

A SPECIAL INTEREST SECTION BY MEDIAPLANET

Workforce of the Future

Building Bridges: Fostering Inclusion in the Trades Industry

Medioplanet sat down with Jamie McMillian, a Journeyman Ironworker and advocate for skilled trades, to talk about the importance of fostering inclusion and safe working environments for women in a male-dominated industry.

What specific inclusive practices can be implemented in the trades industry to enhance employee loyalty and reduce turnover?

To keep employees in Canada's construction industry and reduce turnover, real inclusion is essential. It's not just about hiring a diverse team but creating a workplace where everyone feels genuinely valued and psychologically safe. This means offering diversity training, flexible work schedules, and strong mentorship for underrepresented groups. Addressing harassment, ensuring proper safety gear, and supporting mental health are crucial. When leaders are truly committed to these practices, they build a culture where employees feel safe, respected, and eager to stay and grow.

What are the key challenges faced by the trades industry in creating an inclusive workplace, and how can they be overcome?

The trades industry faces challenges with inclusion due to outdated stereotypes and

the need for psychological safety. Employers can tackle these issues by using team activities to break down biases and setting up anonymous feedback channels where everyone feels safe to share their thoughts. Incorporating fun into team-building helps build genuine connections. Job site reports should include feedback on team dynamics and overall well-being. Employers should also improve how they vet workers and leaders, spotting and addressing toxic behaviors and understanding different personality styles to create a more respectful and supportive workplace.

What role does company culture play in perpetuating or preventing toxic behaviour in the trades industry?

Company culture is the pulse of the trades industry—it's what sets the tone for how people treat each other every day. If leaders turn a blind eye to toxic behavior like bullying or harassment, it sends a message that it's okay, and that negativity spreads. But

when a culture is rooted in respect and open communication, it naturally pushes out toxic behavior. It's more than just having the right policies; it's about everyone, especially leadership, showing through their actions that every worker deserves respect and a safe place to work. ■

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Read the rest of the interview on page 2.



5 Key Elements of Great Company Culture

It can be hard to define, but you know it when you see it: employees feel seen and heard, management is transparent, teams are proud and excited to work together.

Alison Grenier



Alison Grenier
Head of Culture and Research,
Great Place to Work®

Defining great company culture can be challenging, but its essence lies in strong relationships among leaders and teams. A positive culture has less to do with perks and more with how employees feel valued and engaged.

1. Credibility

In high-performing workplaces, leaders are seen as credible. Research shows that 88 per cent of employees at the Best Workplaces™ in Canada feel their management's actions align with their words, compared to just 50 per cent at average workplaces. Credible managers foster:

- Higher employee retention
- Greater workplace satisfaction
- Increased likelihood of recommendations
- Enhanced motivation

Employees who perceive their managers as honest are five times more likely to remain with the company and 11 times more likely to view it positively.

2. Respect

Respect is fundamental in earning employee loyalty. Great workplaces demonstrate respect by acknowledging contributions, seeking input, and recognizing employees as

individuals. Flexibility, such as remote work and flexible hours, reinforces this respect, leading to increased dedication. Companies offering unlimited paid vacation successfully rely on strong relationships to ensure these policies are respected.

3. Fairness

Fairness significantly impacts employee experience. Workplaces where everyone feels they have equal opportunities report higher satisfaction. Employees at great workplaces score fairness in compensation and recognition 30 percentage points higher than average. Interestingly, while fair pay boosts satisfaction, other factors—like leadership and a sense of pride—play an even larger role. Employees who are proud of their work are twenty times more likely to view their workplace positively.

4. Pride

Pride in the workplace encompasses belief in the company's mission, its products, and its community engagement. It exists on three levels: pride in one's job, pride in the team, and pride in the company itself. Employees with pride are twice as likely to

stay long-term and six times more likely to recommend their workplace.

5. Camaraderie

A sense of belonging is crucial for employee engagement. The Best Workplaces in Canada actively celebrate achievements, welcome new hires, and embrace diversity. Inclusive practices—such as improved parental leave and empowering employee resource groups—enhance this sense of belonging. Employees who feel they belong are three times more likely to enjoy coming to work and five times more likely to remain with the company.

Improving company culture

Investing in these five areas can enhance employee experience and foster a great culture. Regular pulse surveys can help gauge employee sentiments and guide improvements. Earning the Great Place To Work Certification™ provides valuable insights into your organization's cultural strengths and areas for growth.

By prioritizing credibility, respect, fairness, pride, and camaraderie, organizations can build a thriving workplace culture that benefits everyone. ■

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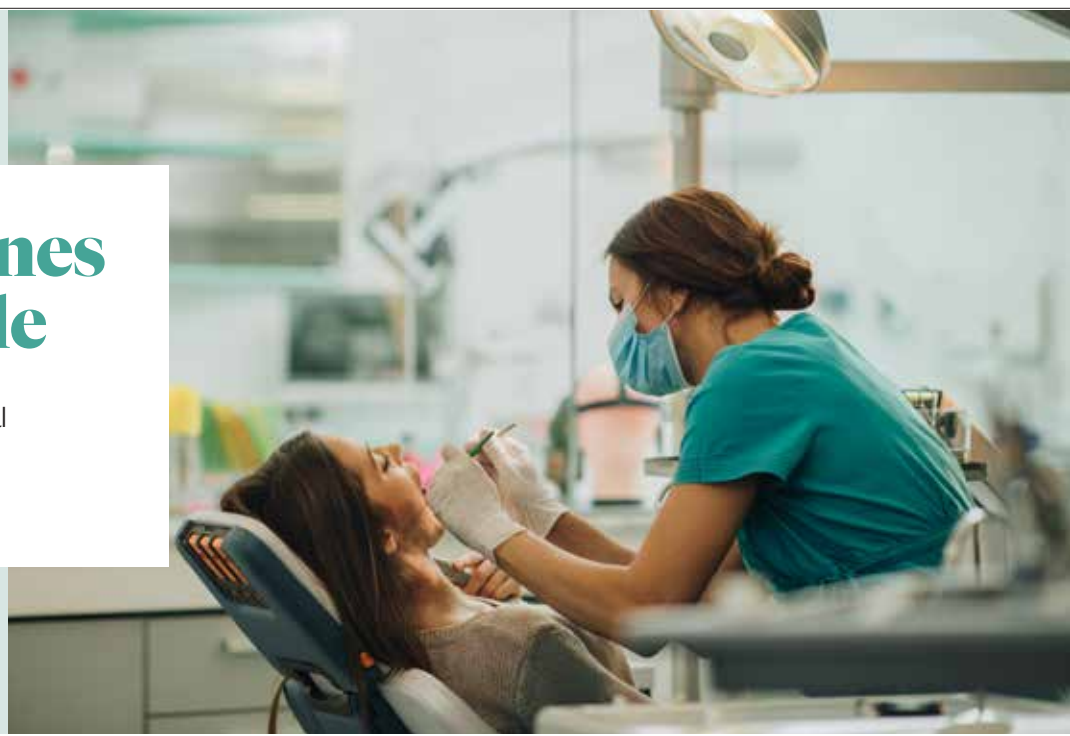
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CDAA: Caring for the Ones Who Care for Your Smile

The work of dental assistants is challenging, rewarding, and integral to a strong and safe oral health system.

Jen Mallia



Chances are you spent most of your last visit to the dentist with a dental assistant. They're the people who work chairside with the dentist and are responsible for many of the health and safety issues related to dentistry, including the sterilization of equipment and patient education related to oral health. "Dentistry is a four-handed practice," explains Leslie Ann Wirth, Executive Director of the Canadian Dental Assistants Association (CDAA). "Dental assistants are the second set of hands." Over its 80-year history, the CDAA has continually advocated for a strong, safe oral health system for its membership and for every Canadian.

Chairside and frontline Dental assisting can be a rewarding career. There's room for flexibility and variety. Building patient relationships is fulfilling and schooling programs are relatively short. How-

ever, up to a quarter of working dental assistants are planning to leave the profession within the next five years for reasons other than retirement. A CDAA survey in 2021 revealed a shocking statistic: 50 per cent of Canadian dental assistants had suffered verbal or physical assault by their employer. Coupled with low pay, this is contributing to barriers to dental assistant retention. This research highlighted the need for continued cooperation between the CDAA and the Canadian Dental Association to create and maintain safe working environments, helping to retain dental assistants and attract people to this caring profession.

The new Canadian Dental Care Plan means that nine million Canadians previously without dental benefits will now have coverage. The CDAA is encouraged by the program, "because it supports our vision for a safe and strong oral health care system for all Canadians," says Wirth, "not just for Canadians who have the money to pay for services." The CDAA recognizes that the plan will mean an increased need for practitioners working more hours — a challenge it's working to meet.

Encouraging safe and supportive work environments is one aspect of the CDAA's work, as is advocating for nationwide standards for training, testing, and certification, as well as ensuring dental assistants are educated about their rights and responsibilities in contributing to a healthy workplace. ■



Leslie Ann Wirth
Executive Director,
Canadian Dental Assistants Association



i At your next dental appointment, why not start a conversation? The public can be a powerful advocate for dental assistants. Wirth encourages people to ask about the training your dental assistants have and what kind of continuing education they receive. To learn more about the CDAA, visit [cdada.ca](https://www.cdada.ca).

This article was sponsored by **Canadian Dental Assistants Association**.



Canadian Dental Assistants Association

Q & A WITH JAMIE MCMILLIAN CONTINUED Building Bridges: Fostering Inclusion in the Trades Industry

How do inclusive workplaces differ from exclusive workplaces in terms of employee interaction and team dynamics?

Inclusive workplaces thrive because everyone feels valued and can collaborate openly, unlike exclusive ones where tension and division can build. To truly achieve equality and inclusion, we need to keep the pendulum in the middle—avoiding extreme shifts from one side to another. Instead of focusing solely on different groups' individual needs, we should work together as a cohesive team, recognizing that everyone's unique challenges and contributions matter. This balanced approach helps create a supportive environment where diverse perspectives drive innovation and team success.

What impact does an inclusive workplace have on the mental health and overall wellbeing of employees in the trades industry?

An inclusive workplace greatly enhances the mental health and well-being of trades workers by creating a

supportive environment where everyone feels valued. Workers who feel genuinely included are less likely to experience burnout and more likely to stay positive. Implementing regular check-ins, peer support groups, and open conversations about well-being helps build a strong sense of community. Additionally, offering safer anonymous reporting services allows employees to voice concerns about toxic environments without fear of retaliation, especially when proper representation is lacking. This ensures that all workers have a channel for support and can maintain a healthier, more positive work experience. ■

“Inclusive workplaces thrive because everyone feels valued and can collaborate openly, unlike exclusive ones where tension and division can build.”



DRIVING CHANGE FOR WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN CANADA: The Prosperity Project Introduces The Impact Project



The Prosperity Project is dedicated to removing barriers that hinder women's advancement and limit Canada's prosperity. Our 2023 Annual Report Card (ARC) highlighted an alarming 11.6 per cent decline in the representation of women in the pipeline to leadership roles. A recurring message from Canada's top 500 companies that participate in the ARC is their desire to use this critical data to drive meaningful change.

That is why we have created The Impact Project, an initiative that will introduce evidence-based and community-informed actionable measures for corporations to tackle key barriers such as hiring and promotion bias, as well as recruitment challenges—especially for women with intersecting identities.

Despite women entering and re-entering the workforce in greater numbers, retention and promotion remain significant issues. The data becomes even more concerning when disaggregated by intersecting identities. For example, women of colour hold only 9.4 per cent of leadership roles held by women, Indigenous women represent less than 1

per cent, and 2SLGBTQIA+ women and women with disabilities are limited to just 1 to 1.5 per cent representation in leadership. This trend threatens to reverse the advancements made toward gender equity and diversity in the workplace, posing a risk not only to gender parity but also to the broader Canadian economy. Research shows that greater representation of women in senior leadership leads to increased performance and profitability.

We will host roundtables across the country with diverse community stakeholders. These events will provide an opportunity for corporate decision makers in the Energy & Utilities sector, as well as in the Telecommunication & Information and Technology sector to hear directly marginalized groups, many of whom represent an incredible talent pool. Through these events, we will listen to how community-initiated solutions have helped and draw on these learnings to develop actionable measures for employers. Through these efforts, The Impact Project seeks to create lasting systemic change in corporate Canada. ■

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i To learn more visit [canadianprosperityproject.ca](https://www.canadianprosperityproject.ca).

This article was sponsored by **The Prosperity Project**.

NAVIGATING CANADA'S ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE: Innovating Skills and Talent for a Resilient Future

Canada's workforce is evolving. Addressing skill gaps through inclusive upskilling and employer-driven strategies is essential for future growth.

Canada's economy is being buffeted by converging global trends: technology transformation, environmental crises, global war for talent and lagging productivity.

Attracting and retaining talent remains one of the most important challenges to meet these global trends head-on. While we need a strong and responsive post-secondary system, we also need ways to respond quickly to changing demands. New and innovative approaches to upskilling and reskilling are critical. And we need to focus on effectively defining, assessing and utilizing skills as job descriptions and classifications are increasingly inconsistent and obsolete.

The Diversity Institute (DI), with the Government of Canada supported Future Skills Centre (FSC) and its partners, is working to anticipate trends and their impacts on the labour market. It is working with employers to better address gaps, mismatches and emerging needs and with workers, and job seekers, and service providers to better understand gaps, opportunities, and what works for whom, in order to strengthen Canada's skills and employment ecosystem.

Digitization was accelerated by COVID-19 and is transforming sectors. New AI applications are finally gaining traction, but Canadian companies still lag behind. Recent research from Deloitte shows that about one quarter (26 per cent) of surveyed organizations had launched one or more AI implementations in Canada, compared with 34 per cent globally. Our multi-year Survey on Employment and Skills of more than 5000 Canadians conducted by Environics Institute, suggests that Canadian employees may be outpacing their employers in terms of AI in some sectors. Three in ten employed Canadians say they are using AI programs to help with tasks at work, with little evidence of the usual gender gap. For those who use AI at work, most say it has made them more productive (81 per cent) while 71 per cent say it has made them more creative.

Generative AI and other "low code, no code" applications are starting to level the playing field for STEM and non-STEM graduates. Prompt engineering requires facility with language not coding — "the English major's revenge" — and has the potential to transform jobs across functions and sectors. It is likely to displace some workers and create new opportunities for others but has rapidly become one of the highest in demand digital skills noted in recent research. A shift from employer led to employee led upskilling is in some ways encouraging, showing commitments to lifelong learning among workers — but also introduces major risks when employees use such tools without guidance, training, or awareness of their limitations.

And we have to recognize, not all employers have the capacity to invest in training and development for their existing workers or to tap into diverse talent pools to meet their needs. Small and medium-enterprises (SMEs), particularly hard hit by COVID-19, are struggling to survive and lack the resources needed to upskill and reskill their workforces, adopt new processes and tools and attract and retain increasingly diverse workers. To address these issues, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, Magnet and DI are working through Future Skills to develop a shared platform — Skills Bridge — which builds economies of scale for SMEs to gain access to relevant training, talent and tools. Skills Bridge responds to specific demands for general skills development,

management, leadership and entrepreneurial skills, digital skills, (including AI), 'green' skills and skills to advance human resources practices. It also provides support to create more inclusive workplaces by developing and creating resources and helping SMEs navigate their options. To date, more than 1000 employees from 861 companies and 55 Chambers of Commerce across the country have participated in the program. They report significant improvement in skills areas

like management, numeracy, innovation, problem-solving, adaptability, entrepreneurship, digital skills, and writing, as well as equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI).

Using the Advanced Digital and Professional Training (ADaPT) model — DI is able to quickly respond to employer needs. Building on its research with FSC, as well as the seven-year study Bridging the Technology Skills Gap: New Evidence-Based Approaches to Leveraging Diversity and Inclusion, supported by the Government of Ontario, DI has developed taxonomies and competency frameworks for digital skills (and specifically AI skills) entrepreneurial skills, green skills, and EDI skills. These frameworks take into account varying levels of understanding and provide ways to define, assess, and develop skills across industries and job classification. As noted, while digital skills are most often associated with STEM disciplines, research shows that there is an insatiable demand for deep technology skills, but these are required for only a small fraction of jobs. Many more roles require people with the skills needed to mediate between technology and organizations — to define opportunities, functional requirements and support implementation or to use advanced digital tools that do not require a computer science degree but do require an understanding of business goals, context and organizational processes. Even more widespread is the demand for digital (and AI) literacy. A similar taxonomy is emerging for green skills. While green tech and science are still critically important, there is increasing demand for people who can support transforming business processes, products and services with an eye to sustainability as well as basic "green" literacy for all employees to shape their individual knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours if we are to achieve our transition goals.

To date, a range of ADaPT programs have been developed to meet the needs of specific industry sectors, employers and job-seeking populations. Driven by specific employer needs and short-term upskilling with wrap-around supports, the program has trained more than 1100 young people with a 90 per cent employment placement rate over the last two years. Through FSC, ADaPT has tested different modes of delivery — both asynchronous and synchronous — as well as the impact of various wrap around and placement supports showing promising results overall and particularly for newcomers and women and youth facing barriers. Supported by the Government of Ontario, for example, ADaPT for Black youth



Using the Advanced Digital and Professional Training (ADaPT) model — DI is able to quickly respond to employer needs.

engaged almost 300 young people in developing their digital skills. The program was a win for the youth but also employers. Of the employers responding to the impact survey, 100 per cent felt that ADaPT for Black Youth participants met or exceeded their expectations, and 85 per cent of these employers noted that as a result of providing work placements their organizations improved their business outcomes.

Fundamental to our work with FSC is the recognition that we cannot strengthen the skills and employment system by focusing only on job seekers and workers. We also need to transform the processes and approaches of employers, and particularly SMEs, towards talent recruitment, selection, advancement and retention. Our research shows clearly that internationally educated professionals, women, racialized, and particularly Black people, Indigenous people, those with disabilities and those who identify as 2SLGBTQ+ face barriers at every stage of their education and employment journeys. The data are well known — people with "foreign sounding" last names are 30 per cent less likely to get call backs for interviews compared to others with similar qualifications. Women are still under-employed and paid less than men doing similar work. Black people with university education are twice as likely to be in jobs requiring high school as others. And university graduates with severe disabilities have worse employment outcomes than high school drop outs. The Environics survey again produced disappointing results of reported experience of workplace discrimination by all of these groups. Shockingly, the rates of reported discrimination were highest in the non-profit sector, followed by government and then the private sector. Therefore, a core focus of DI's work with FSC and employers and associations across the country is to find ways to do better by strengthening commitments to EDI and the tools and techniques needed to create healthier and more inclusive workplaces. To date, more than 300 SMEs, for example, have developed strategies to advance EDI using the free Diversity Assessment Tool, supported by a data base of more than 1000 best practices, and the preliminary results are encouraging. What is especially critical is the continued widespread recognition that the commitments to EDI are critical to the success of business, to bridging the talent gaps and meeting the changing needs of more diverse customers.

Along with the Future Skills Centre and partners, the Diversity Institute is providing evidence-based tools and support to strengthen the skills and employment ecosystem to meet the current and future needs of employers and Canadians. ■



Wendy Cukier
Founder and Academic Director, Diversity Institute and Academic Research Director, Future Skills Centre





How George Brown College Partners with Employers to Future-Proof Careers

Why employers should hire George Brown College graduates:
Real-world experience and strong industry connections.



Dr. Eileen De Courcy
Vice-President,
Academic,
George Brown
College



Dr. Ian Austin
Dean,
Centre for
Business,
George Brown
College

Life moves fast. Technologies and trends are in constant flux, and employers seeking skilled graduates need assurances that potential hires are equipped with relevant, up-to-date skills. George Brown College (GBC) future-proofs our programs and graduates by working directly with industry to ensure the skills you learn are the ones you need to land a job in your field of study.

According to the World Economic Forum, industry transformation spurred by artificial intelligence and other technologies could disrupt 23 per cent of global jobs in the next five years. By working closely with leading employers like Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment, Rogers, CIBC, the University Health Network, and many others, we get an inside track on developments in the field to provide industry-informed learning in and out of the classroom.

At GBC, our programs are informed by industry experts — every academic division includes a program advisory committee. These committees always include community leaders and employers at the forefront of their fields — more than 1,300 in total — who participate in program development to ensure the curriculum reflects current and future industry needs.

"Lacking the required experience to land a first or new job is a frustrating experience for recent graduates. When George Brown College students finish their programs, they embark on their job search with a professional network and practical experience on their resumés," said Dr. Eileen De Courcy, George Brown's Vice-President Academic.

"The ingredients new professionals need for future success are baked into our programs. A George Brown College education emphasizes experience, resilience, and lifelong learning to adapt to an ever-changing workforce."

GBC aims to prepare students for success in a future workforce rooted in human services and technology. The college plays a vital role in promoting innovation and helping Canadians upskill in high-growth sectors, including information and communications technology.

Programs that embed industry involvement

Nearly all programs include work-integrated learning (WIL) to ensure students get real-world experience through co-ops, field placements, labs, simulations, on-campus incubators, or capstone projects. GBC takes industry involvement to the next level by embedding programs in industry environments and co-delivering programs with leading professional organizations, including in the following ways:

- Students in our orthotics and prosthet-

ics programs at the Centre for Health Sciences attend classes at Toronto's Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, where they learn and work alongside professionals in the field.

- Students at our Sally Horsfall Eaton School of Nursing gain real-world experience in clinical placements at some of Canada's largest hospitals, clinics, and health-care organizations.
- GBC operates a network of 13 licensed child care centres serving over 500 children and their families across Toronto. Students at our School of Early Childhood develop skills and learn to work with families in these industry environments, which we call lab schools.
- Chef School students in our Italian and Advanced French Patisserie postgraduate programs develop skills with our renowned partner culinary institutions over a semester and gain work experience in kitchens and boulangeries in Europe.
- All postgraduate programs at the School of Computer Technology offer a work-integrated learning term. GBC is a Cisco Networking Academy member and enjoys partnerships with many other leading organizations including Rogers Wireless, Telus Mobility, and Public Health Ontario.
- Our longstanding partnerships with the biggest players in the construction industry, including Tridel, create invaluable networking and field placement opportunities.
- GBC offers the only post-secondary dance program with a direct partnership with Canada's Jürgen Dance, and our theatre students study at the Young Centre for the Performing Arts, a building we share with longtime partner Souleppper Theatre Company.

Supporting Toronto's tech sector

GBC delivers programs to directly support Toronto's technology sector. Programs at the School of Computer Technology, including Applied AI Solutions Development, Blockchain Development, Cyber Security, and Health Informatics, contribute to the impressive talent pool that makes Toronto a global hub for technology and innovation (the third largest in North America).

The future of business

This year, the college's Centre for Business launched new programs and partnerships with an eye trained on future needs in various fields. We developed the one-year Wealth Management program with Cumberland Private Wealth Management and Infinite Investment Systems Ltd., to address demand for trained client management and operations professionals.

"Our industry relationships mean success for our students. These partnerships directly inform the programs we offer and ensure the skills we teach are the ones our graduates will use in the field," said Dr. Ian Austin, Dean of George Brown College's Centre for Business.

"We launched seven new business programs over the past year that reflect the latest industry developments. These programs provide graduates with a solid foundation of theoretical knowledge and industry experience. With a broad credential mix, graduates can return and gain new skills to complement their previous education."

The new Honours Bachelor of Commerce (Supply Chain Management) program prepares students for a technology-driven career in global sourcing and procurement, transportation and distribution, production management, business planning, and supply chain analysis and logistics.

The Centre for Business also launched three postgraduate programs in People Analytics, Financial Services – Investment Analysis and Financial Services – Compliance and Risk, an Honours Bachelor of Commerce in Digital Marketing, and a Financial Planning certificate.

The perks of being the official college of the Toronto Raptors

As the official (and first) college partner of the Toronto Raptors, we have a special connection to Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment (MLSE). The partnership means increased access to Toronto's NBA franchise for GBC students. This could include behind-the-scenes tours and engaging with the Raptors on and off the court. Recently, GBC students stood at centre court at the Raptors' home at Scotiabank Arena to film a Centre for Business ad shown on television and online. GBC and MLSE already enjoy a longstanding partnership, and approximately 200 graduates have worked with the company.

How our location impacts future opportunities

When we say, "The city is our classroom," we mean it. Our campuses in downtown Toronto are a short distance from the city's financial district, "hospital-row" on University Avenue — home to large health-care providers and research organizations, a thriving restaurant scene and tourism industry, surrounded by tech startups and exciting construction projects. ■

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The GBC experience emphasizes resilience and lifelong learning to adapt to an ever-changing workforce.”



Prepare for an exciting future by attending George Brown College's fall open house on Saturday, November 2. Visit [georgebrown.ca/openhouse](https://www.georgebrown.ca/openhouse) to learn more.

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