

Building tomorrow's workforce through school-work experiences

Who is going to work for you in the next ten years? Recent statistics show it's becoming harder for businesses to find qualified employees. The 2003 Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) Labour Pains Survey reported that 265,000 full-time jobs were vacant across Canada due to a lack of suitable candidates.



Students develop workplace skills

"Ontario's employers need to be able to overcome the imminent challenges to finding qualified labour," says Gerlinde Herrmann, President Elect, Human Resources Professionals of Ontario. "By participating in career-related programs, Ontario employers can prepare their companies to combat the staffing challenges they are facing today and in the future."

The **Passport to Prosperity** campaign helps find opportunities for Ontario's high school students to explore career options and develop workplace skills through school-work experiences. This province-wide initiative brings business, industry and educators together to work towards supplying Ontario's future workforce with skilled and educated candidates.

The pages of this newsletter contain examples of how some Ontario employers are making a success of school-work experiences. For more information on starting up a school-work experience for your organization, please visit the **Passport to Prosperity** website: www.edu.gov.on.ca/passport.

Niagara Health Systems: Promoting Careers in Health Care



Niagara Health System co-op student

The Niagara Health System oversees eight hospitals in the Niagara region. Since 2000, it has provided exciting learning opportunities for area high school students, including Take Our Kids to Work day and cooperative education placements. Each semester, 30 students take part in these co-op experiences.

Students get a chance to work in many jobs in the health care setting. There are co-op placements available in the following divisions: Mother/Newborn Support Unit, Physiotherapy, Occupational therapy, X-ray, Administration, Extended Care Unit, Emergency, IT Department, Fracture Clinic, Pharmacy, and Rehabilitation Clinic.

Students participate in a variety of roles in the hospitals. Some co-op positions involve working with patients in craft and activity groups, portering patients, assisting them in checking in, helping with accounting and other administrative tasks, and some students help feed newborn babies.

Many students find their co-op experiences motivate them to pursue a career in the health care field. Wendy Gillap, a student from E.L. Crossley Secondary School worked in a placement at the Welland Hospital site. "At co-op I was inspired to do my best and become a nurse. The most productive thing about my placement was the hands-on work I got to do."

The Niagara Health System has made educating young people a goal. It participates in a number of conferences in order to promote careers in health care. Students selected are educated about health and safety regulations and participate in orientation training. They are also given advice about jobs they might pursue in the future, and the education requirements for each position.

"All eight of the hospitals go out of their way to ensure that our students receive a placement where they learn a great deal about the career they are interested in," says Lorraine Rivet, Resource Counsellor at the District School Board of Niagara.

"At co-op I was inspired to do my best and become a nurse. The most productive thing about my placement was the hands-on work I got to do."

**Wendy Gillap,
Student**

Landscape Ontario: Encouraging growth through school-work experiences

With over 2,000 members, Landscape Ontario is one of the largest landscape associations in the world. Its goal is to enhance and improve the horticulture industry in the province. One of the main components of Landscape Ontario's strategic plan is an emphasis on human resource development.

In order to ensure that the landscape industry has a stable work force, Landscape Ontario takes part in many school-work initiatives. Representatives attend school career days and job fairs, offer career counseling, and have been working with the Ministry of Education to create a high school curriculum in horticulture.

"Labour supply is an extremely important aspect of our focus," says Terry Murphy, Manager of Education, Training and Safety for Landscape Ontario. "We work closely with schools to make sure that young people understand that the horticulture industry is a field that they can get into. They can work at a job that is worthwhile, while protecting the environment and creating paradise in people's backyards."

Of Landscape Ontario's 2000 members, 1800 offer school-work experiences. "Work experiences do a number of great things. They give students a sense of the real world," says Murphy. "Soft skills such as punctuality, a readiness to learn and take on different tasks, and enthusiasm are more important to many employers than a technical education. Understanding what an employer wants can lead to success in that student's future."

Murphy says that he firmly believes in getting young people out into the workplace - **he'd like for school-work experiences to be mandatory in high schools.** Until that happens, Landscape Ontario will continue to support and encourage its members to participate in school-work experiences, with the hope of encouraging interest in this unique industry, and the many jobs it offers.



Horticulture co-op students gaining valuable experience



Photos courtesy of Landscape Ontario and the Canadian Nursery Landscape Association

"Even if a student comes into our business on a co-op but decides they don't want to pursue a career, it's still a success."

**Terry Murphy,
Landscape Ontario**

Passport to Prosperity Champion Award: Seeking Committed Employers

In communities across the province, countless organizations offer school-work experiences, benefiting thousands of high school students. The Provincial Partnership Council (PPC) has created the **Passport to Prosperity Champion Award** to recognize and support Ontario employers who have shown dedication and commitment to providing such opportunities to students.

The PPC is seeking nominations for this award. Submissions should include the following information:

1. What type of work experiences are provided?
2. How long have the work experiences been offered?
3. How does the community benefit from the work experiences?
4. Describe the experiences of at least two students who have benefited from the work experiences.
5. Why are you nominating this employer for the Passport to Prosperity Champion Award?

To recommend an employer for this award, please contact Ellen Kalis, **Passport to Prosperity Champion Award** coordinator, at 416-598-5777 or at ellen.kalis@avantsc.ca. Nominations must include two references to validate the employer's commitment to school-work experiences. The deadline for entries is Monday, January 31, 2005.

Castlegreen Cooperative: Building Tomorrow's Workforce

Incorporated in 1974, Castlegreen was one of the first housing cooperatives in Canada. Throughout its 30-year history, the organization has helped provide affordable housing in the Thunder Bay area. The cooperative is made up of 215 units, set on 11 acres of land.

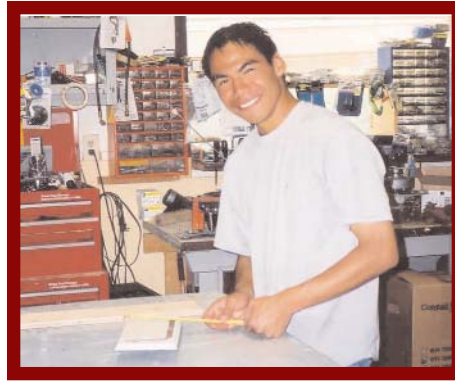
Castlegreen has participated in school-work experiences since 1998. Students who take part learn many valuable skills including: basic carpentry, drywall and tile installation, appliance repair, floor installation, and concrete and brick work. They also assist with landscape maintenance in the summer and winter.

Greg Algren, Senior Maintainer at Castlegreen, is a strong supporter of school-work experiences. He has mentored 15 students in the past six years and usually hires them afterwards for summer or part-time positions. Greg is always there to support, teach, and watch over the students. "He possesses great patience and has a way of bringing out the best in the individual," says cooperative education teacher Trish Somerleigh.

Darby Nagotchi, one of Castlegreen's students says, "My co-op year at Castlegreen was fun. I was taught a lot, like doing drywall and tiling floors. I would like to thank Greg for the time he took to teach us, while doing his own job at the same time."

The cooperative education teachers who work with him say, "Greg and his team at Castlegreen truly care about the individual students. They teach the students a wide variety of hard skills but also reinforce many general employability skills."

Thirty years ago, Castlegreen Cooperative grew out of the spirit of helping and improving the lives of others. It continues to share that spirit with its community by offering students the chance to take part in a school-work experience.



*Castlegreen Cooperative
work experience student*



Toronto Hydro's Take Our Kids to Work day

Take Our Kids to Work at Toronto Hydro

For the past ten years, Take Our Kids to Work day has given thousands of grade nine students across Canada the chance to learn more about life in the working world.

There are many reasons that Toronto Hydro participates in Take Our Kids to Work day. The organization believes that it has a fundamental responsibility to its employees, their children and the community and firmly supports youth and public education.

"Take Our Kids to Work day is a safe and tangible way to provide a snapshot of careers that students might consider in the future," says Jennifer Reynolds, Manager of Community Involvement, Events and Sponsorship. "We want to expose students to a variety of potential avenues, including skilled trades and professional careers."

The 100 students who participate in the day at Toronto Hydro learn about a cross-section of professions, including; skilled trades, customer service, fleet management, telecom, finance, legal and communications. They also attend a session on job interviews and résumé preparation. Students gain a greater appreciation of the environment in which their parents work each day.

"This is one way in which we help youth build their career-options menu and contribute to building tomorrow's workforce," says Reynolds.



"Take Our Kids to Work gives our employees a chance to showcase their skills to students who may choose to follow a similar career path."

**-Jennifer Reynolds,
Toronto Hydro**



Archie McKean (bottom left) with co-op and apprenticeship students

Educator Profile: Archie McKean

"I think co-op education is something that every student should partake in. The sooner students learn about working life, the better."

Archie McKean is a cooperative education teacher at Toronto's Timothy Eaton Business and Technical Institute. He believes that high school students must be exposed to a variety of school-work experiences, so they can make informed decisions about a career direction before they graduate.

"In the province of Ontario over 60% of high school students don't go on to college or university," says McKean. "Being in the classroom doesn't prepare them for the working world, but co-op does".

Mr. McKean promotes cooperative education and apprenticeship opportunities at high schools across Toronto. He believes that there are many industries that could benefit from offering school-work experiences. "A company can take someone at a young age who has the entry level skills required and train them to its needs. It'll have a better employee in the long run."

While there are many jobs that require postsecondary education, McKean points out that often, students will graduate university or college no better prepared to choose their careers than they were before, and only a small percentage end up working in their field of study. "We all go to work eventually. The more knowledge students can get out of the workplace, the better."

Many students believe that in order to find a well-paying job, they need to go on to college or university. McKean disagrees. "A fully qualified skilled tradesperson can make over \$80,000 a year."

Mr. McKean shares his own experiences with his students. As well as teaching, he's also worked as a carpenter, an entrepreneur and a small-business owner. He advises that, "An apprenticeship could be the beginning of a multi-faceted career."

McKean says the best part of his job is student success. "When a former student visits to thank me, I know I got through to them. They come back with a good job, their own car, money in their pocket, and a big smile on their face."

Labour Pains: The Canadian Federation of Independent Business Survey on Labour Availability

One in two businesses (49.6 per cent) indicated that they are concerned with the shortage of qualified labour.

Close to 60 per cent of businesses anticipate that it will become harder to find employees in the next three years.

In every sector of every province, the lack of candidates with the required education, experience, or skills hit small and medium-sized businesses the hardest.

Training is part of the answer to the shortage of labour.

Three quarters of small firms have hired young people between the ages of 15 and 24.

Most businesses believe that increasing the number of cooperative education programs is a real solution.

Two thirds of businesses want to increase their participation in co-op programs.

One of the study's top recommendations for businesses is to participate more in co-op programs.

Get involved!

There are many resources available to help businesses implement a school-work program.

For more information on: implementing a program; examples of short, medium and long-term work experiences; help in determining the type of experience that will work for your organization, visit the *Passport to Prosperity* website: www.edu.gov.on.ca/passport or call 1-800-387-5514.

For more information about programs in your community, contact the Ontario Learning Partnership Group (a province-wide consortium of business-education councils and local training boards). Call 1-888-672-7996 or visit www.olpg.on.ca.

The Provincial Partnership Council and the *Passport to Prosperity* Campaign are supported by the Ontario Ministry of Education and the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities. Partners include the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario (HRPAO), the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Toronto Board of Trade, and the Ontario Learning Partnership Group.

The Labour Pains survey was conducted by the CFIB in 2003.