



Call for Action on Unemployment, Underemployment and Skills Shortages

Introduction

The graduates of Canada's colleges and universities face unacceptable rates of unemployment and underemployment while Canada's employers report growing shortages of individuals with the skills they seek. This misalignment between the talent on offer and the skills required is the outcome of multiple systems operating without central, coordinated direction and accountability. Every underemployed graduate and every vacant job represents lost productivity and the related costs are borne by individuals, employers and the nation. The **Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers (CACEE)** is issuing a **Call for Action on Unemployment, Underemployment and Skills Shortages** to put an end to this misalignment and to aid graduates more effectively transition into the workforce. This Call is issued to 5 key stakeholders – **Government, Higher Education, Employers, K-12 Sector, and Students and Parents.**

Background

On April 25th, CACEE invited people to gather together at the University of Ottawa for **A Symposium on a Skilled Workforce**. Those gathered that day included representatives from key stakeholder groups, including employers, educators, not-for-profit agencies, and government officials, and the discussions to which they all contributed led CACEE to develop this Call for Action. With this document, CACEE is engaging in a conversation about the challenge of youth underemployment in an era of skills shortages, and is welcoming ongoing consideration of the contents of this document. We do not offer all of the answers, but we believe we have identified important challenges.

CACEE recognizes that responding to the items in our Call for Action will require the investment of considerable resources from diverse stakeholders, including federal, provincial and territorial governments, employers, educators, and job seekers. The remedy for our current challenge must address the need for effective career education in schools (from elementary levels to graduate studies), access to accurate labour market information, and incentives for employers and job seekers. Stakeholders will need to invest time, wisdom and resources if our country is to maximize the economic and social benefits of an engaged and productive workforce. Inaction will result in continued lost productivity, declining economic opportunity and a diminished capacity to provide services upon which so many Canadians rely.

The Call for Action to 5 Key Stakeholder Groups

1. CACEE calls upon the federal, provincial and territorial governments to jointly develop a national strategy to aid graduate transition from school to work.

Canada lacks a national plan for education and integration with the labour force. Without a national strategy, there is little incentive to address skills shortages in other regions of the country, and limited access to information that might help ease labour surpluses within their own. Central to the development of a National Strategy is access to reliable labour market information that will allow Canadians to better understand the nature of the contemporary labour market. It has been reported that this is a matter of jurisdiction as described by the Constitution, but it is no longer in the best interests of Canadians to continue without a coordinated strategy.

a. CACEE further calls for a comprehensive incentive program as part of a national graduate transition strategy.

Central to graduate transition plan will be the development of strategic incentives to encourage stakeholders to change their processes or circumstances. The incentives will address the needs of three stakeholder groups – employers, institutes of higher education, and students.

Employers may need incentives to encourage them to invest in hiring or training new talent, through the mitigation of the risks and costs to which they are exposed;

Educators may need incentives to invest in career education resources; and

Individuals may need incentives to seek training, or to aid in relocation.

2. CACEE calls upon Canada's institutes of higher education to commit to the career imperative that brings the majority of students to pursue higher education.

The great majority of students attend institutes of higher education because they perceive graduation to be a gateway to a meaningful and rewarding career. Canada's colleges and universities provide exemplary education and training to millions of students every year, equipping them with valuable knowledge and skills to carry with them for the rest of their lives. Too often, however, graduates leave without an understanding of how their newly acquired knowledge can be applied in pursuit of the careers that brought them to higher education, resulting in unemployed or underemployed entrants to the workforce, frustrated in their efforts to discover their true potential. It also results in significantly diminished returns on the investment that Canadians have made in support of education. This situation may be remedied by integrating career education practices alongside, or preferably within, the curriculum.

a. CACEE further calls upon Canada's institutes of higher education to demonstrate their understanding and support for the career imperative of

students by increasing their investment in the provision of meaningful and comprehensive career education, including experiential education, to all students so that they may be better equipped to transition to the workforce.

Canada's colleges and universities provide varying levels of career service and / or experiential learning service, staffed by conscientious and committed professionals. Most, if not all, of these services are under-resourced relative to the number of students to be served, and many institutions are reducing the budgets of the departments supporting career education. This is resulting in the reduction of personnel and services at a time when students and graduates have never been more in need. CACEE calls for these trends to be reversed.

3. CACEE calls for Canada's employers to make a strategic reinvestment in campus recruiting, including support for campus recruiters and their important contributions.

After the graduate's themselves, perhaps it is Canada's employers who stand to gain the most from improving the transition of graduates into the workforce. They have access to a talent pool that is among the best-educated, most highly-skilled the world has to offer. In return, Canadian employers provide meaningful and rewarding career opportunities to thousands of graduates every year. Many of these new graduates find their first opportunity by connecting with recruiters who visit Canadian campuses representing Canada's employers. These recruiters also provide important career information to other students and graduates, contributing to their understanding of the range of options available. In this way, the campus recruitment process is an essential contributor to the career development of each group of graduates.

In recent years, however, organizations that have recruited on-campus have significantly curtailed their related activities. They have reduced the number of graduates they mean to hire, or they have reduced their recruiting budgets, employing fewer recruiters and providing them with reduced resources to reach out to students. This was understandable in the aftermath of the economic downturn of 2008, but with returning economic growth employers need to hire more talent. This pressure will only grow as existing workers retire. Already Canada is seeing the emergence of regional skills shortages, and there are sectors that are experiencing acute need for talent. According to the 2012 CACEE Benchmark Report 28% of available new graduate engineering positions went vacant last year. That represents a considerable shortfall that will affect productivity now, and will leave a hole in the talent pipeline that will move forward as the Class of 2012 progresses through its career, meaning that ten years from now the companies that did not meet quota may experience a shortage of managers / team leads. A strategic re-investment in campus and graduate recruiting will address these challenges.

4. CACEE calls for additional career learning to be made available to students in the K-12 sector so that they may make better decisions regarding course selection and post-secondary planning.

Students in Canada are regularly asked to make decisions about courses and programs without sufficient information to allow them to understand the impact of these decisions. For example, students are asked to select courses they will take in high school before they have taken a course on career preparation. High school students are asked to make choices about post-secondary programs without sufficient knowledge of the projected workforce demand for the skills offered. CACEE believes students and parents should have access to the information they need to make wise choices at these crucial intersections.

CACEE acknowledges the challenges faced by those who deliver counseling and advisory services in Canada's schools, and we accept that they must assign priorities in response to those ever present challenges. With this said, our consultations have consistently uncovered a need for enhanced career oriented learning to be made available to Canada's youth before they move on to higher education.

5. CACEE calls upon students and parents to seek the information and resources they need to make wise decisions.

Canada's post-secondary graduates have the potential to benefit most from a national plan to improve the transition from school to work, but there will be challenges for them as well. As they move through their education, they need guidance, support and access to reliable labour market information that can help them and their families to identify opportunities and to make wise decisions at important stages of their lives. The nature, and location, of work available to Canadians is changing rapidly with new career opportunities emerging, and others falling away, and students should be offered information to help them understand the environment.

No external intervention can replace personal initiative and self-awareness. Students need to invest time and energy in self-assessment, and preparation for a career. They need to take the time to discover their own interests, talents and values, and from these discoveries they can then identify goals and priorities. Students should have access to career educators and resources to help them move through this process.

About CACEE

CACEE is Canada's national network connecting career educators and employers. Through the sharing of collective knowledge and experience, CACEE members are empowered to succeed in meeting their respective workforce and career development objectives.

For more information please contact:

Paul D. Smith
Executive Director
CACEE

pauls@cacee.com

(613) 634-2359

www.cacee.com

#followcacee

<http://www.linkedin.com/pub/cacee-acsee/a/6b6/29>