

IT Employment Trends in Canada and Atlantic Canada

(Written by Dan Desaulniers – Jan. 2026)

Canada's information technology (IT) labour market is being reshaped by the adoption of cloud technology, rising cybersecurity risks, and the expansion of data and artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities into nearly every industry. National digital-economy analysis from the Information and Communications Technology Council (ICTC) describes Canada's digital economy as a major employer, with ongoing demand for digitally skilled workers (Ivus et al., 2025; Lindstrom, 2025). For students entering the field, the practical question is not whether opportunities exist, but how to align skills to in-demand roles and how to access opportunities that are not always visible through public job advertisements. This report summarizes current trends, high-value skills, regional considerations relevant to Atlantic Canada, and job-search techniques that materially improve outcomes.

Employment trends and opportunities in the Canadian IT sector

Across Canada, employers continue to prioritize modernization and operational resilience. The most persistent demand clusters fall into three overlapping areas: (1) infrastructure and operations (networks, endpoints, identity, and service management), (2) cybersecurity and privacy, and (3) cloud and data platforms. ICTC's Digital Economy Pulse (August 2025) lists software engineering, data roles, ICT management, and cybersecurity roles among the most in-demand occupations in the digital economy (Ivus et al., 2025). In parallel, hiring research in Canada's technology sector notes that organizations are competing for candidates who can support cloud environments, automation, and security-minded operations (Robert Half, 2025).

For many Canadian organizations, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), technology work is increasingly delivered through managed service providers (MSPs) and service-focused internal teams. This trend favours versatile practitioners who can support multiple systems, communicate clearly with non-technical stakeholders, and document work in a repeatable way. In practice, this makes the Network Administrator or Systems Administrator pathway a durable entry point, particularly when paired with scripting (for example, PowerShell) and basic cloud competence.

Information technology vs. cybersecurity

General IT roles and cybersecurity roles overlap, but they are not identical. General IT (for example, network or systems administration) focuses on delivering reliable services: connectivity, authentication, endpoint health, and user support. Cybersecurity focuses on

reducing risk: secure configuration, monitoring, incident response, and governance. Importantly, security is now a baseline expectation in many non-security roles, because misconfigurations and weak access control are common causes of security incidents (Robert Half, 2025).

In New Brunswick, cybersecurity is also a visible regional strength. The Canadian Institute for Cybersecurity (CIC) at the University of New Brunswick is based in Fredericton and positions itself as a national cybersecurity research leader (University of New Brunswick, n.d.-a; University of New Brunswick, n.d.-b). The City of Fredericton describes the city as a national epicentre for cybersecurity innovation and critical infrastructure protection, pointing to facilities such as the Cyber Centre at Knowledge Park and UNB's CIC (City of Fredericton, n.d.). Opportunities linked to this ecosystem include security operations, governance, research, and supporting roles in infrastructure protection (Opportunities New Brunswick, n.d.).

Regional considerations for Atlantic Canada

Atlantic Canada's IT job market is smaller than major hubs such as Toronto, Montréal, or Vancouver, but it can be advantageous for early-career job seekers for two reasons. First, hiring ecosystems are more relationship-driven; referrals and instructor or employer connections can have an outsized impact. Second, remote and hybrid work has expanded the practical geographic reach of many roles, allowing candidates to pursue national opportunities while living in Atlantic Canada (Robert Half, 2025).

Nova Scotia's capital region is a recognized centre of growth within Atlantic Canada. Digital Nova Scotia reports that Halifax's tech workforce reached 22,100 jobs in 2024, with strong growth over the prior three years (Digital Nova Scotia, 2025). While this suggests more opportunities, it also implies higher competition from larger graduate pipelines and frequent national recruiting. For New Brunswick candidates, the best approach is usually a two-track search: pursue local employers (including MSPs and public-sector adjacent organizations) while also applying to remote roles based in larger provinces.

Language and workplace requirements

Language requirements can materially affect job targeting. In New Brunswick, some public-sector roles may require bilingual capacity, while many private-sector IT roles primarily operate in English. In Québec, Bill 96 (a reform to the Charter of the French Language) creates additional French-language obligations in workplaces and business communications, which can influence how roles are posted and what language expectations are applied (Borden Ladner Gervais LLP, 2022; Lavery, 2024). For an English-

speaking candidate, this does not eliminate Québec opportunities, but it increases the importance of verifying language requirements early and tailoring the job search accordingly.

Skills required to compete for IT roles in Canada

Canadian IT hiring decisions are rarely based on one credential. Employers look for a portfolio of evidence that the candidate can deliver value: technical competence, disciplined operations, and strong communication. A practical “T-shaped” skill profile (depth in one area plus breadth across adjacent areas) is consistently marketable.

Core technical foundations

For entry-level and junior roles, fundamentals are the differentiator: TCP/IP basics, DNS and DHCP, Windows administration, Linux familiarity, identity and access management concepts, and a structured troubleshooting approach. CompTIA's A+ objectives emphasize hardware, operating systems, and practical troubleshooting, which align closely with help desk and junior support roles (CompTIA, 2024). For network administration paths, Network+ provides a broad verification of networking concepts, while Security+ helps demonstrate baseline security knowledge.

Cloud, automation, and modern operations

Cloud skills are increasingly expected because organizations continue migrating workloads and identity services to platforms such as Microsoft Azure and AWS. Early-career candidates stand out when they can demonstrate foundational cloud knowledge (identity, storage, virtual networks, and monitoring) and basic automation. Even modest scripting, PowerShell for Windows environments or Bash or Python for Linux, signals that the candidate can reduce repetitive work and operate reliably at scale (Robert Half, 2025).

Security and AI/data literacy

Security-minded behaviour is now a baseline requirement in most environments: least privilege, patching discipline, strong authentication practices, and careful handling of credentials. Demand for cybersecurity roles is also elevated nationally (Ivus et al., 2025). In parallel, AI and data capabilities are influencing job requirements across many IT functions. LinkedIn's 2025 Skills on the Rise highlights rapid growth in skills such as AI literacy and large language model proficiency, which, at the entry level, typically means using AI tools responsibly, validating outputs, and supporting AI-enabled workflows rather than building models from scratch (LinkedIn, 2025).

Professional (soft) skills that hiring managers notice

When technical baselines are similar across applicants, communication and professionalism often decide who is hired. Employers repeatedly emphasize clear documentation, calm troubleshooting, customer service, and the ability to explain technical issues in plain language. These skills also reduce risk for employers, because IT work is often performed under time pressure with non-technical stakeholders.

Job-search techniques that make a difference

A strong IT job search should be treated like a managed project: a defined target role, a weekly activity plan, and a measurable pipeline (applications, conversations, interviews). This matters because advertised postings can be highly competitive. Career writers have argued that a large share of Canadian roles is filled through informal channels rather than only public job boards; for example, ElMorsy (2024) describes the Canadian job market as largely “hidden” and recommends strategies that go beyond mainstream posting sites.

1) Networking and informational interviews

Networking is the deliberate process of building relationships that generate job leads, referrals, and inside knowledge before a role is publicly posted. In smaller markets, a warm referral can significantly increase the probability of an interview. Informational interviews are especially effective: they are initiated by the job seeker, focus on learning (not asking for a job), and often lead to introductions and future referrals. The goal is to convert an unknown employer into a known contact and to learn which skills and tools are actually used in that organization (ElMorsy, 2024).

2) Optimize LinkedIn and tailor applications

LinkedIn functions as both a resume and a recruiter search tool. Profiles should include role-relevant keywords (for example, “Active Directory,” “Microsoft 365,” “PowerShell,” “Windows Server,” “network troubleshooting,” and “ticketing systems”), and should demonstrate outcomes (labs built, projects completed, issues resolved). When applying, tailor the resume and cover letter to the posting language to improve Applicant Tracking System (ATS) matching. Robert Half’s Canadian hiring analysis notes that competition remains high for key roles, which increases the value of targeted applications and visible skill development (Robert Half, 2025).

3) Direct outreach and work proposals

Direct outreach (introductory employer calls or targeted messages) can differentiate candidates because it creates two-way communication instead of a one-way application submission. The most effective outreach is specific: identify the hiring manager or team

lead, mention the exact role or service area, and request a brief conversation or guidance on the best application route. A related “work proposal” approach is to identify a credible business problem (for example, improving patch compliance, tightening remote access, or standardizing backups) and propose a short, measurable solution. This can be particularly effective with SMEs that do not run large recruiting pipelines.

Conclusion

Canada’s IT sector continues to offer strong opportunities, but hiring is increasingly shaped by cloud adoption, cybersecurity risk, and the spread of data and AI into operational workflows. Successful candidates combine solid fundamentals with visible evidence of skill (certifications, labs, and projects) and apply job-search methods that consistently outperform apply-only strategies. For Atlantic Canada students, a practical strategy is to pursue local employers and MSPs while also applying to remote roles in the national market, using networking and informational interviews to access opportunities that are not always visible through job boards.

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