

# Competition rising for skilled environmental professionals

A recent study conducted by Environmental Careers Organization (ECO) Canada revealed that competition for skilled environmental professionals is on the rise. From 2009 to 2010, 40% of employers lost environmental staff to competing companies who offered better benefits, higher income, better work-life balance, or better career opportunities.

## Environmental jobs on the rise

Over the next few years, the environmental sector's annual growth is expected to rise above Canada's economic GDP and to reach from 4.7% to 7.7%. This is a direct result of 1) demand for environmental products and services from consumers, and 2) stronger government regulations which require businesses to invest more capital in environmental endeavors.

"What we are seeing is a shift, where existing jobs are moving into new areas of environmental employment that include 'green jobs' as well as work in the low carbon economy or 'clean tech' jobs. So this expansion is not the result of different positions emerging, it is more of a redistribution and reallocation of environmental skills and knowledge to a broader sector of the economy. This is happening not just in Canada but worldwide," says Grant Trump, CEO of ECO Canada.

In addition, 14% of the environmental workforce will reach the age of retirement within the next decade, creating over 100,000 vacancies.

As a result, nearly half of Canadian environmental companies will be looking for employees over the next two years, and will be working on developing recruitment strategies and improving employee retention.

## Understanding what workers want

In a recent survey conducted by ECO Canada, employers reported that successful recruiting in the sector depended on methods which build upon existing relationships with workers, and on making use of employee and professional networks as well as online networks, such as LinkedIn. These existing networks were



*Creating a positive workplace environment is a vital component of attracting and retaining talented professionals. Grant Trump (right), CEO of ECO Canada, presents Cindy Coutts, President SIMS Recycling Solutions, with the 2011 Large Business Environmental Employer of the Year Award.*

viewed by almost half of environmental employers as critical to the success of their recruiting programs.

Other top rated methods for recruiting include: internal recruitment, referrals, and co-op programs.

The reputation of an environmental employer as an 'Employer of Choice' was seen as the most important factor affecting the ability to successfully recruit highly qualified and engaged workers.

As Canada's environmental sector council for nearly twenty years, ECO Canada has been committed to developing programs that encourage and maintain the sector's growth; these include the nation's largest environmental job board, professional networking events, online managerial training, and an 'environmental employer of the year' contest. Their latest development is a tool to monitor compensation standards.

"Our members have told us that they want reliable information on the salaries and benefits of critical positions within the environmental industry," says Michael Kerford, VP of ECO Canada. "While there are a number of factors in employee engagement, fair and competi-

tive compensation will always be an important consideration and this information will provide an important backdrop to employer/employee discussions."

## Benchmarking industry compensation

With an ever-changing and diverse sector such as the environmental, a proper comparison of compensation was difficult to find. As a result, compensation and research experts worked with ECO to come up with a method to provide small- and medium-sized employers with national metrics on specialized occupations which are continually evolving.

Data on salaries, and retirement, vacation and other benefits, for over 60 environmental professions are contributed anonymously by employers throughout the year. The first report will be available to the sector in November 2011.

The compensation centre is open to all environmental industry employers, including consultants, service providers, contractors, emitters, and government. It is one of a variety of tools being built in order to support the environmental sector.

*For more information, visit [www.eco.ca](http://www.eco.ca)*