

FOCUS AND FRAME IT: LIFE IN THE SKILLS LANE

The Focus:

Automation, the rise of part-time and contract work, artificial intelligence, and other major shifts are transforming work in the GTHA. How might we equip workers, especially youth, with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in this new reality and engage employers, governments, and educational institutions in the solutions?

The Frame:

Why the future of work is an issue

Canada's workforce may not be able to meet current or future labour demands.

- 30% of employers report having trouble filling entry-level roles. At the same time, 779,000 youth across Canada between the ages of 15 and 29 are not working, studying, or participating in some form of training.¹

Work and workers are already being affected by technology-driven shifts such as automation of routine tasks, the rise of precarious employment, and the rapid pace of change to the skills required for jobs.

- Youth aged 15 to 24 comprise nearly 20% of employees at a high risk of being affected by automation in Canada.²
- Within the next ten years, over 25% of jobs in Canada will be heavily affected by the automation of job functions and 50% will undergo significant changes to the skills required.³
- Low-income precarious employment, which is characterized by short-term work without labour protections and benefits has been growing twice as fast as non-precarious employment since 2001.⁴

Challenging the myths - The "Status Know"

Myth: "We just need to make sure young people learn tech skills like coding."

Reality: The most in-demand and commonly-cited skills in entry-level job postings are communication, growth mindset, collaboration, empathy, creativity, and digital literacy.⁵

Myth: "Young people are learning everything they need to succeed through secondary and post-secondary education."

Reality: 83% of Canadian education providers feel that youth are adequately prepared for the workforce, but only 44% of youth and 34% of employers feel the same way.⁶

Myth: Robots and AI are going to replace humans in the workforce.

The reality: Jobs won't disappear, but automation does mean that jobs are going to be done differently. Despite projected heavy job displacement in many sectors and occupations, the Canadian economy is expected to add 2.4 million jobs over the next four years, all of which will require this new mix of skills.⁷

Solution Spotlight:

The Toronto Public Library partnered with Cisco Networking Academy and Toronto Employment and Social Services to provide free, interactive, self-paced courses on Linux, IoT (Internet of Things), and cybersecurity that are helping residents develop career-advancing skills.

Discussion Questions

1. What has your work journey been like so far? Have you had to learn new skills for your job? Have parts of your job been automated? Do you consider yourself to be employed in precarious work?
2. What do you think about when you think about the future of work? How do you feel? Do you think automation, AI, or other major shifts will affect your job?
3. What is something post-secondary institutions should be doing differently to better prepare young people for the job market? What is something employers should be doing differently to more effectively hire young workers? What could governments be doing to support workers who are affected by automation?

Action:

To get involved in more thought-provoking dialogue about this and other issues, join the [Emerging Leaders Network](https://leadership.civicaaction.ca/ELN) (leadership.civicaaction.ca/ELN) It's free to join! Through the ELN, you can attend events on city-building topics like the future of work, participate in skills-building workshops, network, and get to know fellow emerging leaders who are invested in building a better city for all.