

Where the jobs will be

By Anne McDonagh

A year ago in an article entitled "Where the jobs are," I wrote, "The aging population, innovations in technology, the expansion of globalization, increased immigration, the financing of healthcare and education have continued to be major elements affecting the current and future workplace and current and future jobs."

These major factors affecting the world of work have continued to evolve.

I also pointed out that the future is uncertain and that unforeseen events will affect the labour market. A recent unexpected influence on the economy, though long overdue, is the breakthrough of the environmental movement into the mainstream of society.

The Environment

We are finally facing up to the harm our carelessness has done to the environment.

The problem is that our way of life depends on an ever-expanding economy, as if there were no limits. Yet we live in a finite world. The economy cannot expand forever because the earth's resources like oil, gas, coal, water and air are not infinite; an expanding economy uses up these resources faster than a sustainable one.

According to Statistics Canada a sustainable economy is an "economic system in which the number of people and the quantity of goods are maintained at some constant level. This level is ecologically sustainable over time and meets at least the basic needs of all members of the population." In fact, we are using up our resources that are crucial to our way of life so rapidly that, by some estimates, the oil economy—and our way of life—will be over in about fifty years. If we don't start waking up to the realities of depleting resources, climate change, pollution, deforestation, over-population, the disappearance of plants and animals and so on, we will be in deep trouble.

Do we want our economy to keep on expanding to the point of self-destruction or do we want to find ways to live that are kinder to the planet? Signs of an expanding economy are low unemployment, lots of buying and selling, a higher and higher standard of living, huge corporate profits and a rising GDP. Prime Ministers and other politicians take credit when their rule coincides with job growth and higher tax revenues. Average Canadian workers are happy if they have good jobs and are able to buy more goods and services.

A "sustainable economy," on the other hand, would require quite a lot of adapting. Our materialism and consumerism would need to be curbed, at times severely

regulated. It seems our own selfish interests and the best interests of the planet are diametrically opposed to one another. However, I am willing to bet that the planet will survive somehow; whether humanity will is debatable. How willing are we to change? How possible is it for us to change? Elizabeth May, leader of the Green Party, once said that we may destroy the planet because it is inconvenient to save it.

To save the planet, some people claim we will have to go back to the way of life of the pre-industrial age. Others, like Stephan Dion, leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, are convinced we can make the necessary changes and build a sustainable economy without suffering a great loss in our standard of living.

According to Mr. Dion, "The clear connection between environmental considerations and economic competitiveness is leading a transformation of the way the global economy works. More and more, we see the signs of what can only be described as a new Industrial Revolution - a revolution in which the environment is a key driver of creativity, of innovation and of competitiveness around the world. The countries that fail to integrate both environmental and economic factors will not position themselves well to improve, or even to maintain, the quality of life of their people." (from a speech in 2004)

Where do we start as individuals in helping to save the planet? There are, of course, many factors over which we have no control that will determine our survival. Nevertheless, one factor over which we have control is what kind of work we do. When deciding on a career or on changing careers, we take into account our talents and training, but we may also consider whether our career choice contributes to a sustainable economy by not needlessly using up precious resources.

For instance, a skilled trades person might decline building a "monster home" which is unacceptable environmentally while participating in the construction of a hospital, a school or an environmentally responsible building.

Perhaps we should all adopt the doctors' principle of "do no harm." If we think of our work in that way, there are many jobs and careers that "do no harm" and many that do a great deal of good for people and for the environment—and for the economy and our bank accounts too.

The Aging Population

Getting back to the other factors influencing the world of work, the aging population continues to influence the economy both in terms of its costs and the jobs it creates.

However, it may be that not all the jobs that were expected to be filled by young workers as a result of retirements will materialize. It seems many people want to—

or need to—keep on working. Now that the Ontario government has eliminated mandatory retirement, some will work past the age of sixty-five. Nevertheless, with Canada's jobless rate lower than it has been for thirty years, it is now an employees' market

If this trend continues, by the end of the decade, the work environment should be more positive for employees. Employers will provide more benefits, higher wages and better working conditions in order to retain their employees, and they will employ more of the elderly and disabled.

Although the percentage increase of jobs in the next decade will be greatest for those with a university degree or college diploma, the greatest absolute increase in jobs will be for those with only a high school diploma. The fact that there will be labour shortages even for low skilled workers is an indicator of the positive employment picture that will gradually emerge over the next five to six years. This situation is rather surprising since, for the last twenty years, labour market experts have been pushing the necessity of post secondary education for everyone since the early nineties if they want to work.

On the other hand, jobs are disappearing because of outsourcing, automation and increased productivity. If you are an optimist, you will believe the positive picture—jobs galore. If you are a pessimist, you will be prepared for a less than ideal work environment.

Before the aging baby boomers become incapacitated they will have free time and more money than any retired generation has had before. They will want to travel and to pursue hobbies. People who cater to these interests will have plenty of work; for instance, people who want to instruct others in their hobby may have a captive audience, although sedentary hobbies are likely to be more popular with the retired than tennis or bungee jumping. Travel and tourism is expected to be a growth industry for some time. .

Skilled Trades

The aging population is creating a severe labour shortage in the skilled trades. According to Skills Canada, in the manufacturing sector, an estimated 400,000 workers will be required in the next fifteen years, and 50,000 metal trades people will be needed in the next five years. With more than 140 skilled trades in Ontario, there is a skilled trade for every interest and aptitude.

Unfortunately, most young people say they are unlikely to consider a career in the skilled trades even though careers in twenty of those trades pay well above average wages; for example, tool and die makers earn about 23% more than the average and electricians more than 16 %. Moreover, the unemployment rate is lower than

average. Skilled trades provide creative and intellectual challenges and often require the aptitude to work with advanced technology.

Some of the trades most in demand are industrial electrician, plumber, pipe fitter, brick layer, heavy duty equipment mechanic/operator, millwright, construction worker, tool and die maker, computer systems analyst, mason, electronic mechanic and auto body repairer.

If you want a secure and challenging job, consider a skilled trade. (The above information is from Skills Canada)

Technology, Research and Innovation

If Mr. Dion is right about a new industrial revolution marrying economic power with environmental care, then the advance of technology will continue and probably at a rapid pace. Besides attending to the needs of the ever growing functions of the communications technologies, the talents of high tech workers, engineers and engineering technologists will be called upon to solve many environmental problems: waste management, control of industrial emissions as well as automobile emissions, further development of wind power and other renewable resources. Many experts, including Mr. Dion, see the development of this environmental technology as a way of creating a niche market for our economy.

For people interested in scientific research, biotechnology is one of the most exciting areas of research today. Think of the discoveries of DNA, the human genome, stem cell research and the list goes on. The opportunities for research are enormous

There is some new interest and support on the part of government for scientific research probably because the only way Canada can be competitive in the global economy is to create products and technologies that no other country has—the value-added component.

Ontario has recently started putting more money into research. Last year the Ontario government announced an investment of \$51 million over five years in the Early Researcher Award program in order to strengthen Ontario's economy by investing in young researchers and attracting world-class researchers.

Other exciting opportunities for would-be researchers are with the Centres of Excellence. "Canada's Networks of Centres of Excellence are unique partnerships among universities, industry, government and not-for-profit organizations aimed at turning Canadian research and entrepreneurial talent into economic and social benefits for all Canadians. These nation-wide, multidisciplinary and multisectoral research partnerships connect excellent research with industrial know-how and strategic investment." (from website of NCE www.nce.gc.ca)

The National Research Council "offers training, coaching, mentoring, access to state-of-the-art facilities, and opportunity to work alongside top-notch researchers and research teams. The NRC sponsors a number of programs to provide students the opportunity to develop their skills and expertise, while at the same time, gaining valuable experience working with research groups or leaders in Canadian government laboratories and research institutions." (from NRC's website nrc-cnrc.gc.ca)

These are just three examples of research organizations. Every university has research opportunities for the right people as do hospitals. To sum up, if you are interested in scientific research and if you have the brains and the determination, there should be ample opportunity. Who knows, you might come up with a product that contributes to sustainability?

Globalization

Globalization of trade continues to increase with India and China competing assertively with the rest of the world. China will soon export more to the United States than Canada does. Although our business elites claim tax cuts and higher productivity (read lower labour costs) could make us more competitive, it is hard to see how we can compete with India or China since their standards of living are so much lower than ours. Surely we cannot be expected to accept the wages or working conditions of China or India. China regularly disobeys international trade laws, and both India and China tolerate a greater gap between rich and poor than Canadians would tolerate.

Meantime outsourcing of jobs in North America, even knowledge work, is continuing and, shockingly, even high-paying jobs in manufacturing and technology are being outsourced. Even call centres are going to countries like India.

A study by PricewaterhouseCoopers showed that Canada could lose 75,000 IT jobs to offshore outsourcing by 2010 but could gain 165,000 jobs through U.S. outsourcing to Canada providing we go after the jobs. These conditions offer a golden opportunity to entrepreneurs to facilitate outsourcing from the United States to Canada. Whether Canadians take the opportunity or not will determine somewhat the future of IT in Canada.

Globalization, then, is continuing. In both North America and around the world, it is creating great wealth, but it is also creating deep poverty for those who miss the bandwagon, that is, those who are not highly skilled. This situation is true in North America as well as in China and India, and it goes against our values of equality and social justice. Moreover, such injustice creates geopolitical instability with repercussions we can't begin to contemplate.

Clearly, Canadian society and the world community need to deal with the gap between the rich and poor. One possibility is to raise the salaries of people in the services industry and in unskilled jobs. Another is to tax a percentage of the wealth created by the new international free market economy and use that money to create jobs in the not-for-profit sector. Not everybody has to be a rocket scientist. Society needs people who take care of the elderly and who know how to be compassionate and honest. Society needs people who work in hospitals and social service agencies. Society needs all kinds of skills social and emotional as well as intellectual.

It seems painfully obvious that we need international labour laws, which every country would have to obey or else risk facing a boycott.

Immigration

Toronto is the most multicultural city in the world—about fifty percent of its residents were born outside of Canada. With immigration continuing as government policy, there will be jobs in teaching ESL and other settlement jobs for some time to come.

Immigrants to Canada are better educated than the average Canadian. They are granted immigrant status on the basis of their education. You would think they would get work in their fields quite easily, but they don't. Despite recent publicity and efforts by the government, there are still too many immigrant professionals working at low skill jobs. Employers use the "No Canadian experience" as an excuse not to deal with someone who was not educated in Canada. Fortunately, governments seem to be waking up to this great waste of human resources. Perhaps the business sector will soon come to realize that access to markets around the world is in their own backyard. If we don't find a way to use the skills and education of immigrants, we are continuing to commit a great injustice to them and an enormous disservice to our country's welfare.

Health Care and Education

The Ontario Liberal government's re-investment in health care and education means there is money to pay for services to the rapidly increasing elderly population: for nurses, nurse practitioners, activation co-coordinators, personal support workers and so on. There will be new jobs in health care generally for the foreseeable future not only because of the aging population but also because of the commitment of government and Canadians to making the health care system work, and warnings of what will happen if the necessary resources are not invested in health care; for example, if an epidemic should occur, we need to be prepared

Since the working hypothesis is that preventive health care is essential to keeping down health care costs, there will be more work for dietitians, social workers, health educators, mental health workers etc. in the near future. Family

Health Teams and Community Health Centres will be where many new jobs are created. Currently there is already a shortage of general practitioners and pharmacists.

In public education (elementary and secondary), money withdrawn in the 1990's is returning, albeit much too slowly. Obviously, because of this influx of money, there will be jobs for teachers to add to the vacancies because of retirements.

The chronic underfunding of post secondary education was not really dealt with in the Rae Report, but there is some improvement in student loans; on the other hand, tuition fees, frozen when the Liberals first came to power, have been unfrozen and so the expense of a post secondary education is continuing to increase. As with elementary and secondary education, there will be jobs anyway because of a looming shortage of professors and lecturers due to retirements.

How do we get to know our local labour market?

We need to read the business section of the newspaper for information on how the economy is doing, which companies are growing and so on. However, we also need to keep on top of all the social and political factors that could affect the labour market. Here are a few factors to consider looming in the near future.

- The economy of Toronto and the GTA is approximately seventy percent services, twenty percent manufacturing and ten percent construction and utilities. Jobs in services run the gamut from short order cook to lawyer.
- The population of Toronto will grow by half a million by 2031 from 2.45 million to 3 million. The GTA will grow by more than 2.6 million in the same time period, from 4.78 million (in 1996) to 7.45 million. Think of the jobs that will be created in the next decade and beyond! The construction industry will be kept busy building housing, schools and office buildings for the burgeoning population. Teachers, doctors, lawyers, police, firemen, dentists, pharmacists will all be needed to look after them. The list is endless of the services that will be required to accommodate such an increase in population. Issues like waste management, clean water, and air pollution will continue to be enormous challenges. It is not too far-fetched to think that at long last the health of the environment will be taken seriously and that the appropriate jobs will follow.
- According to a CIBC report, starting a small business is easier in Canada than anywhere else in the world and the fastest pace of growth in small business formation is in Oshawa followed by Toronto. It is predicted that by 2010 one in five Canadian workers will be their own boss. More than twenty percent of self-employed individuals are immigrants. So if you have a hankering to start your own business, you certainly won't be alone.
- Politics plays a part in the labour market as well. Governments create jobs in the course of implementing their agendas—especially before an election.

The Crumbling Infrastructure

Years of neglect have left much of Ontario's infrastructure in a deplorable state. The government has already delivered some of the money for its ten-year infrastructure renewal plan. The current money is for clean water infrastructure, sewage treatment facilities, municipal roads and bridges, public transit and waste management facilities. These projects will mean work for civil and environmental engineers, engineering technologists and technicians as well as many types of workers in the construction industry.

Two serious problems

First, the residents of the City of Toronto pay billions of dollars to the federal and provincial governments in taxes and the city government receives back only 6% of that money sent to government. No wonder the infrastructure is crumbling and the waterfront in limbo.

Secondly, we have to do something about poverty in our city. More people are using food banks than ever, many of them the working poor. As a beginning, we need to raise the minimum wage to \$10.00 an hour.

There is good reason to be optimistic about jobs in Toronto and the GTA for the future. Of course, the best jobs will go to the well-educated and the entrepreneurial, but it seems there will be enough jobs to go around for everyone. Just remember, though, that no one can predict the future. Anything could happen!

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