



The

# Employment Journey

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A Prince Edward Island Information Publication for Career Planning and Job Seeking

## More IT workers needed on PEI

by Gloria Welton



Mike Gillis

The **Innovation and Technology Sector Council (ITSC)** recently held a forum which highlighted *'PEI's Opportunities and Challenges in the IT Labour Force.'*

IT employers, workers, educators, students, government representatives, career practitioners, and others gathered to hear about the findings of the newly-launched **Information Technology Labour Market Supply and Demand Study**. The study presented a picture of the current labour market and offered suggestions to address the shortage of IT workers on PEI.

"The IT industry is growing on PEI and elsewhere, and is projected to continue to grow," says **Mike Gillis**, Executive Director of ITSC. "This growth will drive the demand for IT workers. While demand is on the rise, supply is falling behind for several reasons that are addressed in the study."



Kelly Dawson

### Highlights of the study

The study was based on a survey done by **MacPherson Roche Smith & Associates**. It received responses from 57 of the 107 IT companies on PEI.

- Significant growth was reported. 47 percent of PEI's 107 IT companies were established between 1999 and 2008.
- 85 percent of IT workers on PEI work for an employer and 15 percent are self employed.
- 58.3 percent of the 57 companies surveyed reported having difficulty filling IT positions. This means about 57 junior and senior-level positions were difficult to fill over the last 24 months.
- 53 percent of the PEI companies surveyed will be hiring over the next 24 months. This equals about 69 new positions.
- The study estimates that there are **2,100 IT workers** employed on PEI at present. **210 to 630 new IT positions** will be created over the next five years depending on several economic, business, and technological factors.
- Positions reported to be most in demand were **Programmer Analysts, Analysts and Web/Graphic Designers**.

**Kelly Dawson**, President of the Innovation and Technology Sector Council (ITSC) and Chief Operating Officer of Cogsdale Corporation.

"I started my career in IT by taking a Bachelor of Commerce at Saint Mary's University, majoring in Computer Science and Business Administration," says Kelly. "I went on to earn an MBA. Through all of these steps, I never imagined there would be a career opportunity back home on PEI."

"I think it was my combination of computer science and business administration education that was the key to me being employable in this sector on the Island. I was able to find some challenging opportunities in Charlottetown before rejoining Cogsdale Corporation four years ago. Since then, I have had the opportunity to advance further in my career."

"We now have an amazing variety of IT businesses on PEI doing really innovative and interesting work. It seems, however, that the IT industry is still one of the best kept secrets. It is time to raise the profile of this sector to make people more aware of PEI's IT companies, what they are doing, and what their hiring needs are. With stable growth in the sector, we are seeing the need for more mid- to high-level jobs needing to be filled. However, companies have to recruit off-Island to find people with between five and 10 years of experience. It can be difficult to find people who have the right combination of education and experience and who want to relocate to PEI, especially if they do not already have ties to the Island. Therefore, companies including Cogdale are now changing their recruiting and training approach to help fill this void."

### Hiring at Cogsdale

"We certainly have been experiencing a growth trend at Cogsdale Corporation. Since 1997, we have gone from five staff to 75. We have done a lot of hiring in the last two years and still are trying to fill positions. To combat the lack of mid- to high-level IT workers available, we have shifted to a new approach. We look for people who have a university background in computer science or business. When we find the right educational and personality fit for our corporate culture, they enter our accelerated in-house education program that teaches the skills and knowledge needed to work effectively with our customers. So far, we are seeing great results from this approach."

### Spreading the word about opportunities in IT

"This is my second year as an ITSC board member and my first year as president. From my experience working in the industry and with the Sector Council, I find that few people realize out there is a labour shortage issue and there are great opportunities available for those looking for a new career. It is one of our priorities to get the word out to educators, parents, government, employers and the general public exactly what IT careers are available and what education is required."

### Building IT skills

"We also will work towards assisting employers to find ways to help their employees build their skills. Efforts are being made to bring the required training to the Island. Recently, a highly successful Project Management Professional (PMP) training program was offered which will assist participants in obtaining their PMP certification. In November, ITIL v3 Foundation Certification training will start. This three-day training session will offer individuals the opportunity to earn Foundation Certification."



courtesy of ITSC

For more information about the **Information Technology Labour Market Supply and Demand Study** or about the initiatives of the **Innovation and Technology Sector Council**, call **566-3988**.

To take a look at employment opportunities in the IT sector, visit [www.itsc.ca](http://www.itsc.ca) Click **HR Centre**.

For more information about PEI's IT companies, visit [www.itap.ca](http://www.itap.ca) Click **member profiles**.

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