

18th Annual

**IEP**<sup>TM</sup>



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**CONFERENCE**

A UNIQUE FORUM FOR  
Internationally Educated Professionals

**2023**

**CONFERENCE REPORT**

Published by:



WORKING TOGETHER FOR PROGRESS

A SUCCESSFUL  
CANADIAN ECONOMY  
IS POWERED BY THE  
INGENUITY AND DIVERSITY  
OF ITS WORKING PEOPLE



PROGRESS CAREER PLANNING INSTITUTE



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Presents

# THE IEP CONFERENCE REPORT

# IEP CONFERENCE

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preamble.....	5
Executive Summary / About the IEP Conference and PCPI .....	6
Delegate Profiles & Demographics .....	8

### **Conference Proceedings**

Welcome and Opening Remarks.....	9
Opening Keynote - Faisal Kazi, President & CEO of <i>Siemens Canada</i> .....	10
IEP Leaders Panel .....	12

### **Concurrent Sessions**

#### Professional Sector Hub Presentations

#### *Regulatory & Licensing Thought Leaders | Employer Representatives*

Engineering and Related Professions .....	15
Finance & Accounting.....	18
Healthcare and Related Professions .....	20
Digital Technology .....	22
Sales, Marketing & Communications .....	24

Skill Building Presentations.....	26
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Closing Keynote - Michael Lee-Chin, OOnt Chairman, <i>Portland Holdings Inc.</i> and Chairman, <i>Mandeville Private Client Inc.</i> .....	27
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Attendee Feedback.....	29
Key Observations, Considerations and Recommendations .....	29
Thank You to Our Sponsors.....	30
Acknowledgments .....	30

## PREAMBLE

This report offers a summary of key information, highlights and recommendations shared by keynote speakers, thought leaders, and delegates who participated in the 18<sup>th</sup> annual [Internationally Educated Professionals \(“IEP”\) Conference](#) held October 26, 2023 at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### ABOUT THE IEP CONFERENCE AND PCPI

The IEP Conference produced by *Progress Career Planning Institute* (“PCPI”) is Canada’s longest-running forum dedicated to advancing the career objectives of skilled newcomer professionals. Delegates participate in a full range of free programming designed to inspire work search strategy, offer skill acquisition and practice, and ultimately to network with potential employers, academic bodies and regulatory associations. From its beginning in 2003, the IEP Conference has assisted thousands of Engineering, Healthcare, Accounting and Financial Services, Sales, Marketing and Communications, and Digital and Information Technology professionals get connected for career success.

With its vision of “a successful Canadian economy powered by the ingenuity and diversity of our working people”, *Progress Career Planning Institute* taps into the unique skillset and background that every client brings to the table. For more than 27 years, PCPI has fostered strong connections with employers and local community partners, delivering Human Resource solutions to address the complex demands of Canada’s labour market.

The 2023 IEP Conference marked a return to a traditional in-person event following virtual productions offered during the pandemic. The program featured keynote plenary presentations from industry leaders, professional sector information hubs, career development workshops, and IEP thought leader panel discussions. PCPI again benefited from longstanding financial and in-kind partnerships with the *City of Toronto*, professional associations (like *CPA Ontario*), regulatory bodies, academia, private sector employers, media (*CBC Toronto*), and dozens of volunteers – many who have supported the Conference since its inception. The staggered format offered IEPs the flexibility to attend their professional hub, visit the exhibitors’ marketplace and select their choice of skills workshop.



Delegates access valuable resources and insight while attending the Exhibitor Marketplace at the IEP Conference.

## EXHIBITOR MARKETPLACE

A popular feature of the Conference was the assembly of prospective employers as well as professionals in accreditation, education and training, employment counselling, settlement services, municipalities, and financing/micro-lending. In keeping with the conference value of bringing together various stakeholders invested in the success of IEPs, the exhibitor marketplace provided opportunity to access valuable resources and engage in meaningful conversations.

## IEP DIRECTORY: AN EMPLOYMENT RESOURCE GUIDE

This specialty magazine produced by PCPI and provided free to delegates compiles wide-ranging career and employment resources for IEPs and newcomers, conveniently organized by professional sector. Organizations and individuals alike value this resource well beyond the conference.



# IEP CONFERENCE

## DELEGATE PROFILE\*

### WHERE ATTENDING IEPS ORIGINATE

While Asian participants were typically predominant, registrants identifying as from the African continent grew significantly.



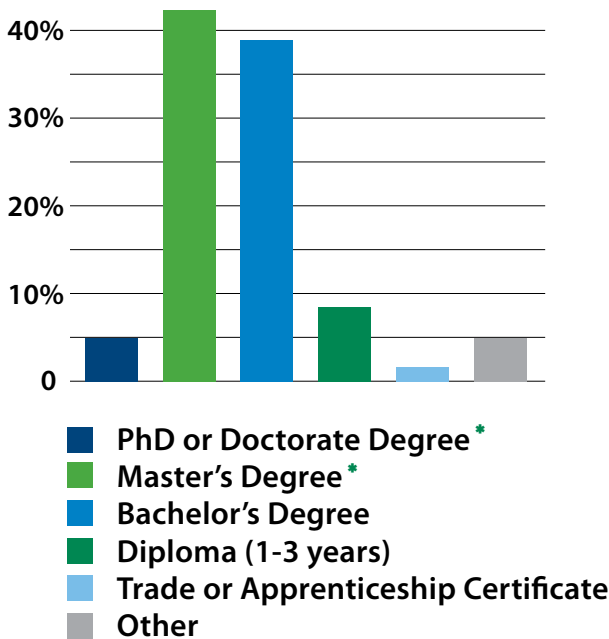
**Top 10 countries of origin:** India; Nigeria; Pakistan; Bangladesh; Islamic Rep. of Iran; Ethiopia; Uganda; Ukraine; People's Republic of China/Kenya (tie); and the Philippines.

### GENDER

Male and female gender representation was essentially equal, with 4% indicating other genders

### HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION

**47%\*** of registrants are post-graduate degree holders

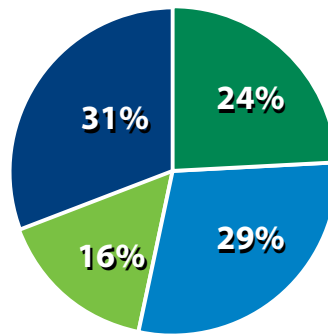
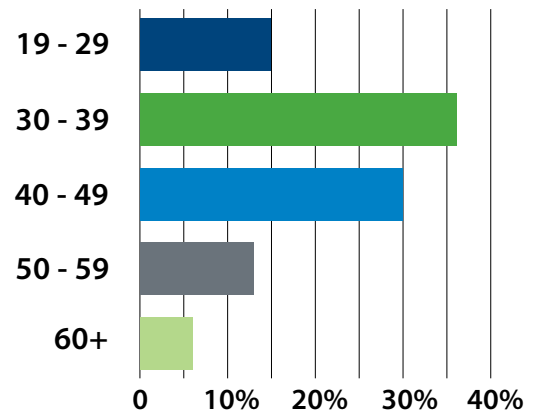


### YEARS IN CANADA



### AGE RANGE

**51%** of registrants are under the age of 40

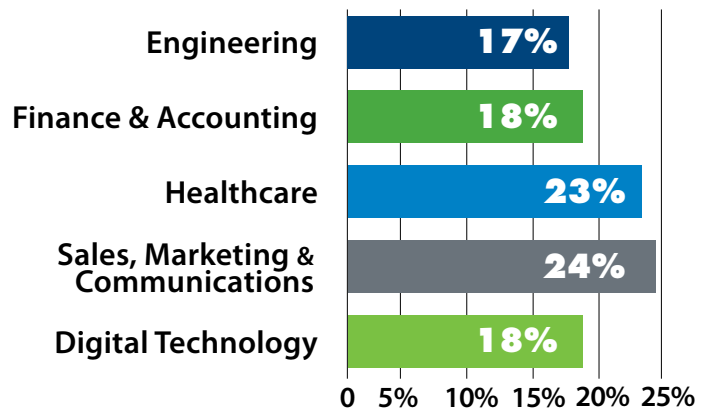


### STATUS IN CANADA

Canadian Citizen **24%**  
 Permanent Resident **29%**  
 Convention Refugee **16%**  
 Work Permit **31%**

### SECTOR INTEREST SHIFT INDICATION

**24%** chose Sales, Marketing & Communications field



\* Pre-registration delegate demographic information



## WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

The 18th annual IEP Conference began with an Indigenous welcome ceremony followed by opening remarks from co-Chair Silma Roddau, PCPI's President and CEO. Roddau referenced the Conference's values and how they remain just as relevant today as in 2003, when PCPI first produced this event. She acknowledged the delegates' courage in coming to Canada, and her hope that during this event they would acquire new skills and contacts helpful to their careers. Roddau then thanked the conference sponsors, appreciating in particular the long-standing partnerships with the *City of Toronto* and *CPA Ontario*.

David Common, newly named host of *CBC Toronto's "Metro Morning"*, assumed the conference emcee duties and immediately acknowledged the challenging journey of many IEPs, including newcomer friends of his in various stages of their Canadian career search. He encouraged delegates to immerse themselves in the learning opportunities at the conference, especially the networking that he noted was integral to transitioning into employment commensurate with their education and experience. As Common shared, *"We want you — we live and breathe on people who have skills coming to this country and using those skills to their maximum potential."*



**Silma Roddau - President and CEO of PCPI and presenter of the IEP Conference**



**David Common - CBC's Metro Morning and IEP Conference Emcee**



**Steve Teekens - member of Nipissing First Nation during drum ceremony**

## OPENING KEYNOTE PRESENTATION



Opening Keynote Speaker, Faisal Kazi, delves into aspects of his early career and the lessons learned.

### FAISAL KAZI, PRESIDENT & CEO OF SIEMENS CANADA

Faisal Kazi's multi-year career with this global technology powerhouse began in Lahore, Pakistan where after joining the company he accepted an assignment in Germany. Learning to speak German as well as adapt to a new culture far from his personal network was the first of many risks (and rewards) Kazi was to acquire in his career journey.

Ensuing projects in Brazil, China, the Philippines, and the Netherlands all contributed to broadening his skills and deepening his experience (including learning Dutch from cloistered nuns). Kazi leveraged his "DNA of inherent compassion" in each new posting, including finding time to add HR, law, and an MBA to his educational portfolio. Canada was a preferred choice for him and his family, and he has not looked back leading over 4200 employees with a mission to be this country's most diverse and inclusive company.

Working hard, being immersed in challenges, building teams, and always stretching to learn new things were hallmarks of Kazi's early career; and later on, having the courage to pause, step back and evaluate family and life priorities. His dedication and leadership were rewarded when Siemens Canada was recognized as the top division in the global organization.

## OPENING KEYNOTE PRESENTATION



Faisal Kazi's career advice to IEP Conference delegates included maintaining positive focus, growing your knowledge and network capabilities, thinking long-term and never compromise on quality or compliance.

Kazi's career advice for delegates is summarized in the following principles:

- 1) Maintain a positive attitude (givers succeed more than takers)
- 2) Don't be shy of getting your hands dirty
- 3) Take ownership/responsibility/blame; and respect others
- 4) Experience must be learned/earned
- 5) Focus on shared success
- 6) Accept critical feedback as a present (seek out those people who will be honest)
- 7) It is not what but who you know (network)
- 8) Adapt a growth mindset – keep on learning; and resist putting people (or yourself) in a box
- 9) Invest in employees and outcomes-based leadership (versus measuring time in the office)
- 10) Think long-term (like investing in the stock market)
- 11) Never compromise on quality or compliance; and
- 12) Be first a human, then a manager

## IEP LEADERS PANEL

Following Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow's welcome remarks to delegates (presented by co-chair Michael Marville, PCPI's Newcomer Settlement Service Manager), David Common facilitated the IEP Leaders Panel, comprised of:

- **Dr. Raunica Ahluwalia, PhD, MBA** - *Marketing Professor, Seneca College*
- **Ayman Shash, PMP, PGMP** - *Utilities Manager, Gannett Fleming*
- **Emilino Mendez** - *Group Product Manager – Bank of Montreal (BMO)*
- **Dr. Shafi Bhuiyan, PhD, MBBS, MPH, MBA** - *Assistant Professor, Division of Clinical Public Health, Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto*
- **Garfield Dixon** - *Manager, Technology Training and Education – City of Toronto*

Panellists were invited to respond to two main questions:

- 1) *"When did you know how things were really going to play out (career-wise) in Canada?"* and
- 2) *"What was the biggest barrier you overcame in your job search?"*



*Left to Right:* David Common, of CBC's *Metro Morning*, facilitates the **IEP Leaders Panel** featuring Dr. Shafi Bhuiyan, Emilino Mendez, Ayman Shash, Garfield Dixon and Dr. Raunica Ahluwalia.

Universally, all respondents indicated that they had left successful lives in their home countries before immigrating (for better work-life balance, career opportunities, children’s future, etc.). The shocks of what they anticipated - and the reality of their actual journey trying to integrate quickly into the labour market – were also similar.

Dr. Ahluwalia talked about stepping out of her comfort zone and accepting a “sustenance job” in exchange for learning about the college system, a move she credits with accelerating the transition to her current role which more accurately aligns with her education and experience.

Garfield Dixon shared about overcoming the loss of a promising position due to a sudden company buyout, then navigating through the pandemic with survival roles while accessing career supports and resources. Ayman Shash reflected on participating at this conference in 2017 as an attendee, and establishing valuable connections; while Emilino Mendez noted his frustrations transitioning from student to employee, and struggling to grasp “how things worked in the corporate world”. Dr. Bhuyian recalled how offering to help solve problems in the medical community resulted in opening doors to employment, and eventually advocating for more accessible systems (healthcare).

Regarding barriers to success, most panellists agreed that managing what was going on in their own minds (e.g., despair and negativity) was vital. Collectively, they offered this advice to IEPs navigating their career journeys:

- Risk taking is essential: accept that first job, even if it is not your dream position
- Seek advice and resources: align yourself with helpful people and organizations
- Set a strategy and implement it: target your efforts through goal setting and emphasize transferrable skills
- Network: grow your community and contacts; and find a mentor
- Give before you receive: consider volunteering
- Never give up, keep an open mind, and always believe in yourself and your capability





# METRO MORNING

WITH DAVID COMMON

WEEKDAYS 5:30<sup>AM</sup>



CBC  
RADIO  
ONE

99.1<sup>FM</sup>



CBC LISTEN

**Jagdish Yadav (Moderator)**

– *Education Sector Advisor,  
Economic Development & Culture Division, City of Toronto*

# ENGINEERING



**Ayman Shash, PMP, PGMP**

– *Utilities Manager, Gannett Fleming*

**Ian Tolliver**

– *Founder, President & CEO, Tolliver International Inc.*

**Pritam Shrestha**

– *Manager, Immigrant Programs & Services  
Community Outreach and Workforce Development, Humber College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning*

**Paola Cetares, MBA, MFA**

– *Public Affairs Manager, Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE)*

**Mehemed Delibasic, M.Sc., P.Eng.**

– *Assistant Vice President, Transportation Planning and Traffic Engineering, McIntosh Perry Consulting Engineers Ltd.*



*Engineering Sector Hub presenters (L to R) : Ian Tolliver, Ayman Shash, Paola Cetares, Mehemed Delibasic*

## ENGINEERING

### KEY THEMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

PRESENTED BY THOUGHT LEADERS, EMPLOYERS AND REGULATORY EXPERTS

- Despite the 'hot' building and construction job market currently (especially in infrastructure projects), newcomers must first meet licensing standards for engineering practice as established by the professional regulator or the "PEO" (Professional Engineers Ontario)
- Credential evaluation helps ensure that international engineering degrees meet the PEO standards, as well as form an essential part of career documentation when applying for jobs
- Third party verification of academic studies also highlights any areas for growth (or gaps to close), in accordance with meeting the PEng. standards
- The newcomer journey in engineering mirrors that of other sectors, requiring significant time and effort invested in learning about the Canadian work culture. It is important to persevere, despite the complexities and challenges
- Engineering roles are crucial in developing sustainable urban environments, efficient transportation networks, and infrastructure to accommodate the evolving needs of communities across the GTA, London, ON and beyond: Canada is modernizing and expanding its rail and road networks, energy systems, water and wastewater facilities, and others. This has created a high demand for civil, electrical, and mechanical engineers all across the country
- Despite many challenges, the journey of a newcomer in the engineering sector subsequently presents opportunities for growth, and personal development. Overcoming obstacles, working on transferable skills, and building meaningful relationships contribute to your professional journey and eventual career success
- Adapt your engineering field of study and expertise to the high-demand employment areas, discovered by researching industry trends, technological advancements, and community needs (e.g., replacement of aging infrastructure related to waste and water; and fossil fuel energy alternatives)
- Examine your portfolio of transferable skills to match the needs of employers: and if gaps exist, consider upskilling while working in a developmental role, to gain experience
- Join professional associations/institutions and learn about their various training programs, workshops, as well as networking opportunities tailored to your specific area of engineering
- Embrace a mindset of lifelong learning: be adaptable, and proactively seek out new opportunities for skill development and





## ENGINEERING

KEY THEMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
PRESENTED BY THOUGHT LEADERS, EMPLOYERS AND REGULATORY EXPERTS



career advancement, especially in rapidly evolving areas like digital transformation (automation and data analytics)

- Consider working with experienced career professionals: coaches as well as mentors can offer invaluable advice at every stage of your job search
- Seek out various bridging programs offered by colleges and universities, as well as apprenticeship programs: these can provide valuable hands-on experience and practical training
- Remember to stay positive: current challenges eventually develop into great opportunities for engineers to innovate, problem-solve, and develop solutions for the growth of the Canadian economy
- There is massive investment currently in the production of electric vehicles and batteries in Ontario. You must be learning and leveraging digital tools and new technologies in order to maximize job opportunities in this market
- Huge opportunities also exist for engineers with skills in manufacturing processes, industrial automation, and materials science
- Networking remains one of the most powerful ways to learn about the 'hidden' or unadvertised job market
- Demonstrating to employers that you have the transferable skills that can add value to their business (efficiency, cost savings, etc.) is an effective interviewing strategy

**Carmen Jacques, CPA, CGA, B.Com (Moderator)**  
– *Student Recruitment Manager, CPA Ontario*



# FINANCE & ACCOUNTING

**Sean Riley, CPA, CA**  
– *Partner, Gilmore & Company LLP*

**Shraddha Bhagwat, CPA, CMA (ICAI)**  
– *Director of Finance & Capital Inc.*

**Beverly Lewis-Hunte, BAA, CIP**  
– *Sr. Career Connections Program Officer, Insurance Institute of Canada (Career Connections)*

**Omar Salas, CPA, CA, MBA**  
– *Associate Partner, Assurance, Ernst & Young LLP*

**Mihaela Dima**  
– *Financial Controller, Paging Network of Canada*



*Finance & Accounting Professional Sector Hub presenters (L to R) :  
Sean Riley, Mihaela Dima, Carmen Jacques, Shraddha Bhagwat, Beverly Lewis-Hunte, Omar Salas.*

## FINANCE & ACCOUNTING

### KEY THEMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

PRESENTED BY THOUGHT LEADERS, EMPLOYERS AND REGULATORY EXPERTS

- Developing new skills, perspectives and approaches will be essential in this post-pandemic landscape dominated by shifting roles and new technology (like AI)
- Given most businesses require accounting services, the opportunities are immense: seek out possibilities in a variety of industries using your AP, AR, budgeting, and forecasting experience
- Be realistic, intentional, and methodical in your career planning; assemble the 'whole package' of hard and soft skills, ethics and professionalism, experience and education to bring clarity to your job search
- Consider applying your transferrable skills to the insurance industry, which offers many opportunities to newcomers willing and able to work
- The language of Accounting is similar across the world, so leverage those transferrable skills and work experiences in job applications and interviews
- Connect with experts and seek out their advice, including agencies that may assist you in résumé and interview preparation (adopt a mindset of continuous professional development)
- Develop confidence in demonstrating your soft skills and interpersonal skills through Canadian context social interactions (e.g., sports, the arts, etc.)
- Become an effective communicator/public speaker/writer; learn professional boundaries and culturally appropriate protocol in oral and written communication, especially peer-to-peer, peer to supervisor, and client interactions

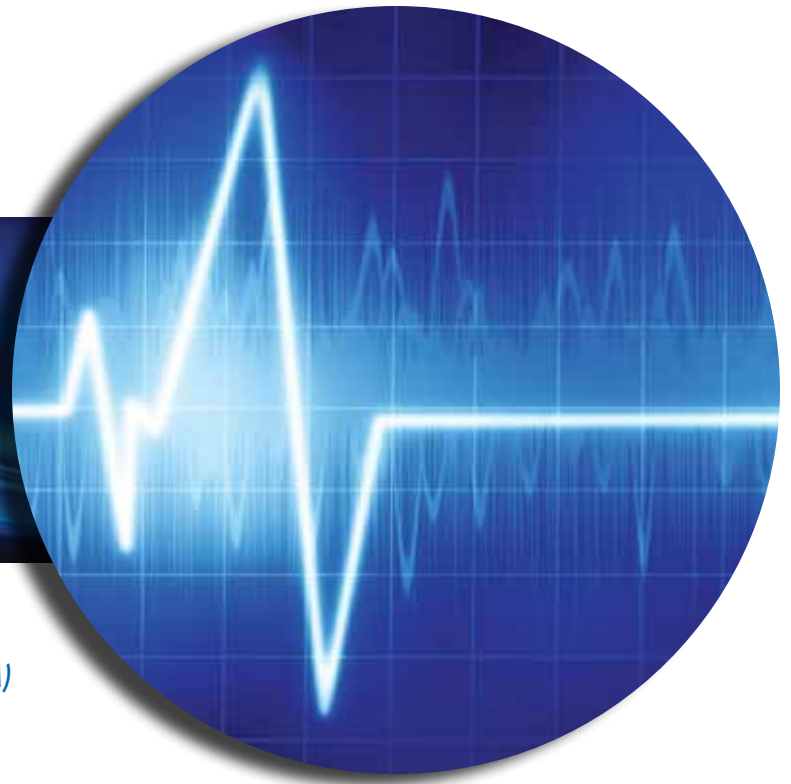


- Keep current with new technology and systems by asking for a free demonstration
- Be willing to 'give back' by volunteering with your professional association, community or religious group
- Build your network of industry contacts and friends including those within your families and social circles
- If considered over qualified for a position, tailor your résumé to suit the job profile. Be willing to accept a junior position, and study to upgrade as needed
- Better work life balance is the norm in most Canadian organizations now; and emphasis is placed on maintaining good mental health and reducing burnout (to retain workers)
- Admissions in the Accounting industry (Public and Private) are thriving in Canada: opportunities exist across the country, with established pathways to certification

**Hameed Shaheer, MSc., IMG (Moderator)**

*– Community Health Manager,  
Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre*

# HEALTHCARE & RELATED PROFESSIONS



**Dr. Rahim Karim, BSc, DC, MBA, CHE, ICD.D,**  
*– President & CEO,  
Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine (CCNM)*

**Farnaz Raofi**  
*– Bridge Training Manager, JVS Toronto*

**Ramesh Venkatesa Perumal, RN, M.Sc.N, PhD, CCNE, CCSNE, CNCC®**  
*– Coordinator, Internationally Educated Nurses B.Sc. Program, York University*

**Dr. Gordhan Jethoo**  
*– Global Development Scientist Director in Late-Stage Oncology, Clinical Development, Astra Zeneca*

**Rola El Moubadder, RN, BScN, MQM**  
*– Program Manager, CARE Centre for Internationally Educated Nurses*



*Healthcare & Related Professions Sector Hub presenters (L to R) : Dr. Gordhan Jethoo, Farnaz Raofi, Rola El Moubadder, Ramesh Venkatesa Perumal, Hameed Shaheer, Dr. Rahim Karim.*

## HEALTHCARE & RELATED PROFESSIONS



### KEY THEMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS PRESENTED BY THOUGHT LEADERS, EMPLOYERS AND REGULATORY EXPERTS

- Bridging programs can help IEPs navigate the job market and obtain licensing in regulated professions such as nursing
- Bridging programs in nursing typically require completion of specific competencies and education to meet Canadian standards
- There are opportunities for specialization in nursing, such as critical care, operating room, or medical-surgical units
- Clinical research and pharmaceutical companies offer job opportunities for healthcare professionals. Networking, volunteering, and seeking mentorship can be beneficial for career advancement
- Non-regulated professions in clinical research and pharmaceuticals may offer alternative career paths for medical professionals
- Certification programs and continuing education courses can enhance skills and increase employment opportunities in clinical research and pharmaceutical industries
- Micro-credentials and online courses can provide specific and relevant skills and competencies
- Professional associations can provide support, resources, and networking opportunities for internationally educated professionals

**Vivian Lee (Moderator)**

*– Team Lead, WIL Digital e-Learning, ICTC*

# DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY



**Mahesh Gohil**

*– IT Developer, TD Bank*

**Aamir Sardar, MBA**

*– Director Alliances Cloud Protection & Licensing, Thales Group*

**Sarah Qureshi**

*– QSi Security Inc.*

**Joe Mazzei**

*– Senior Advisor, Technology Sector, Business Growth Services, Economic Development and Culture, City of Toronto*

**Syed Irfan Maham Khalid**

*– CEO & Strategic Advisor, SMI Consulting*

**Mahdi Raza**

*– Founder & CEO, SiberX*



*Digital Technology Sector Hub presenters (L to R) : Joe Mazzei, Mahdi Raza, Maham Khalid, Sarah Qureshi, Mahesh Gohil and Aamir Sardar, MBA*

## DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

### KEY THEMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

PRESENTED BY THOUGHT LEADERS, EMPLOYERS AND REGULATORY EXPERTS

- Exciting time to be involved in this industry due to rapid changes, particularly an ever-increasing focus on cyber security (jobs counteracting fraud, hackers, etc.)
- Tech evolution (from internet, to mobile telephony, to generative AI) - virtually every sector is impacted by technology, resulting in many job opportunities (domain is wide and vast)
- Curiosity and fascination about how things work, combined with focusing on business, socio-economic, and environmental outcomes are key drivers to entering and thriving in digital tech
- Personally attend six to seven events yearly to discover the key industry players and vendors (this environment provides lots of information and opportunities to connect with people)
- Check out *Task Dot Net* as a great resource for keeping current in cyber security
- Focus on English language skills: one of the best ways to learn English is to read out loud
- Become familiar with Canadian culture (e.g., unnecessary to address people so formally by "ma'am" or "sir")
- Access entry-level jobs once you have achieved experience (and certifications) through co-op positions. On the job training may be possible through opportunities like *Siemens' WILL* program mentioned earlier today
- Demonstrating initiative (e.g., developing money and time-saving solutions) can help secure a reference for job applications
- Develop your reputation as a subject matter expert by contributing at conferences, sharing your expertise, and advocating on behalf of causes and issues
- Volunteer at events to develop confidence and build your network, including ones unrelated to your field (practise your soft skills)
- Follow the Four Ps: plan, practise, prepare, and pitch. Persevere through this cycle and you will gain results eventually, despite a competitive applicant field
- Reinvent yourself if necessary by considering emerging technologies that can utilize your transferrable skills and formal education (e.g. quantum, robotics, digital twins, etc.). Equip yourself by accessing as many free courses and information as possible
- Consider taking remote opportunities (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Africa, Latin America), since some global companies favour Canadian-based workers with international experience
- Stay current on universal trends like the gradual migration from Prem to SAS cloud applications
- Create your own website as a variation on relying solely on a résumé. In tandem with a *LinkedIn* profile, this creates a powerful marketing tool to gain attention with potential employers
- Pursuing academic roles at colleges or universities may require a PhD, but getting a foot in the door will open so many opportunities (and helpful networks)
- Become an expert in whatever it is that you are doing: model the example of Michael Jordan, taking 1000 shots a day so eventually he never missed scoring baskets under pressure
- Remind yourself why you came to Canada: cultivate mental resilience because the path to success is never straight. Never accept defeat!

**Bobby Sahni, MBA (Moderator)**  
*Partner & Co-Founder,  
Ethnicity Multicultural Marketing & Advertising*



# SALES, MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

**Tishan Canagasaby**  
*EVP and GM, Performance Art Toronto*

**Bart Nickerson**  
*SVP Wireless Marketing, Rogers*

**Nicky Mezo**  
*VP Marketing, Personal and Small Business Banking, TD*

**Sharyn Byrne-Nearing**  
*VP Brand, Digital and Product Marketing, Metrolinx*

**Laura Weisz**  
*National Director of Partnerships, Client Success & Media Relations, Windmill Microlending*



*Sales, Marketing & Communications Sector Hub presenters (L to R) : Laura Weisz, Bart Nickerson, Sharyn Byrne-Nearing, Nicky Mezo and Tishan Canagasaby*



## SALES, MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

### KEY THEMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

PRESENTED BY THOUGHT LEADERS, EMPLOYERS AND REGULATORY EXPERTS

- Embrace your own cultural background and lived experiences, as it adds to the diversity and value you bring to the Canadian workplace
- Networking remains one of the essential ways to build your Canadian contacts (reach out to people to build connections and discover opportunities)
- Contact people in your field or areas of interest, network at industry events, and utilize platforms like LinkedIn to connect with professionals in your field
- Build relationships through mentorship: a mentor is an experienced individual who can provide guidance, support, and advice in your professional journey; a mentee is someone seeking guidance and learning from a mentor
- Join professional associations, engage in community activities, and leverage online platforms to connect with professionals in your field
- Canadian workplace culture can vary, but some general traits include collaboration, professionalism, open communication, and valuing diversity and inclusivity
- In addition to hard skills, soft skills like communication, collaboration, adaptability, and empathy are highly valued in the Canadian workplace
- Volunteering can help expand your network, gain Canadian experience, enhance your skills, and showcase your passion. Consider



- joining volunteer organizations and leveraging online platforms like [charityvillage.com](https://www.charityvillage.com)
- Consult with customers to learn about industry leaders and their workplace cultures and values
- Invest in up-skilling, professional development courses, and learning opportunities to improve your skill set and remain competitive in the job market. This can include taking courses, attending workshops, or obtaining certifications relevant to your field (maintain a continuous learning mindset)
- Recognize the value of authenticity and vulnerability in building relationships, and showcasing your unique skills, experiences, and perspectives

## SKILL BUILDING SESSIONS

Complementing the professional sector hub discussions were two workshops: “*Essential and Transferable Skills for the Future Workforce*”, and “*Applying Your Skills to AI and in Your Job Search*”.

### ESSENTIAL AND TRANSFERABLE SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE WORKFORCE



Dr. Juan Marsiaj

Dr. Juan Marsiaj, PhD, Director, Research – Special Projects – Diversity Institute (*Ted Rogers School of Management and Toronto Metropolitan University*) led the first session, sharing his particular expertise in identifying future skills required for Canada’s emerging labour market.

Content included an overview of the skills and employment landscape faced by IEPs in Canada, and a discussion of issues related to in-demand skills, training and development, and employment and entrepreneurship. Dr. Marsiaj highlighted key initiatives to assist IEPs in resolving their work search challenges, while opening new pathways for their careers. The session featured an interactive discussion where delegates shared and learned from each other’s experiences.

### APPLYING YOUR SKILLS TO AI AND IN YOUR JOB SEARCH

Carlos Paz-Soldan, MBA, Principal of *Techmien Corp* delivered a comprehensive, how-to skill building session on “*Applying Your Skills to AI and in Your Job Search*”. He emphasized the necessity of transferring existing skills to the exploding field of Artificial Intelligence (AI), and its potential to revolutionize IEPs’ job search strategy and personal brand.



Carlos Paz-Soldan

**Both the professional hubs and skill building sessions offered delegates opportunity to interact with the presenters during the Question & Answer segments, as well as chat informally one on one, afterwards.**

**For the first time in the Conference’s eighteen-year history, more than 90% of the speakers were IEPs themselves (including some as former conference attendees). The sharing of lived experiences enriched the interaction with delegates, and proved additionally motivating and inspirational.**

## CLOSING KEYNOTE PRESENTATION



Closing Keynote Speaker, Michael Lee-Chin OOnt, shares his business mantra: “Live your truth; identify a role model; obtain their success recipe and repeat it...the future is what you make of it.”

### MICHAEL LEE-CHIN, OONT

CHAIRMAN, PORTLAND HOLDINGS INC. AND CHAIRMAN, MANDEVILLE PRIVATE CLIENT INC.

Delegates were inspired by the advice of Jamaican-born and renowned Canadian businessman, Michael Lee-Chin, Order of Ontario recipient.

As Chairman of the multi-faceted Portland Holdings Ltd. and the *Mandeville Group of Companies*, Lee-Chin has lived a fulfilled life of doing well, and “doing good for society”.

He remarked that living a life of passion and purpose, driven by a clear vision and mission, were essentials in “getting through the air pockets of life”. Lee-Chin also acknowledged the responsibility in leaving a legacy, associated with the fulfillment of a purposeful life, as illustrated by the Stonemasons parable he shared.

Over the arc of his career, he has learned the value of persistence (overcoming multiple rejections cold-calling as a mutual fund salesperson); outworking everyone to achieve goals; and helping people achieve success.

Lee-Chin advocated that in order to overcome the kinds of challenges he (and IEPs) face in building careers, one needs to be in “rhinoceros mode: Be thick skinned, keep your head down, and charge ahead.”

He concluded his remarks by sharing his business mantra: Live your truth; identify a role model; obtain their success recipe and repeat it (just as he did with Warren Buffett). He reminded IEPs that Canada is “a great country, and the future is what you make of it.”

# “Diversity Our Strength”

“Diversity Our Strength” is the City of Toronto’s official motto. It recognizes and celebrates the important contributions that newcomers make to the city’s prosperity.

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## ATTENDEE FEEDBACK

Delegate Evaluations cited the most important lessons from the conference were:

- 1 The imperative of networking (to build connections and community; and to uncover hidden opportunities);
- 2 Using Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to augment job search activities; and
- 3 Maintaining a positive mental attitude: make a plan, persevere, and never give up

**97%**  
of attendees were satisfied overall with the Conference programming

**91%**  
reported being motivated to take specific action steps regarding their job search

**94%**  
were first time conference attendees

**76%**  
said they had received new tools and resources to assist them with setting goals to acquiring an appropriate job

**79%** indicated they felt more confident in securing meaningful work.

## KEY OBSERVATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- 1) The increase in African attendees may correlate to a surge in refugee asylum seekers Canada experienced in 2023.
- 2) Following a forced hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic and last year's "virtual" conference, the event went live again in 2023. Early registration was encouraging yet lower numbers of attendance were anticipated as delegates transitioned back to attending the IEP Conference in-person. As such, the unprecedented number of conference no shows (527) was alarming, given weather/transportation conditions were not a factor. Will this be a trend? If so, how can organizers mitigate that risk to avoid associated budget and human resource impacts?
- 3) Are career pathways for IEPs accelerating and less fraught with barriers than before? To what can be attributed the decrease in Engineering sector registrations, for example, once numbering in excess of 350? How significantly have fast tracking, bridging, OTJ and other programs (designed to facilitate the 'landing' of IEPs into Canadian positions commensurate with their skills and experience) evolved, to the point where they erase the unique or add-on value of the Conference?
- 4) Is it time for PCPI to conduct research on the need for this forum; and if so, to reimagine the programming/event to more appropriately meet the requirements of all stakeholders?

# IEP CONFERENCE

*Thank You*

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## Planning Committee:

Conference Co-Chairs - Silma Roddau - PCPI / Michael Marville - PCPI

Finance - Zoe Troka - PCPI

Event Planner – Carol Ford

Website/Registration - Michael Dacuyuy - PCPI

Planning Committee

Maham Khalid – (previously representing Career Foundation)

Uzma Jafrani - Career Foundation

Carmen Jacques - Chartered Professional Accountants of Ontario /  
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## Conference Report

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## Special Thanks to our Guest Speakers:

David Common, Host - *CBC Toronto*

Faisal Kazi, Morning Keynote - President and CEO of *Siemens Canada*

Michael Lee-Chin OOnt, Closing Keynote -

Chairman, *Portland Holdings Inc.* & Chairman, *Mandeville Private Client Inc.*

Dr. Juan Marsiaj, PhD, Director, Research [Special Projects]

Diversity Institute - *Ted Rogers School of Management* and  
*Toronto Metropolitan University*

Carlos Paz-Soldan, MBA - Principal of *Techmien Corp*

Special Thanks to our panellists, moderators, PCPI sector hub scribes and all our volunteers.

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