



Trades are well-paid, studies show

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Elvy Moro, left, says TDSB stats show an estimated 1 per cent of high school graduates enter the trades directly from high school.

High school grads should take serious look at skilled trades careers

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Just imagine you're 17, you're great with your hands and you're part of the 1%.

That figure roughly represents the small trickle of Ontario high school graduates who make the jump to the trades directly from high school. The number is surprisingly small considering that there is an abundance of opportunity in these highly satisfying, well-paid careers.

Consider these 2018/2019 statistics from the Toronto District School Board, as presented by teacher Elvy Moro of Northview Heights Secondary School, who works centrally for TDSB out of Northview Heights Secondary School alongside Ian Da Silva.

- There were 53,913 secondary students from Grade 9-12.
- Based on students self-declaring their favourite occupation, a total of 698 chose construction as their career destination interest.
- Therefore, this represents 1% of students who chose construction trades.

Moro is doing incredible work with TDSB students through the Specialized Trades Exploration Program (STEP) to Construction program. That same school year, he had 80 students experience job-shadowing and hands-on experience on construction sites across Toronto – an impressive 80% of those students will join the construction trades, he says.

When you consider that the average age of an apprentice is 27 in Canada, you realize that something is broken in the system and we need to get students into the trades a lot quicker rather than seeing young people fall into these great careers after a pathway through university or college.

And that brings me back to the survey we helped finance through Toronto-based marketing experts Job Talks. According to their recently released research, skilled trades workers have high job satisfaction rates – in fact, in a deep-dive poll of more than 400 Ontario workers, 65% said they would strongly recommend their job to a young person.

People in these careers can enjoy the fact that they can visibly see the fruits of their labour. Look around you: consider the fact that everything we work with – your desk, office and car, as a few examples – was all built by a skilled trades worker.

And while the salaries are higher than average, someone with a hint of ambition can go into business on their own and earn even more. The opportunities are endless.

Other notable stats from Job Talks:

- 73% of workers were influenced by family or friends to enter the construction industry.
- 96% attribute shortages to stigma and negative parental influence.
- Only 8% of workers were positively influenced by a guidance counsellor.
- 69% believe there is a shortage of workers in the field (and they're right).

Let's face facts: Ontario can no longer rely on immigration to fill trades jobs. Other jurisdictions around the world are in the same boat as the GTA and are screaming for skilled trades workers.

While Ontarians are socialized to think about university and college ahead of the trades, I'm here to tell you that it is a viable option to get you to fast-track your career and is a great way to avoid the student loans racked up for post-secondary education – lots of young people go through massive debt unnecessarily, and this is not a recipe for success. None of these three options is better than the other, but – let me tell you this – the road less travelled often leads to hidden opportunities.