

## How can Ontario prepare youth for the future labour market?

**Toronto, September 12, 2018** – New research from the [Institute for Competitiveness & Prosperity](#) examines whether Ontario's current education system is able to impart youth with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. While talent development is one of Ontario's key strengths, the Institute's newest Working Paper 33, [Teaching for tomorrow: Building the necessary skills today](#), finds that youth do not have the skills required to thrive in future labour markets.

*"While we cannot predict the kinds of jobs of the future, we can already foresee some of the skills and competencies—the foundations of jobs—that will be important to develop for the workplace of the future,"* says Tiff Macklem, Chair of Ontario's Panel on Economic Growth & Prosperity and Dean of the Rotman School of Management.

Analysis by the Institute found that reading comprehension, writing and social skills (such as coordination and social perceptiveness) will be required for most forecasted job openings between 2017 and 2021. More jobs will require mathematics, complex problem solving, and resource management (including financial, personal, and time) skills, and at higher skill levels. Additionally, for each skill examined, the share of jobs that it is important for is projected to increase, meaning that Ontario's workforce must generally be more skilled in the future.

*"Recommendations regarding the kinds of skills that should be taught in Ontario's schools from kindergarten right through post-secondary must also consider whether the education system is poised and has the capacity to successfully impart these skills,"* says Macklem.

While Ontario's elementary schools do an excellent job teaching reading and writing—EQAO test scores have increased significantly since 2006—math scores have dropped sharply. Ontario is also the only Canadian province where secondary students choose between applied and academic tracks in grade 9, and there are concerns that applied courses limit students' post-secondary options, and are not adequately preparing students for college. Moreover, students do not have sufficient guidance and career support to be making an important decision about their future at a young age.

At the post-secondary level, 40 percent of humanities and social sciences university graduates are back in school at an equal or lower level six months after graduation, raising concerns that they are either not developing the transferrable skills necessary for employment or they are not aware of the skills they have developed (known as the "awareness gap"). Further, not all post-secondary students are able to participate in valuable work-integrated learning opportunities, where they are able to develop crucial employable skills.

In Working Paper 33, the Institute makes 12 recommendations that Ontario should implement in both K-12 and post-secondary institutions to improve 21<sup>st</sup> century skills development. Highlighted recommendations include:

- Assess all incoming teachers' college students on their mathematics knowledge and implement a mandatory standardized mathematics foundations course at all Ontario faculties of education;
- Consider removal of applied and academic streams in grade 9 and provide additional funding for grade 7 and 8 guidance counselling until the change is implemented. Conduct a review of the delivery of all college destination-based courses in Grade 11 and 12 to ensure students are adequately learning the content required to succeed in college;
- Increase collaboration between the private sector and post-secondary institutions on program creation and between post-secondary institutions to facilitate more student transfers; and
- Incentivize post-secondary institutions to work with the private sector to create new, accelerated work-integrated learning opportunities to complement existing offerings.

Ontario has all the building blocks necessary to cement its status as home to a world-class education system of the future. By implementing changes today, Ontario will ensure its youth have the most sought-after skills to succeed in the labour market of tomorrow.

To download this Working Paper, please visit: <https://www.competeprosper.ca/work/working-papers/teaching-for-tomorrow-building-the-necessary-skills-today>

This working paper is a follow up to [\*The labour market shift: Training a highly skilled and resilient workforce in Ontario\*](#), which analyzed the state of training and retraining programs offered by businesses and government.

**About the Institute:** The Institute for Competitiveness & Prosperity is an independent, not-for-profit organization that deepens public understanding of macro and microeconomic factors behind Ontario's economic progress. The Institute is supported by the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

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