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Dana Flavelle

The jobs of the future are likely to be in health care, computer technology and the skilled trades, experts say, given an aging population, growing global demand for resources and Canadians' love affair with electronic gadgets.

Several large Canadian companies cut jobs this week, putting hundreds of mobile phone call centre employees, airport security screeners and contract hydro staff out of work.

Up to 1,800 jobs in the Greater Toronto Area disappeared at Bell Mobility, Toronto Hydro and Garda Security Solutions, which serves Pearson International Airport, the companies confirmed.

But overall employment in Canada is growing, albeit slowly, and there are bright spots in certain sectors, geographic regions and specific skills.

The trick is finding qualified candidates that meet employers' criteria, said Geoff Bagg, chief executive officer of The Bagg Group, a leading Toronto-based staffing agency.

"It is hard to find people, across the board, we find it challenging to find good people. It's one of the most difficult things to explain. You keep hearing everybody's out of work. And then you talk to companies and they say they can't find people. There's obviously a bit of a gap between what the market is demanding and what the labour pool is providing," Bagg said in an interview.

Employers tend to prefer candidates with a proven track record because hiring mistakes are expensive, he said. "It's especially apparent in IT (information technology). Our recruiters are very busy trying to find qualified candidates."

The ideal candidate would have the right technology background, good communication skills and project management experience, Bagg said, adding that job applicants who have all three "are getting multiple offers."

It's difficult to predict which occupations will be in demand in future, given the uncertain impact of economic conditions, technological developments, demographics and consumer behaviour.

But most experts say an aging population, growing global demand for oil and consumers' love affair with new gadgets make sectors like health care, skilled trades and computer technology fairly safe bets.

Still, local demand can differ from regional and national trends, said Gervan Fearon, dean of the G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education at Ryerson University

Kindergarten teachers will be in higher demand in Ontario as the province moves to full-day kindergarten classes, while the condo boom in downtown Toronto is fuelling higher than average demand for construction workers, Fearon noted.

As well, new banking regulations along with companies' heightened concerns about cyber-terrorism have created demand for experts in data management and security.

The Ontario ministry of colleges and skills training predicts job growth will be strong in health care (including doctors and nurses), information technology (such as software engineers and information systems analysts), and other trades and services (including plumbers, electricians, child-care workers and dental hygienists).

Job-seekers with college or apprenticeship training are expected to get 35 per cent of the new jobs, followed by university graduates, at 26 per cent. High school dropouts are expected to get just 8 per cent of the new jobs, the provincial study also showed.

Employment growth in Canada is expected to remain soft in 2012 after the economy added 199,200 jobs in 2011, Statistics Canada said last week. That was a gain of 1.2 per cent over the previous year.

However, some sectors grew faster than others, including natural resources (up 7.5 per cent) accommodation and foodservices (up 6.2 per cent) and professional, scientific and technical services (up 6 per cent).

Utilities were already in a tailspin (down 9.5 per cent). Financial services fell 2.8 per cent. And transportation and warehousing were down 1.8 per cent.

Oil-rich Alberta saw the biggest gains, up 4.9 per cent, while Ontario ranked 5th among the provinces, up 1.4 per cent.