

1990s jobs, opportunities

Estimated four million job openings this decade — Smaller firms on the incline —
Workers must prepare for new opportunities

Signposts for jobs in the 1990s point in new directions brought on by changes that swirl around us only as words on the late night news. Slower population growth... increased immigration... changing markets... older workers... global markets... free trade — each has an impact on the kinds of jobs in demand and on the skills needed to fill them.

Gary Fletcher, director of Sector Studies at Employment and Immigration Canada, says change in the job market happens all the time. Now, however, many factors have collided and changes are coming fast.

Workers must be fast off the mark to see the emerging opportunities. He says many of the opportunities are in small, young companies where skills in dealing with technology are in high demand.

His colleague, Wayne Roth, director of the Labor Market Outlook Unit, agrees and lists other areas where there is growth: health services, human resource management, communications, environment and occupations making heavy use of computer technology. He estimates nearly two million new jobs will be created during the 1990s. Another two million existing jobs will become vacant, because of deaths, retirements or people moving on to other jobs.

TECHNOLOGY TAKING OFF

"Technology is really taking off. Companies are having to do things differently," says Fletcher.

He explains, for example, the metal mining industry increased its use of technology in exploring new ways to extract and refine ore. During the 1981-82 recession, employment dropped to about 50,000 from 70,000. Technology eliminated those jobs.

"During the rest of the 1980s, production increased tremendously but the workforce remained about the same," Fletcher noted. "We're seeing that in other industries as well. What that meant for the workers that remained is that the skill requirements jumped tremendously."

Many industries are having to adapt to a new working environment brought on by three principal factors:

▲ *global competition*: Canadian companies are competing against foreign companies with lower wage rates, different work practices or greater use of technology.

▲ *free trade*: allowing goods to flow back and forth across

North American borders without duty means businesses look to the places where they can get the best deal to produce their products. They must be able to compete effectively.

▲ *technology*:

use of computers and other forms of technology has been part of business life for a long time but, because companies were making money, workers often paid little attention because jobs were still being created which didn't demand computer skills.

These factors are called *structural* changes which means they are permanent changes. Recessions, on the other hand, are considered to occur periodically. They come and they go.

ADJUSTMENT DIFFICULT

The combination of events this year is making it difficult for some people to adjust, particularly workers with few skills and limited education.

Roth says job opportunities are brightest in the health, information/technology and personal service fields. Many of these jobs result from the new awareness of health issues and the aging Canadian population.

With increased demand for technological skills and fewer young people entering the job market, there is more pressure on young people at least to finish high school. Canada's dropout rate rose during the 1980s from 28 to 30 per cent: three of 10 high school students leave school without graduating even though 60 per cent of all jobs created in the 1990s require high school graduation. Roth cautions that the skills students gain in school should relate to the job market.

"If I were in Grade 10 right now, I'd try to collect as much information as I could about the job market, particularly in the occupations that appeal to me. What happens in that job? What are the qualifications? Career prospects? Everything. That's why career days are so important."

And he'd make certain he

picked up computer skills. "Computers are used for so many things. You have to be familiar with the basics of computer use so you can learn all the new applications."

Fletcher agrees, saying there is a great deal of confusion in the labor market making it difficult to project trends. Young people should examine each occupation carefully, and the best

way is to ask questions of people in business, government, employment counselors and educators.

In general, Roth says the growth areas for jobs — health, environment and technology — have a variety of occupations ranging from those requiring limited skills to those needing extensive training and experience.

What there won't be a lot of, forecasters say, are the middle-skilled jobs. Research by the Economic Council of Canada suggests the number of middle-level jobs is shrinking.

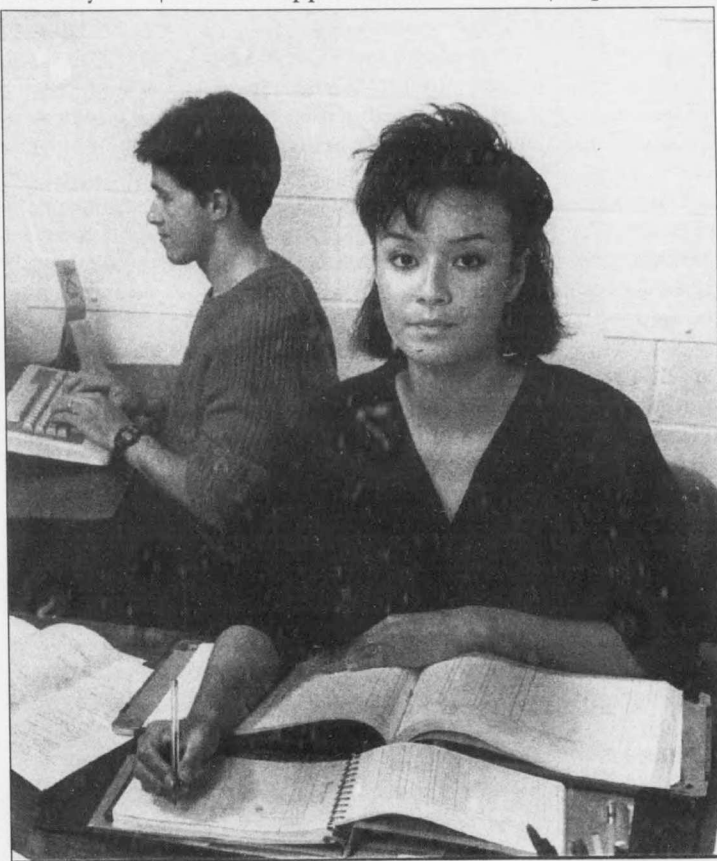
There is increased demand for people with high skill levels who will receive high wages, benefits and protection. There is also growing demand for workers to do less skilled jobs where pay is low, there is little security and less protection.

MORE SELF-EMPLOYED

Counterbalancing those predictions is the growing number of people who operate their own businesses, described as entrepreneurs. Fletcher says: "There are lots of opportunities. Many companies are finding it more effective to contract out or purchase services rather than hire permanent staff to perform those services in-house."

Although specialists foresee a period of uncertainty in the Canadian labor market, Fletcher says the whole idea of a global market also holds opportunities for Canadian workers who have skills and are willing to move.

"I think we're moving to a global labor market. Geophysicists in Canada, for example, aren't limited to opportunities in this country. Many foreign companies are hiring Canadians. Nurses are a good example. While hospitals here have been cutting back, American hospitals are look-



Changing technologies creating new job opportunities.

Other skills include math and communications. Fletcher refers, as an example, to the broadcast medium where satellite communication is opening the door to hundreds of radio and television channels. These won't carry only major networks but will be available for many different uses.

ATTITUDES CHANGING

While young people have a bright future, bringing new skills and energy to the labor market, there is a shift in several industries that may be encouraging to older workers who remain in the workforce. "There's a changing attitude about early retirement and golden handshakes," says Roth. "In the printing industry, for example, they need people who know the industry and also know how to operate computers. Some companies are asking themselves if they shouldn't be keeping older workers so all their expertise is not lost."

"In some industries, however, they feel it is easier to hire the necessary skills rather than retrain workers." Roth emphasizes researching the industry is a critical part of choosing a career or finding a job.

The Top 10

If you are going to be entering the job market in New Brunswick within the next ten years, consider becoming an occupational therapist or a dental hygienist. With expected annual growth rates of above five and three per cent respectively, they will be among the top 10 fastest growing occupations, a recent forecast survey by Monica van Huystee of Employment and Immigration Canada, in Fredericton. The expected annual average growth rate for all occupations in New Brunswick is about 0.75 per cent. Other occupations in the top 10 are:

- ▼ psychologists
- ▼ systems analysts and computer programmers
- ▼ personnel management
- ▼ paving and surfacing occupations
- ▼ cabinet makers
- ▼ dentists
- ▼ veterinarians
- ▼ sales management occupations

Many of the fastest growing occupations will be in the field of health care because demand for these services is expected to grow as our population ages.

Many health care occupations require university education, although some two-year college programs for dental assistants are offered in other provinces. System analysts, computer programmers, people in personnel management normally have studied at a university or a community college.

People in sales management occupations normally have considerable experience in sales. Many have worked their way up to management positions. There are a variety of ways to become a cabinet maker. Carpentry courses are offered by community colleges, while an apprenticeship program is another option. People in paving and surfacing occupations are usually trained on the job, although they benefit from heavy equipment operating courses.

ing for nursing staff." As the trade barriers come down, so will obstructions to workers who want to move to where the jobs are.