

STUDENTS SEE THERE IS GREEN TO BE MADE BY USING GREEN METHODS

By Don Horne

George Brown College's seventh annual Technology in the City gathered aspiring electricians from various high schools once again – but this year there was a definite green tinge to the event.

According to a recent George Brown College survey, four in five employers in the construction and engineering sectors put priority on hiring staff with training and knowledge in environmentally sound practices – building “green”.

That same survey shows that nine in ten students feel a company's environmental practices and policies will play a significant role in their decision to work for them.

The survey, conducted with nearly 100 high school and college students and almost 200 industry representatives, also reveals many employers believe that their current workforce lacks the skills and knowledge to properly address and implement government and public demands for increased environmental responsibility. In addition, nearly a third identify the need to find qualified workers as the single greatest challenge they face in the next five to ten years – more than a slowing economy, rising cost of materials, increased competition and changing government regulations.

“Ontario's construction and engineering industries are changing, with employers and graduates citing the environment as a growing priority,” said Nancy Sherman, Dean, Centre for Construction and Engineering Technologies (CCET), George Brown College. “It is clear these sectors offer young Canadians a rare opportunity to join a growing and attractive workforce – one with high demand for jobs that gives environmentally conscious youth a way to affect positive environmental change instead of just being advocates for change.”

Other highlights of the survey demonstrate the environment's impact on education and industry:

- 95 per cent of students say it is important for college or university curriculums to teach practices that are environmentally sound;
- 94 per cent of industry respondents agreed that environmental responsibility plays a role in their business decisions, with 28 per cent strongly agreeing;
- 82 per cent of industry respondents say that finding applicants with training and knowledge in environmentally sound practices is important to their recruitment decision-making process.

Once again, I was pleased to represent Electrical Source magazine as a judge in the electric al competition, where high school students from across Ontario tested their wiring skills and electrical knowledge in the hopes to win one-year's tuition at the college.

Tech in the City is an annual event that engages youth and introduces them to the breadth of potential career options in the construction and engineering technologies sectors, including skilled trades. It highlights the important role that these sectors, and their workers, will play in the overall sustainability of our



economy, society and the environment.

“We are trying to respond to the increasing number of jobs in the construction and engineering sectors. We want to get students, parents and teachers excited about these growing career areas,” says Sherman.

This year's ‘green’ theme is supported by the mandate of the CCET at George Brown College - to integrate an environmental perspective into its curriculum to better prepare graduates with the skills and knowledge sought by employers.

The event featured a keynote address from renowned environmental educator Lisa Glithero, speaking to students about technology and the skilled professional's contribution to a more sustainable future. According to Glithero, colleges like George Brown are well positioned to face the challenges of preparing students with environmental related skills because they offer an intimate, hands-on, participatory-based approach to learning, allowing for a more direct and immediate real-world application of students' learning.

The event also featured a display of George Brown student inventions, as well as competitions for high school students to win a year's tuition at the College's Centre for Construction and Engineering Technologies. Among the green-focused inventions were an electric Vespa, a portable wind turbine and a solar tracker.