

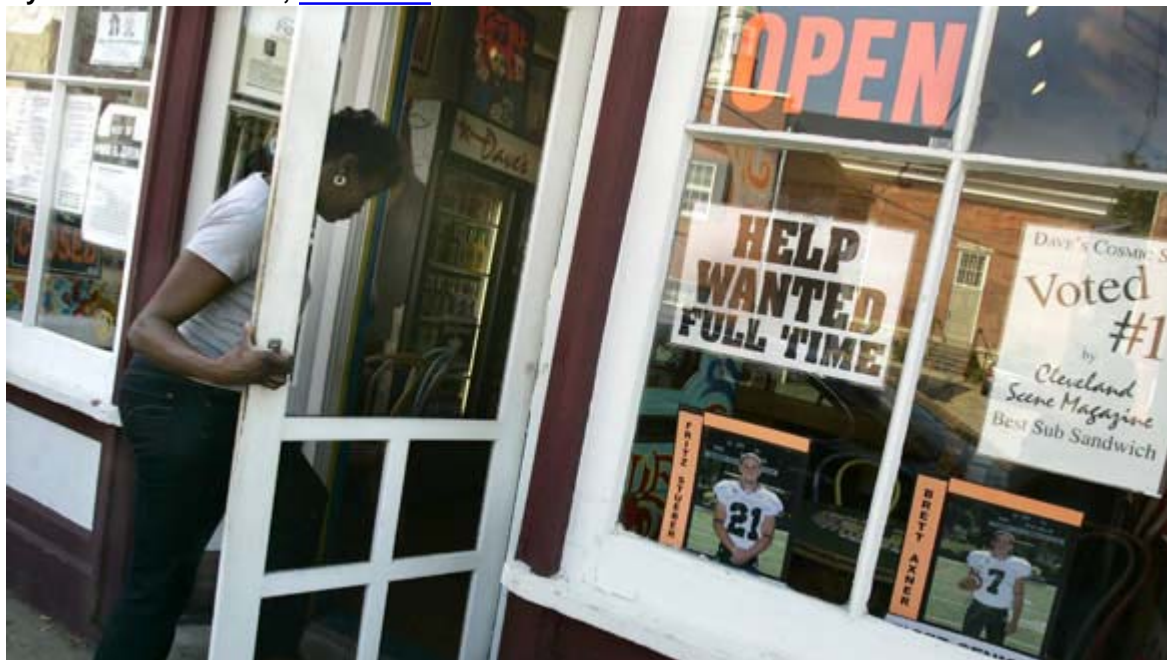
## ECONOMY

### Recession-resistant jobs

# Finding a new groove

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By Amber Hildebrandt, [CBC News](#)



*A subway shop in Chagrin Falls, Ohio, is looking for new employees. In hard economic times, people are looking for new careers, ones that are stable enough to weather a recession. (Amy Sancetta/Associated Press)*

With daily news headlines screaming job layoffs, work stability is on everybody's mind — no matter how secure their industry. Almost everyone is mulling a backup plan.

Career leaps once considered crazy suddenly seem possible: A journalist muses about becoming a midwife; an architect eyes an apprenticeship as an electrician.

Toronto career counsellor Mark Franklin said he even has a client considering a jump from the film business into the funeral industry, where an aging population makes steady work more likely.

But when thinking about Plan B, the question remains: What jobs can weather a recession? While no work can claim to be fully recession-proof, some are more resistant than others.

## Where are the jobs?

James Knight, president of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges, says there are still areas you can snag a job in "10 minutes," if you're trained.

- **Health:** "Anything to do with health, you're in," Knight said. Some of the jobs hurting for workers are ultrasound operators, physiotherapists, paramedics and dental technicians. And when it comes to nursing, there are "enormous needs" in every jurisdiction, he says.
- **Information technology:** This sector, covering a wide range of computing and technology fields, took a hit when the dot-com bubble of the late 1990s burst, but it's not a total bust now. Even though it's not been seen as a "desirable field," there are jobs there, Knight said.
- **Skilled trades:** Despite the slowdown in the construction sector, skilled trades are still going strong,

Knight says. With governments injecting billions of dollars into infrastructure, "we're wondering if we have enough capacity to deliver" the workers. Areas where the job hunt may not take long are in carpentry, electrical work, plumbing and any sort of technician. "Refrigerator specialists — the food industry is crying for them — a whole lot more of them," Knight said.

- **Food:** People need to eat and a number of sectors rely on that most basic of survival requirements. From those that supply the chemicals and equipment for farmers to the retailers and restaurants, workers are in demand. As Michael Burt of the Conference Board of Canada notes on its website, food is one of the "most overlooked components" of the economy. Restaurants may be suffering — shown in such signs as high-scale restaurants pandering to the masses for added business — but it's a sector always searching for staff.
- **Small business:** While the major players, such as Nortel and Bombardier, are shedding jobs, many small companies are enjoying business as usual. "The small business sector is holding its own," Knight said, adding many small business owners are nearing retirement and are anxious to find entrepreneurs who can keep the business running.

## Colleges lack capacity

But no matter the field, a problem lies in training workers to fill the gaps.

Now more than ever, colleges are inundated with applications as the suddenly unemployed explore new horizons. In September, Algonquin College alone turned down 6,000 qualified students, and a large number of them found nowhere else to go, Knight said.



*Ultrasound operators are still in high demand, as are other jobs in the health field. (Victor R. Caivano/Associated Press)*

Waiting lists at institutions across the country currently run up to four years, Knight said.

The 2009 federal budget promised \$2 billion to post-secondary institutions for repairs and reconstruction, with about 30 per cent going to colleges, but that work will take time.

For now, students can sometimes get around long queues by applying at more remote colleges, instead of jam-packed programs in urban centres.

Colleges are also scrambling to come up with new ways to accommodate rising demand in the short term. "We're going to have to be very creative," Knight said.

Some of the ideas include training on weekends or evenings, and using non-active industrial sites as training facilities to try to cut down on waiting lists.

Tara Ferron is among those who pursued training in a completely different field after being laid off. After five years of assembling car seats at a General Motors plant in Whitby, Ont., the married mom of three got notice in November 2007 that she was out of a job.

With financial help from Employment Ontario, she's since become a dental assistant, a career she said had been her second choice back in high school.

"Salary is a pay cut, for sure, but my happiness in my job is ... I feel I have more job satisfaction," Ferron said.

"There was so much turmoil and stress with all the stuff going on at GM — it was horrible. It was so stressful and it filters into your whole life and now I'm so much happier."

In the end, Toronto career counsellor Mark Franklin says, the recession shouldn't completely dictate your job choices.

"Should everyone follow what's hot right now only to find out what's hot is not anymore?" he asks.

He warns against ending up a square peg in a round hole.

*With files from Sheila Whyte*

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**[katkub](#) wrote:**Posted 2009/02/07

at 11:19 AM ETi went reluctantly into nursing in 2001, but am very glad i did. good salary, no problem getting work. there are so many different opportunities in nursing that if one doesn't like the area one is working in, it is very easy to move to another. well worth looking into if anyone is thinking of going back to school after losing their job.

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**[piewacket](#) wrote:**Posted 2009/02/07

at 1:12 AM ETtoo bad I had parents with no education. I was the first to get grade 12 but had no career counselling or choices like today

i'd definitely be in the health field as I like helping people.

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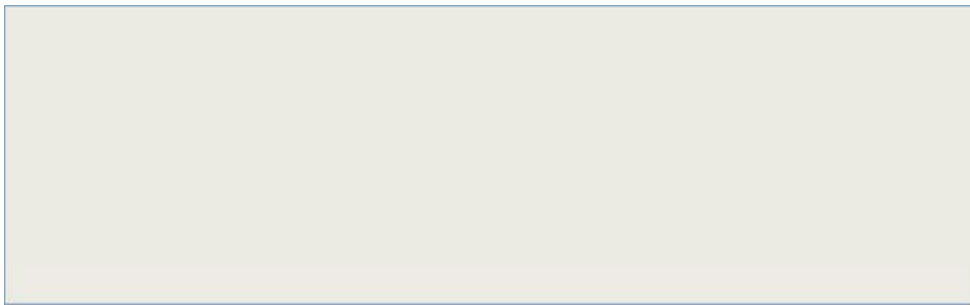
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