Vancouver top spot in Canada for IT hiring
TECHNOLOGY I City sees a 120% jump in full-time positions, '06 review finds

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Vancouver is the Canadian hotspot for full-time jobs in information technology, according to a report issued Friday by one of the country's top IT talent providers.

And part of the reason is the build-up to the 2010 Olympics.

A 120-per-cent increase in permanent jobs in the Vancouver area was reported by CNC Global in its 2006 annual market review, although CNC said it doesn't release the actual figures.

"One of the things that we're seeing, and it isn't surprising, is that there's an awful lot of infrastructure work going on related to the run-up to the Olympics," said CNC Global marketing vice-president Christopher Drummond.

"But there is also a lot of growth in things like financial institutions and among systems integrators and that's part and parcel of the general economic growth that's taking place in B.C."

Drummond said that such a leap in demand is a traditional indicator in the industry that there's a lot of confidence in the provincial economy.

"Most companies that open up their full-time hiring do so because they feel confident about the future and it's because they're willing to make the investment in full-time people coming in."

Demand is high, said Drummond, in infrastructure areas -- like networking and support functions -- because of increased activity now that B.C. has rid itself of the remnants of the dot-com bust.

"Web development, too, has become huge with an awful lot of demand for that across the country and particularly in British Columbia," said Drummond.

"Companies need people who can deal with the requirements of organizations that are trying to grow their business and do that in a new economy with the Internet and Web services."

He added there was a real squeeze in those skill sets, particularly at senior levels.

Across Canada, employers are looking for people with business and communications skills on top of their technological abilities.

"More and more organizations are coming to us and saying that they need IT people who have good solid technical skills but also know how to communicate, understand their business and can deal at a more strategic level, regardless of where they are within the organization," said Drummond.

"You have to have a good understanding of business goals, you have to be able to communicate that information effectively and you have to be able to work on teams."

Increasingly, B.C. companies are having to go outside the province, and sometimes even go outside the country, to find workers with the right skill sets.

And this shortage means that, especially at higher levels where people are making more than $80,000 a year, salaries are starting to rise.

"I wouldn't say they've increased dramatically, but they are starting to creep up."

One of Drummond's concerns is that not enough people, perhaps discouraged after the dot-com decline, are choosing to study in the IT field.

"Post-secondary enrollment is significantly down and people need to realize that the field is now as exciting as it's ever been."