

Winter 2004

Business Leaders Put a Stamp on Ontario's *Passport to Prosperity*

On September 23, 2003, hundreds of business leaders from across Ontario gathered to discuss the issues of youth work experience and the looming threat of skills shortages. The forum, 'Building Tomorrow's Workforce: Students in Today's Workplace', was sponsored by the Provincial Partnership Council and partners and provided human resource professionals and employers with practical information about offering high school students work experiences.

Speakers from partner organizations included Monica Belcourt, President of the Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario; Len Crispino, President of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce; Don Jackson, Chair of the Provincial Partnership Council and Edward Scheck, C.A. and Chair of the Toronto Board of Trade. Employers, teachers and students also spoke about their experiences.

"With the help of our dedicated partners, the forum reinforced the important message that working with employers and schools helps students develop the skills, attitudes and knowledge necessary for future success," said Tom Flanagan, President and COO of BMO InvestorLine and Chair of the HR Forum Task Force.

Simultaneous events took place in communities across the province. The forum was webcast and is available in its entirety at www.olpg.on.ca.

The information in this edition of the *Passport to Prosperity* Update highlights the topics discussed at the forum.

"To keep our economy strong we must act now. We must address the issue of labour shortages at the point where we have the most impact, with our future workforce, the students of today."

Len Crispino,
President of
the Ontario
Chamber of
Commerce

Ten Reasons Why Work Experience for High School Students Makes Business Sense

1. Students are the future of our economy.
2. Training students today creates a labour pool of skilled workers for tomorrow.
3. School-work initiatives are a cost-effective solution to recruiting, training and retaining young workers.
4. Work opportunities expose students to career options which they may not have considered, increasing career awareness of new and traditional industries.
5. Offering high school students work experience increases competitiveness and enhances an organization's productivity.
6. Students are a valuable resource, with expertise in the latest technology and computer software.
7. Having students in the workplace provides an opportunity for employees to enhance management, team work and communication skills.
8. Mentoring students is an excellent opportunity for professional development.
9. Students bring fresh ideas, energy and enthusiasm into the workplace.
10. Being involved in school-work initiatives enhances an organization's public image and consumer loyalty.

The Toronto Board of Trade reinforced the *Passport to Prosperity* message in its recent report *The Skills Advantage; Opening Doors for Youth and New Canadians*. The report calls upon the employer community to take "a leadership role in preparing the next generation of workers by becoming actively involved in school-work programs."

"High school students face many choices when determining how to start their careers," said Edward Scheck C.A. and Chair, Toronto Board of Trade. "We believe that they will make good choices only if they have access to a full range of education and training options."



Human resource professionals, business leaders and teachers, gathered to discuss offering high school students work experience. The forum highlighted how work experiences help students make the transition from high school to college, university and the working world.

Keeping Our Students Safe in the Workplace

Keeping students safe in the workplace requires a partnership between employers, schools and parents.

Over 15 per cent of employees in Ontario are young people (ages 15-24). This makes up 850,000 of the 6 million people employed in Ontario. Young workers are 25 per cent more likely to sustain injuries on the job because they are excited about working and eager to please their employers. Most of these injuries happen in the first year of work. It is essential to ensure that students are properly trained before beginning their work experience.

There are a number of reasons why young people tend to suffer more injuries on the job. These factors include:

- Lack of life experience.
- Expectations that the workplace will be safe.
- Not recognizing many common workplace hazards.

"Young people do not want to appear incompetent," said Cathi Carr of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. "They just want to do a really good job."

"Young workers are intimidated and they don't like to speak up. They just want to impress," pointed out Lyle Hargrove, Director of the Canadian Auto Workers Health and Safety Fund.

Secondary school students in Ontario are receiving health and safety related information through numerous curricula including science, business, technology and guidance. A resource for teachers called *Live Safe! Work Smart!*, has been developed and distributed to secondary schools through a partnership of the Ministries of Education and Labour and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

For more information about safety in the workplace, please visit www.worksmartontario.gov.on.ca or www.youngworker.ca.

Partner Organizations Help Promote Passport to Prosperity

The Provincial Partnership Council works with a variety of organizations across Ontario to relay the message:



Wanted:
*More Interested Employers
More Work Experiences
for High School Students*

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, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Toronto Board of Trade, the Ontario Learning Partnership Group and a number of professional associations in a variety of sectors.

Tips to Help Keep Young Workers Safe

- **Ensure young workers receive job training and health and safety training before they begin work.**
- **Assign a buddy who can mentor the young worker on how to work safely.**
- **Stress to frontline supervisors that they are in the best position to influence young workers attitudes' and work habits.**
- **Strongly encourage supervisors to set a strong example.**
- **Establish and maintain open lines of communication. Young workers are an asset to your workplace – with fresh eyes, new ideas and good questions to ask.**



While helping to alleviate the pressures of a looming skills shortage, students gain hands-on experience in many career areas.

Partner Profile: Canadian Federation of Independent Business

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) supports the goals of *Passport to Prosperity*. It is a non-partisan, not for profit organization representing 42,000 small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) in Ontario and 105, 000 SMEs across Canada. Since 1971, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has been giving small firms a big voice in the public arena. The CFIB promotes entrepreneurship, small business, community and free enterprise. To learn more about CFIB visit www.cfib.ca

"When given the opportunity, young people feel empowered about the impact they are having in the workplace."

Kelly Hoey,
Executive Director,
Halton Industry Education Council

"Students are at ease with technology and have a deep understanding of the youth culture that is so important to many businesses. They are a valuable resource to Ontario businesses."

Monica Belcourt,
President,
Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario

Governor of the Bank of Canada Urges More Employer Support for Youth Work Experiences

David Dodge, Governor of the Bank of Canada, was honoured at a tribute dinner hosted by the Canadian Foundation of Economic Education on November 3, 2003. Recognized for his distinguished career as a public servant and his role in shaping the economy of Canada, David Dodge offered his wisdom and advice on economic education. The following are excerpts from the speech he gave at the tribute dinner.

Discussing the symbiotic relationship between the public and private sectors, Mr. Dodge said "nowhere is the relationship more important than in the development of human capital through education, training, and learning by doing." An advocate of school-work experiences Mr. Dodge noted that "one of the keys to making school more productive and relevant for our times lies in linking formal education to practical experience - building a bridge to the real world. We should all be doing what we can to provide opportunities for high-school students to work with skilled tradespeople on the shop floor, with computer technicians and programmers in our businesses and offices, and even with economists at the Bank of Canada."

According to Mr. Dodge, "all of us, as parents, employers and public policy makers will have to keep thinking of ways to provide new opportunities for our youth to learn by doing."

To read more on Mr. Dodge's insight on educating our future workforce, visit www.bankofcanada.ca

"These are programs that respect the needs of business to make a profit. They also respect the needs of students to make seamless transitions to the post-secondary destinations of their choice and to do so in the most productive way."

Carlos Sousa,
OYAP
Coordinator,
Toronto
Catholic
District
School Board

Mount Sinai Offers Creative Approach to Take Our Kids to Work Day

When Mount Sinai Hospital began considering how they might offer work experience to students as part of *Take Our Kids to Work Day*, the issues of patient confidentiality and infection control were a primary concern. They also wanted to make the experience as enjoyable as possible for the students. To effectively address these hurdles, the work experience initiative that the hospital developed has the students spend part of their day shadowing their parents and the rest of the day participating in interactive hands-on activities in various departments within the hospital.

Joanne Woodward, Community Relations Officer, has been working on this initiative for the last three years. It has grown to include 80 students each year. "It's a definite challenge for the different departments to make these tours fun, educational and interactive. We've discovered that interactive activities, such as learning to suture and viewing glowing green mice, work really well."

"Planning for this day takes several months and it's an effort worth making. Mount Sinai believes very strongly in the power of education. This is a wonderful opportunity to open the minds of students to the diverse and exciting career opportunities in the health field," says Ms. Woodward, "and **it's not just about doctors and nurses.**"

As part of Take Our Kids to Work Day, students had the opportunity to make various pastries and get a taste of working in the kitchen at the Westin Harbour Castle in Toronto.

MoldMasters Offers a Range of Work Experiences

MoldMasters Ltd. sees an investment in the workforce as a key to success and offers a variety of work experiences to students. These include cooperative education and apprenticeship placements across the company in engineering, IT, marketing, manufacturing and reception.

"These initiatives offer a true competitive advantage because often we have the students coming back to work for us," said MoldMasters President Jonathan Fischer. "In fact, there are five supervisors who manage about 300 people and three of the five completed their apprenticeships with the company."

"At MoldMasters, we think we exemplify best practices with respect to apprenticeships and student work initiatives," said Mr. Fischer. "We have a 'no-excuses' approach to investing in the creation of a skilled workforce. **We are committed to creating the best, innovative, and driven workforce today and tomorrow.** It starts with people and we are driven by our people."



The InterContinental Toronto Centre Promotes Hospitality Careers

The InterContinental Toronto Centre is an industry leader in raising awareness among students about the potential career opportunities in the hotel setting. The hotel and hospitality industry has faced many challenges over the last couple of years. A variety of economic and world events have curtailed travel. This has had an effect on people looking for careers in hospitality.

Malcolm Dales, Manager, Recruitment and Retention at the InterContinental, is actively involved in the hotel's work experience initiatives. "The hotel is a unionized environment. Work experience in a unionized setting must be very transparent – students must be seen as doing learning tasks, not job tasks." Mr. Dales pointed out that "the work that the student is doing has to be in a learning capacity, not in a job role. For example, let's take potato peeling – it could be seen by the union as a task or it could be seen as learning. If you have the student peel a bucket of potatoes, that's learning. Have them spend four weeks peeling potatoes, that's a job. You have to be clear on that."

Under the leadership of a very passionate chef, the culinary team has accepted having students on the team in the kitchens at the InterContinental. "It gives them a real sense of value at the end of the day that they've contributed to the overall success of a student," said Mr. Dales. "In fact, we learn every day from what the students have to tell us."

When it comes to job placement, the students receive the same training plan as the full time staff, with a designated trainer providing orientation.

"It's an extremely successful initiative in our view," said Mr. Dales, "because **we are now starting to see higher enrolments in colleges and universities for hospitality and tourism.**"

"Work experience is giving students the opportunity to make better choices. Better choices about courses they're going to be taking, better choices about what they want to be doing after they finish school, whether they're going directly to the workplace, on to college, or on to university,"

**Anne Sasman,
Education
Officer with
the Ministry
of Education**



Students get to test a variety of career options through work experience initiatives. Students can work on-site and gain hands-on experience (above) or from a remote location through the virtual co-op program.



Work Experiences Work! The Student Perspective

Students have difficult decisions to make about their future. When given the opportunity, students gain valuable insight through work experiences. They can receive the knowledge and information they need to choose the best career path.

Melissa Seucharan participated in a co-op placement with BMO InvestorLine in 1997. She started in the trading department, providing stock quotes to clients. "Throughout my six month co-op term, I was introduced to many aspects of the business, including client services and new accounts," said Ms. Seucharan. "The co-op placement provided me with not only hands-on experience but also the opportunity to pursue a career in the field I was seeking. I recommend the co-op placement to any student looking to gain valuable work experience." Ms. Seucharan is now a client relationship consultant in the trading department of BMO InvestorLine.

"This initiative helped me build confidence in myself," said Steve Alvares of his virtual co-op experience, designing web pages. The virtual co-op placement gives students first-hand experience in a number of careers through freelance work usually from home offices or classrooms. Scheduling difficulties or distance can prevent students from participating in school-work efforts. Virtual programs are more flexible. Students acquire many skills that make them more marketable, including the ability to work and solve problems on their own. After the co-op placement Mr. Alvares was hired by three different organizations to do freelance web design.

The Provincial Partnership Council is looking for employer partners to help with school-work opportunities. If you would like more information on becoming a partner or supporter, please refer to the enclosed Passport to Prosperity contact sheet.