

## **How the Canadian Job Market Works**

### **Introduction**

Job searching in Canada can feel confusing at first, especially if you are new to the country, new to the local labour market, or unsure what employers expect from applicants. This module introduces the basic parts of the Canadian job-search process and explains how those parts work together.

The goal of this module is not to make you an expert on every part of employment in Canada. Instead, the goal is to help you understand the basic structure of the job search so you can make better decisions before, during, and after applying for work.

A strong job search is not only about submitting applications. It also involves understanding what kind of work you are looking for, knowing your availability and work eligibility, preparing your resume, communicating with employers, preparing for interviews, following up professionally, and adjusting your approach based on what is working.

### **What is the Job Search Process?**

Job searching is not just one action. It is not only submitting an application, writing a resume, making a connection, or attending an interview. These are all parts of the process, but they work best when they are connected.

A complete job-search process usually includes several steps.

First, you need to understand what kind of work you are looking for. This may include part-time work during studies, on-campus work, volunteering, seasonal work, co-op or placement-related work, entry-level work, or work connected to your career goals after graduation.

Second, you need to understand your own skills, abilities, and competencies. This means thinking about what you already know how to do, what experience you already have, and what strengths you can explain clearly to an employer.

Third, you need to understand what kind of work you are eligible and available for. For international students, this may include understanding your study permit work conditions, your class schedule, your transportation options, and how many hours you can realistically work.

A strong job search also includes creating an application strategy. This means choosing jobs carefully, reading postings closely, preparing resumes and cover letters for the type of work you are applying for, and communicating professionally with employers.

Finally, job searching should include a method for tracking results and improving over time. If you apply to many jobs and do not hear back, that may be a sign that your resume, application strategy, availability, or job choices need to be reviewed. If you get interviews but no offers, you may need to practice interview skills. The job search works best when you learn from the process and adjust your approach.

**Key idea:** Once you understand the key pieces of the job search, you can approach it more effectively as a complete process.

## **Why Understanding This Matters**

Understanding the job-search process can help you approach employment with more confidence. Many students feel stressed or discouraged when they apply for jobs and do not hear back. Sometimes the issue is not effort. The issue may be that they do not yet understand how the process works or what employers are looking for.

One way to think about the job search is through a set of guiding questions.

Ask yourself:

### **What are employers looking for?**

Employers are usually looking for signs that you can do the work, communicate clearly, show up reliably, understand the role, and fit the needs of the workplace.

### **Why do some applications get interviews and others do not?**

Applications that clearly match the job posting are often stronger. If your resume is too general, hard to read, or not connected to the role, the employer may not understand why you are a good fit.

### **How do interviews and references affect hiring decisions?**

An interview helps the employer understand how you communicate, explain your experience, and respond to questions. References help confirm that you are reliable, professional, and ready for the workplace.

### **How do local job opportunities shape your goals?**

The jobs available in North Bay may be different from the jobs available in larger cities. Transportation, employer demand, local industries, and competition can all affect your strategy.

### **When should you ask for support or adjust your approach?**

If you are applying often but not getting responses, or if you are unsure what to do next, it is better to ask for help early instead of waiting until the situation becomes urgent.

**Key idea:** Understanding the job market helps you make better decisions before, during, and after you apply.

### **Applications, Interviews, and References**

Applications, interviews, and references each play a different role in the hiring process. They are connected, but they do not all do the same job.

An **application** helps the employer decide whether you should be considered for the job. This may include your resume, cover letter, online application form, or any other documents the employer requests.

A **resume or cover letter** helps the employer understand whether your skills and experience match the role. A strong resume is not just a list of everything you have done. It should show the employer why your experience is relevant to the specific job.

An **interview** helps the employer understand whether you can explain your experience clearly, communicate professionally, and understand the role. It is also an opportunity for you to learn more about the job and workplace.

**References** help confirm that you are reliable and professional. Employers may contact references before hiring to verify your experience, work habits, communication, and professionalism.

The **follow-up stage** also matters. Employers may need time to review applications, complete interviews, and make decisions. If you are waiting for an update, it is usually best to wait at least five business days before following up. Multiple follow-up attempts too quickly may seem impatient.

**Key idea:** Getting hired is usually not based on one step. Each part of the process helps build the employer's confidence in you.

### **What Are You Looking For: Work for Students**

Students often look for different types of work depending on their goals, schedule, and stage of study.

Some students may look for **part-time work during studies**. This type of work can help with income, local experience, and confidence. However, students should make sure the job fits their class schedule and work eligibility.

Some students may look for **on-campus jobs**. These can be useful because they are connected to the college environment and may be easier to manage with a student schedule.

**Volunteering opportunities** can also be valuable. Volunteering may not provide income, but it can help students gain experience, meet people, build confidence, and develop references.

Students may also look for **summer or seasonal work**, especially during breaks. These roles can be a good way to gain experience over a shorter period.

Some programs may include **co-op, placement, or field experience**. These opportunities are often connected to a student's field of study and may help build career-related experience.

Students may also apply for **entry-level jobs or sector-specific jobs**. Entry-level work can help students gain local experience and understand Canadian workplace expectations.

Common student jobs may include customer service, food service, retail, general labour, administrative support, or other roles connected to local employer needs. After graduation, students may begin looking for more career-related work.

It is important to remember that a first job in Canada may not be your long-term career goal. That does not mean it has no value. A first job can help you build local experience, references, confidence, communication skills, and workplace knowledge.

**Key idea:** A first job in Canada may not be your final career goal, but it can help you build the foundation for future opportunities.

## **What Employers Look For**

Employers are looking for signs that a candidate can succeed in the role and workplace. When an employer reviews an application or interviews a candidate, they are often trying to answer several practical questions.

They may ask:

Can this applicant do the work?

This means the employer wants to know whether you have the skills, training, experience, or ability to learn what the role requires.

Is this applicant reliable?

Reliability is important. Employers want workers who show up on time, follow instructions, communicate when needed, and take their responsibilities seriously.

Can this applicant communicate clearly?

Communication matters during applications, interviews, emails, phone calls, and workplace interactions. Employers often pay attention to how clearly and respectfully you communicate.

Does this applicant understand the role?

Employers want to see that you know what the job involves. If your application or interview answers show that you did not read the posting carefully, that can hurt your chances.

Is this applicant available for the schedule?

Availability matters. If the job requires evenings, weekends, early mornings, or specific shifts, the employer needs to know whether your schedule matches their needs.

Will this applicant work well with the team?

Most workplaces require cooperation. Employers may look for signs that you can work respectfully with supervisors, coworkers, and customers.

Is this applicant legally able to work?

For international students, work eligibility is important. You need to understand the conditions of your study permit and make sure you are following the rules.

**Key idea:** Employers want to see that you understand the job and the needs of the workplace. Trying to understand what they are looking for gives you a major advantage when applying.

## **The Local Labour Market**

The local labour market has a major influence on the best way to approach work. A job search in North Bay may look different from a job search in Toronto, Ottawa, or another country.

The local labour market can affect what types of jobs are available. Some communities may have more opportunities in retail, food service, healthcare, construction, trades, education, hospitality, or public services. Other communities may have fewer openings in some fields.

It can also affect which employers are hiring. In a smaller labour market, students may need to pay close attention to local employers, local job boards, campus resources, community networks, and seasonal hiring patterns.

Competition can also vary. Some jobs may receive many applications, while others may be harder for employers to fill. Understanding this can help students decide where to focus their effort.

Transportation is another important factor. A job may look suitable online, but if the workplace is difficult to reach by bus or is too far from campus or home, it may not be realistic. Students should check transportation before applying, not after receiving an interview or job offer.

Schedule also matters. If your class schedule does not match employer needs, it may be difficult to accept certain jobs. Employers may need evening, weekend, morning, or flexible availability.

The local labour market can also affect which skills, certifications, or experience are most useful. For example, some jobs may prefer or require First Aid, CPR, Smart Serve, Food Handler certification, customer service experience, or safety training.

Timing is also important. Some jobs hire before the busy season begins. If you wait until you urgently need work, you may miss the best time to apply.

**Key idea:** A strong job search is not only about what job you want. It is also about understanding what opportunities are realistic in your local area and adjusting your strategy.

## **Stay Safe Working**

It is important to protect yourself when applying for work and starting a new job. Most employers are legitimate, but students should still be careful, especially when they are new to the Canadian job market.

Be cautious with jobs that ask for money before hiring you. A real employer should not usually require you to pay money just to receive a job offer.

Be careful with employers who avoid written details about pay, hours, duties, or working conditions. A real job should have clear information about what work you will do, how much you will be paid, and when you are expected to work.

Students should also be careful with requests to share their SIN, or Social Insurance Number, before it is needed. Your SIN is sensitive personal information. Employers may need it after you are hired for payroll and tax purposes, but you should be cautious about sharing it too early or with someone you do not trust.

Cash jobs can also be risky if they do not follow employment rules. If a job is “cash under the table,” it may create problems related to pay, taxes, worker protections, and immigration compliance.

Students should also watch for unsafe work or unclear training. If you are being asked to do work that seems unsafe, or if you are not given proper instructions or training, ask for help.

International students must also be careful about pressure to work more than they are allowed. It is your responsibility to understand and follow the conditions of your study permit.

Finally, be cautious with job offers that seem too good to be true. Very high pay for unclear work, vague job duties, or pressure to act quickly can be warning signs.

**Key idea:** A real job should be clear, safe, and legal. Ask for support if something about a job offer, payment, schedule, or employer does not feel right.

### **What Should You Do Next?**

Before moving to the next video, take a few minutes to think about what kind of work you are looking for and what support you may need first.

You may want to ask yourself:

What kind of work am I looking for right now?

Do I want part-time work, campus work, volunteer experience, seasonal work, placement-related work, or career-related work?

What is my availability?

Think about your class schedule, study time, transportation, and personal responsibilities.

Do I understand my work eligibility?

Make sure you understand whether you are allowed to work and any conditions attached to your study permit.

Do I have a resume ready?

If you have a resume, consider whether it matches the type of job you are applying for. If you do not have one, this may be a good first step.

Do I know where to look for jobs?

You may want to use the Campus Job Portal, Job Bank Canada, local employer websites, community resources, or employment supports.

Do I need help?

If you are unsure where to start, need support understanding work eligibility, or want help with job-search planning, ask for support early.

The next video is **Why Searching for a Job Might Feel Different in Canada**. That section will explain some of the differences students may notice when looking for work in Canada, including communication expectations, local experience, references, networking, and confidence.

**Final takeaway:** Job searching works best when you treat it as a process. Understand your goal, learn what employers are looking for, prepare carefully, use support when needed, and adjust your approach as you learn what is working.