

Skills Ontario debunks myths about skilled trades

Careers in trades, technology should be viewed as a viable first option for young people

WATERLOO, Ont. (January 31, 2020) – Outdated misconceptions about working in the skilled trades and technology fields are a significant obstacle Ontario must overcome to address a serious labour shortage that is projected to worsen over the next decade.

Over the past 30 years, Skills Ontario has developed a growing portfolio of programs and initiatives – such as hosting Canada’s largest skilled trades and technologies competition – to help students of all ages and backgrounds understand that they can find fulfilling career paths in the skilled trades and technologies. We also provide them, their parents, and their educators information on informative, skill-building programs and work-experience opportunities that can help them pursue these positions.

“Jobs in the trades and technologies sector offer high pay, good benefits, flexibility, rewarding work, variety and unlimited opportunity,” says Skills Ontario CEO Ian Howcroft. “We need to set the record straight about these positions so that they are viewed as a first option for those preparing to enter the workforce.”

There continue to be misperceptions and inaccurate generalizations about working in the skilled trades and technologies in some circles. Among them:

Myth 1: *The skilled trades are primarily for people who can’t make it into university or have limited education.*

Reality: Careers in skilled trades and technology require critical thinking skills and a solid education. Most positions demand a combination of hands-on work and specialty training, which may include post- secondary education and learning on the job through apprenticeships.

Myth 2: *Jobs in the trades are dirty and physically demanding.*

Reality: It’s true that many positions in the trades have some element of hands-on work, but technological innovations in recent years have radically transformed how many tasks are performed, making them cleaner and less physically intensive.

Myth 3: *Once you take up a trade, you’ll be stuck doing the same job the rest of your career.*

Reality: There are abundant opportunities to move up the ladder in the skilled trades and technology fields. Apprenticeship training, additional certification courses and other professional development activities open the door to new responsibilities and career options. Many decide to start their own business and hire other tradespeople.

Myth 4: *These jobs aren’t suited to women.*

Reality: There are many opportunities for women in the skilled trades and technology fields, offering high pay, advancement and challenging opportunities. Skills Ontario and its partners have been encouraging more young women to explore these positions through initiatives such as Young Women’s Career Exploration Events throughout the year, plus a Young Women’s Conference every year at the Skills Ontario Competition. We need to do more to introduce these opportunities to girls and young women and facilitate them moving forward.

Myth 5: *You can’t earn a good living in the trades.*

Reality: Skilled professionals in Ontario make highly competitive salaries, including opportunities to earn while learning through apprenticeships. Because there is a severe shortage of skilled trade and tech workers across the province, there are plenty of job opportunities in many sectors that pay very well!

About Skills Ontario

Skills Ontario – Promoting skilled trades and technologies in Ontario since 1989

Over the last 30 years, Skills Ontario has been growing a portfolio of programs including in-school presentations reaching 125,000 students across Ontario, career exploration summer camps, Young Women’s and First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Career Exploration Conferences, and hosting Canada’s largest skills competition which annually attracts 35,000+ spectators who cheerlead the 2,400+ competitors in 68+ trades and tech categories.

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For more information, please contact:

Emina Jakupović

Manager of Communications

519 749 9899 x 221

ejakupovic@skillsontario.com

Ian Howcroft

Chief Executive Officer

519 749 9899 x 229

ihowcroft@skillsontario.com