

A newsletter about achievements, innovations and leadership in Ontario's college system

Symposium addresses need for more training programs Governments must implement agreements

Nearly one year after the federal and provincial governments announced the signing of new labour market agreements for Ontario, no new money has been invested to improve training opportunities in this province.

In particular, it is difficult for groups such as aboriginals, francophones, people with disabilities, new immigrants and others to get access to suitable training under Ottawa's current training system.

A coalition of experts is looking to address this problem. Ontario's colleges, in cooperation with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario, Canadian Policy Research Networks and ONESTEP, have invited senior government officials and other partners to a Nov.



A symposium in Toronto will urge governments to improve the availability of training programs in Ontario.
Photo: Sheridan Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning

24 symposium in Toronto to discuss ideas for improving access to training programs.

"To keep Ontario strong, we must develop a more effective and comprehensive system for the

"Workforce training must become a policy priority," said Pat Dillon of the Trades Council of Ontario.

training and re-training of workers," said Barbara Taylor, the chair of the colleges' committee of presidents. "We believe it is time for major reforms."

There are a number of ar-

reas where the system can be improved. For example, it is often difficult for people to find training or re-training programs that match their skills and background, and in some cases there isn't a demand in the workforce for the training provided.

Approximately 250 people will be attending the symposium, called Developing Skills through Partnerships.

"Workforce training must become a policy priority in Ontario and Canada," said Pat Dillon, the Business Manager and Secretary/Treasurer for the Trades Council of Ontario. "It is essential that these labour market agreements are implemented effectively, and that new opportunities for training and retraining are provided to people throughout the province."

José Etcheverry

Global warming crusader has a solution

José Etcheverry is talking about a revolution and it has nothing to do with politics in his native Chile.

Etcheverry, a Centennial College graduate, is the climate change research and policy analyst for the David Suzuki Foundation. He is adamant that the only way the globe can grapple with mounting greenhouse gases is to fundamentally change the way we live.

"Changing behaviour is more profound," he says, pointing to a small sticker on his computer that reminds the user to turn it off when not in use. It's a simple message, but one that flies in the

face of the complex technological solutions.

"If we perfect the fuel-cell car

that emits only water, we'll make it OK for everyone to drive everywhere — but is

that the answer? We'll have to pave over everything — using oil — to accommodate all these vehicles and we'll be no further ahead."

Instead of chasing grand

technological dreams, he says the world would be better off producing energy locally rather than expending energy carrying it over long distances. "The real solutions, the desirable ones, bring environmental, social, economic and health benefits to local communities," he says.

Etcheverry came to Cana-

da in 1989, leaving Chile to escape a dictatorship. At the time, he thought Canada was a francophone country. "Landing in Toronto, I soon realized I made a mistake," he recalls with a grin.

Anxious to learn English, he enrolled in the General Arts and Science program at Centennial College, a program that gave him English instruction and an introduction to some science and math.

He went on to pursue a degree in geography and environmental studies at York University and followed it up with a master's degree at the University of Toronto.



Michelle Lane An inspired teacher



The founder of the world's first Montessori school for children with autism says it was her studies at Sheridan College that inspired her work.

Michelle Lane graduated from the Montessori Early Childhood Teacher Education program at Sheridan in 2001. She had enrolled in the program after spending 15 years working with autistic children as a tutor and therapist, and says she was inspired during a two-week segment in her studies that addressed special needs.

"The instructor spoke about autism, and my mind started to think about adapting the curriculum," she says. "Nobody told me how to do it. It just clicked. I knew that a

blend of Montessori and behaviour therapy would work."

In 2003, Lane founded the Toronto Montessori School for Autism, which she says is the first to combine the Montessori curriculum with Applied Behaviour Analysis.

Lane says Montessori teaching is based on creating an inviting environment where children learn through exploration and independent thinking, while applied behaviour analysis recognizes that children with autism need a structured, therapeutic approach.

"You need to make sure they're learning, because there's a limited window of time and you have to get in there," says Lane, who earned a bilingual degree in psychology and sociology from York

University at 19.

She describes Sheridan's one-year Montessori program – the only college-level Montessori program in Canada – as intense. It begins in June with academic activity covering topics such as classroom management and budgeting, and includes a 10-month internship with an accredited Montessori school.

Lane says she has taken her school's draft curriculum, which she developed for teaching in the school's first year, and published it for wider distribution, with a view to seeing her efforts replicated elsewhere. She also operates a separate autism consulting business, where she trains Montessori teachers and schools working with autistic children.

In her spare time, Lane sings, writes music and plays violin and piano. She has recorded two CDs and two music videos and sometimes incorporates music into her classroom.

Regina Lulka, an instructor with Sheridan's Montessori program, describes Lane as creative, resourceful and determined.

"From the day she came into the classroom, she seemed to glow," Lulka says. "She had this quiet, confident energy, and she always came up with a very interesting angle on things. It seemed effortless."

The final installment in a series on the winners of Celebrating Excellence: The 2005 Premier's Awards for College Graduates.

Seneca gymnast wins medal

A Seneca College gymnastics student has accomplished something no other Canadian has been able to do: win a world championship medal in artistic gymnastics.

Elyse Hopfner-Hibbs, 17, won the bronze medal in the eight-woman beam final during the final day of competition last month in Aarhus, Denmark.

"It feels amazing," Hopfner-Hibbs told reporters at the event.

Hopfner-Hibbs is able to train with Sport Seneca gymnastics due to a unique partnership between Seneca College and the Toronto District

School Board's Claude Watson School for the Arts. The program offers academic and sport training. Potential athletes looking to compete at

Elyse Hopfner-Hibbs wins Canada's first medal in artistic gymnastics.

the world-class level are tested to enter the program in artistic or rhythmic gymnastics, and figure skating.

"Our environment at Seneca is unique. We not only train world-class athletes, we also train coaches," said Sylvia Corn, the chair of Seneca Sports and Recreation.

"Our Competitive Gymnastics Coaching Program prepares students for the kind of work that (Hopfner-Hibbs' coach) Carol-Angela Orchard is doing now on the international stage."

"We're incredibly proud of the accomplishments of the Sports Seneca

team, and of Elyse's accomplishments in particular," said Dr. Rick Miner, president of Seneca College. "This medal is a testament to the hours of training, the hard work and the commitment that both Elyse and Carol-Angela have shown in their pursuit of excellence."

Cooking with the stars

Culinary students at the Humber Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning got to cook alongside some of Canada's top chefs recently.

The leading chefs joined the Humber students for the Culinary Team Canada dinner, a fundraising event to help offset students' travel costs for an international cooking competition in Luxembourg.

Wilson new postsecondary critic

MPP Jim Wilson is the official opposition's new critic for training, colleges and universities at Queen's Park.

Wilson, the Progressive Conservative member for Simcoe-Grey, is also the party's deputy house leader. One of his first tasks was to question Training, Colleges and Universities Minister Chris Bentley during the estimates committee meetings in Toronto.

Dodge calls for skills agenda

Skills development must become a policy priority, Bank of Canada governor David Dodge said in a satellite-transmitted speech last month to the Ontario Economic Summit in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Dodge warned Ontario would be hit by the economic slowdown in the U.S., and said policy makers should be looking at measures to strengthen the economy over the longer term. His recommendations included a focus on skills training, and increasing the co-operation between colleges and employers.

Student artwork at Queen's Park

The work of art students in Seneca College's Design for Social Change course was on display at the Ontario legislative building.

Part of an information fair hosted by the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (ONPEA), the students created five poster campaigns for ONPEA, all dealing with ageism.

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