

PEI Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning: a Canada Career Month Profile

by Heidi Riley

November is Canada Career Month, which celebrates the skills of the Canadian workforce.

The **Canadian Council for Career Development (3CD)** is promoting and coordinating events across the country. The theme this year is “I Know I Can Because...” emphasizing the skills of Canadians and shining a spotlight on the talent of our emerging labour force for the jobs of today and the careers of the future.

Across the country, 3CD is highlighting the career paths of labour-related government ministers and sharing other insightful messages. We would like to present to you our own PEI Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, **Sonny Gallant**.

Minister Gallant represents the district of Evangeline-Miscouche. He was born in Summerside and as a child moved to Miscouche, where he still lives today. After high school, he took business courses, and worked as the Assistant Manager of the Miscouche Legion and as a Corrections Officer. He and his wife Linda also managed two local gas stations in St. Eleanors and Miscouche for 20 years.

All three of their sons live on the Island: one is a carpenter, one is a welder, and one is in business and owns Cook's Corner Convenience in Miscouche.

“Being in retail got me closer to the community, because I saw so many people on a daily basis,” says Minister Gallant. “When I entered municipal politics, I continued to enjoy meeting and talking with people. I went on to run in the provincial election in 2003 unsuccessfully, and then won a seat in 2007.

“In politics and in retail, when you are asked to do something, you make your best effort to find out the answer and get back to the person. You need to be on time and ready to deliver. It's about customer service.”

Volunteering

“I volunteered with the Beaver and Scout movement when my kids were involved in those organizations, and I got to meet other parents. When the boys got into minor hockey, it was just natural that I would help coach. It is a wonderful experience to be with my children and meet new people. I enjoy the camaraderie of sports.”

He also volunteered his time with a host of other local organizations. “Volunteering on committees helped me become familiar with local issues,” he says.

Deciding to leave PEI or stay

“In 1976, I went to Red Deer, Alberta and quickly found a job with the city. But I got so homesick, I left after only 91 days. For me, PEI is home.

“Years ago, many people went away to find work because there were very few jobs here. Now some are leaving for other reasons: they want a different life experience. We just hope they move back and use their experience to benefit PEI.”

Minister Gallant says the economy and job opportunities have really expanded here on PEI. “About 6,000 jobs have been created in the last two years. When those off-Island see how the economy is flourishing, many consider moving back.”

Where are the employment opportunities on PEI?

“There are tremendous employment opportunities on PEI. Every sector is looking for people. The construction, bioscience, and renewable energy sectors are expanding.

As well, employers in retail, agriculture, and fisheries are all looking for workers.

“A mix of low-paying and high-paying jobs is available. To find those good-paying jobs, job seekers may have to go back to school and refresh their skills. There are lots of programs to help individuals find work and employers find workers.”

Experiential learning on the job

“Many employers do not have time to train staff and cannot find enough people who already have the experience to do the job. Yet, many unemployed people, often new graduates, do not have the skills employers are looking for. Our department is working to put a new emphasis on experiential learning.

“The Graduate Mentorship program is a good example. This program helps recent post-secondary graduates develop new skills and gain work experience in their field of study through on-the-job training. Intake numbers have tripled since the program first started.”

In September, the third-annual YDAY brought together youth from across PEI to share ideas. “Many of the recommendations made by youth during that event turned into policies and direction. A new Experiential Learning Steering committee was begun as a response to a suggestion made by youth at YDAY last year.

“We also visit employers and businesses in the community all the time to make sure they are aware of **Workpei.ca** and the programs we offer, and to help them find people to hire.”

First step for job seekers and employers: visit www.workpei.ca

“The traditional method of finding work is going out and knocking on doors of employers. Our department has simplified the process through **WorkPEI.ca**.

“When job seekers register on the website, they can make a profile highlighting their skills and experience. Employers can search for potential employees by key word, and use filters to narrow their search. This saves employers time as they can contact those who meet their needs without posting a job ad.

“This website is beyond a job board. It's for employers and job seekers, and also lists available SkillsPEI programs. It's a good idea to first check the jobs that are available, and if you find a career you would like to explore, you can find out what programs can help enhance your skills.”

Helping Islanders prepare for the needs of the existing and emerging labour market

“We are continuously in collaboration with Holland College, UPEI, Collège de l'Île, and private training schools to identify opportunities to address labour market needs,” says Minister Gallant.

“We work very closely with a number of industry associations and sector councils to implement plans to attract and train workers for the key sectors.



Sonny Gallant, Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

“Recently, the Construction Association of PEI expressed that the industry requires hundreds of new workers. We introduced new programs for youth such as Team Construction and a program to recruit new workers called Island Builder. Those programs help prepare people become work-ready and find good-paying jobs. Other programs such as Apprenticeship can enhance skills of workers to learn a trade.”

For more information about job opportunities on PEI, visit www.workpei.ca



CAREER MONTH
2018

NOVEMBER IS CANADA CAREER MONTH

I KNOW I CAN Because: _____

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