



CANADIAN COALITION FOR TOMORROW'S ICT SKILLS

PRESS RELEASE

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Canadian Coalition for Tomorrow's ICT Skills

Study shows the “cool factor” and not job stability concerns matters more to high school students considering careers in ICT

What influences Generation Y high school students in their career choices?

TORONTO, June 9, 2009 – Canada's Generation Y high school students believe that jobs in the Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) sector pay well, are easy to find and offer good job security. But according to a recent study of Grade 9 & 10 high school students conducted by the Conference Board of Canada, funded by Bell, for the Canadian Coalition for Tomorrow's ICT Skills (CCICT), these factors have no bearing on whether or not they are attracted to an ICT career. The study provides new information about why Canadian students have been turning away from computer-related programs in colleges and universities with 33-40% or more rates of declining enrollments since 2001.

The report, entitled “Connecting Students to Tomorrow's Jobs and Careers”, reveals that students who perceive that the field is interesting, fun, cool and creative are more likely to want to pursue a career in the field. Even though conventional wisdom says students fear IT job instability due to outsourcing, offshoring and memories of the dot com crash, this study reveals that to tackle its talent issue, the real problem is that high school students are neutral or they don't know the career possibilities in ICT. “This survey provides information to develop strategies to encourage young people to pursue careers in ICT,” says Stéphane Boisvert, CCICT Chairman and President of Bell Business Markets. “CCICT is already working with its members to improve the pathways to these 21st century careers and to ensure a clear message reaches both students and the people who influence them – parents, teachers, and guidance counsellors.”

Canada's employers in the ICT sector already have difficulty filling positions and the impending retirement of many current employees threatens to make the situation worse. This is why CCICT was created in 2007, bringing together stakeholders with an interest in developing Canada's ICT capabilities. “The report's findings bode well for turning the tide, since today's high growth ICT careers meet the “cool factor” criteria of Generation Y,” said David Ticoll, Executive Director of CCICT. “For example, some exciting careers are those of specialized technologists – both ICT-focused and multidisciplinary – who operate at the leading edge of innovation in every field, be it ICT product innovation, social media, health care and medical research, green infrastructure, automotive design, the arts, etc. Possibilities are endless!”

Based on the report, the CCICT believes that it is essential to ensure that those students who express interest in ICT jobs are guided towards relevant and appropriate education and career paths so that the skills mismatch challenge can be addressed. The ICT sector and other stakeholders should recognize the diversity of student motivations and design ICT attraction, education, and recruitment programs that offer a corresponding diversity of opportunities and strategies.

Other key facts from the report include:

- 39% of the students surveyed see an ICT job or career as appealing or very appealing, 19% as unappealing while the remainder (nearly half) were neutral or not sure;
- Similarly, 30% see an ICT job or career as interesting, 27% as not interesting, while the remaining 43% were neutral or not sure;
- 77% believe ICT jobs offer average or better than average pay;
- 74% believe ICT jobs offer average or better than average job security;
- Girls (32%) are less likely than boys (41%) to see an ICT job or career as appealing; and
- Among the cities surveyed (Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Montreal, Halifax) the greatest interest in ICT was in Montreal where 54% see ICT as appealing) followed by Vancouver at 44%.

Parents are the most common source of advice for students on careers - 83% versus 63% for friends, 50% for teachers and only 43% for guidance counsellors. Yet in a small survey of 30 parents, the research found that they may be less optimistic about ICT jobs/careers than their kids. Only 19% of students see ICT as unappealing versus 33% of parents.

The research, conducted from November 2008 to February 2009, set out to uncover secondary school students' views about ICT jobs and careers. The research sheds light on students' perceptions of careers in this sector. To understand the reasons for low and declining enrolment, the Conference Board of Canada spoke with 1,034 Grade 9 and 10 students in 21 schools and 46 classes Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Montreal, and Halifax. In addition, 60 parents and 54 guidance / career counsellors offered their perspectives on ICT education and careers.

About CCICT

Founded in 2007 by Bell Canada, CCICT is an industry-led, action-oriented, open multi-stakeholder initiative. Its mission is to ensure that Canadian organizations can engage information and communications technology professionals with knowledge, skills and talents to meet the evolving and diverse needs of this exciting field. Members include companies, academic institutions, professional associations, industry organizations, and other stakeholders with an interest in developing Canada's ICT capabilities. For more information please visit www.cciict.ca

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