Apprenticeships lead to rewarding careers with great futures

Apprenticeship, college and university are all post-secondary options to further prepare high school graduates for the workforce. Apprenticeships in the skilled trades provide rewarding career opportunities.

Skilled trades are divided into four sectors:

- Construction (e.g. electricians, carpenters, plumbers)
- Motive Power (e.g. auto service technicians, fuel/electrical systems technicians, aircraft structural technicians)
- Industrial (e.g. tool & die makers, industrial mechanics (millwrights), precision metal fabricators)
- Service (e.g. horticulturists, chefs, child and youth worker)

Apprenticeships provide hands-on training for people who enjoy learning by doing and want to work in a skilled trade. An apprenticeship combines paid work-based training and in-class training. Apprentices spend approximately 80% of their time learning their skills on the job (under the direction of a highly skilled journeyperson) and approximately 20% of their time learning in a classroom setting.

Apprenticeship programs can range from three to five years in length. When apprentices finish a program, they are required to write a completion exam in order to be certified. Once certified they become known as a journeyperson and earn the full journeyperson wage.

The many positives of a career in the skilled trades

There are many strong reasons to consider pursuing a career in the skilled trades. These include:

- Wide variety of career choices - in Ontario, there are over 150 apprenticeable trades where professionals earn a good living by doing valuable work that contributes to society.
- Apprentices earn while they learn - an apprentice will start out making 60 percent of a journeyperson’s wage for the trade they are learning. Not only do they graduate without being heavily in debt, they actually earn income while they complete their studies.
Apprentices gain valuable skills that offer careers with advancement opportunities, from supervisory to management, to the chance to own their own businesses. Many trades now require workers to be proficient in computer skills.

Skilled trades careers provide incomes that are higher than the national average for employed Canadians. Statistics Canada information shows that tradespeople generally earn a salary of 3.1% above the national average of all Canadian careers combined.

Lower than average unemployment rates for employed Canadians.

High demand for skilled trade workers in the workforce - In Canada, the shortage of skilled labour has been estimated at no fewer than 50,000 by 2010. By 2020, it is estimated that Canada will be short 1 million workers. In the manufacturing sector alone, 400,000 workers will be required in the next 15 years due to retirement. In the Region of Peel, skilled trades such as welding, plumbing, tool and die, electrical are in very high demand and pay well.

Skilled tradespeople are mobile - the Red Seal program provides a national standard for certification in many trades, allowing the tradesperson designation to be recognized throughout Canada.

High school students can earn credits through work placement

Full time students who are 16 years of age and have earned a minimum of 16 credits can get started pursuing a career in the trades through the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP), while earning cooperative education credits through work placements in skilled trades.

To learn more about OYAP, contact a guidance counsellor or co-op education teacher at your high school.

Sources:

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