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Halton Region home of unique career centre

By Oksana Buhel

Halton Region is home to a unique instructional institution. The Halton Industry Education Council (H.I.E.C.) operates a Career Centre in Burlington which Troy Lassau, chair of H.I.E.C., described as a "very meaningful product of shared labor between the Council, school boards and industries."

Lassau explained that what separates this centre from the other nine in Ontario is its thrust on industry. The Career Centre opened in March 1992, catering to students from both school boards, between Grades 8-to-13. "We want to provide information to younger students to prepare them for the requirements of the work force," Lassau said.

Requirements for the work force have definitely changed, Lassau said. "Jobs which have been newly-created by the Ministry of Employment and Immigration require approximately 16 years of formal study. In 1986, only 25% of jobs needed this amount of training."

Another baffling statistic is that, across Canada, 60% of students start working without going to college or university.

"Our purpose is not to push these individuals into further study," Lassau said, "but to prepare them for the skills industries in a manner in which schools can't prepare them. Currently, there's a need for a combination of interpersonal, academic and technical skills."

What troubles Lassau is the apparent, and unfounded, stigma against trades. "Ask a parent if skilled trades are necessary, and they firmly agree, adding they are honorable professions. Ask them, however, if they want their kids to enter a skilled trade, and they adamantly object."

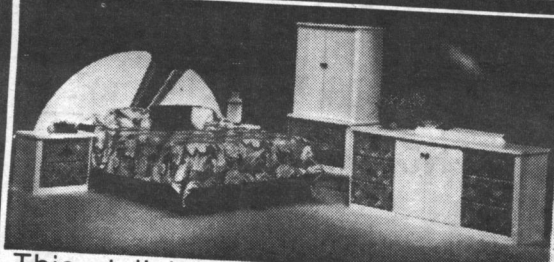
For this reason, parents are invited to the Career Centre programs. The Centre offers workshops, government incentive programs and directs students to academic programs for further training. "If we want a meaningful change," Lassau concludes, "we have to involve everyone."

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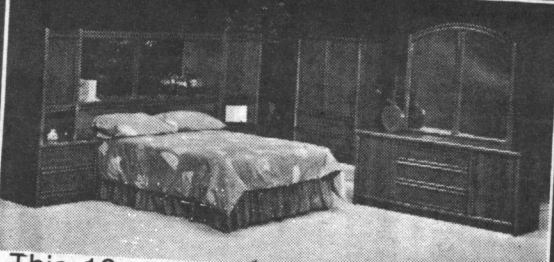
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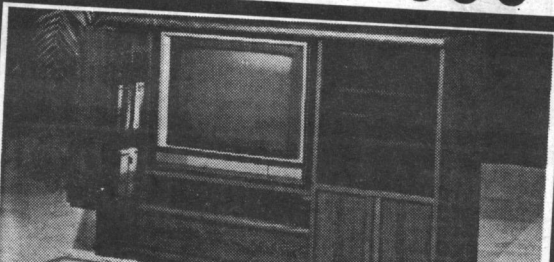
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