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Brain gain for Canada?

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Friday, September 07, 2001

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We've all heard about the "brain drain" -- the migration of Canadian workers heading south. But what we've discovered is that when it comes to much-coveted high tech workers, almost as many Americans are coming north as the other way around.

For every one and a half Canadians...if there is such a thing...that goes south for a high tech job, one American chooses to come north. If it's not for the money, why are so many young Americans are chasing their dreams here?

The view from Diane Mueller's penthouse balcony is picture perfect. High above Vancouver's bustling downtown core, the creative juices flow.

"You wouldn't probably have seen me painting in the States," Mueller said.

Mueller is originally from Boston but has been living on Canada's west coast for five years. She's putting together a portfolio to apply to a prestigious art college, but it's really just a hobby. Her day job is a software designer in Vancouver's high tech industry.

"When I was working down below the line, I think I was putting in 80-90 hour weeks. And here, it's like people expect you to take the weekend off."

With 20 years experience, Mueller could write her own ticket anywhere. She's turned down job offers from Microsoft and chooses to do some of the world's most progressive work from a remodeled warehouse.

"Could you be making more money working in the United States? Of course, you could call me a liar if I said not. I could probably double my salary by going just across the border. It's not about that. It's about the livability, where you want to be," Mueller explained.

Industry leaders have long feared that Canada is losing its most highly skilled tech workers to the U.S. But Diane and others are proof many American professionals are just as willing to come north.

Just blocks away at the competition, Shane Caraveo is still settling in. He's been in Vancouver just six months, but is already enjoying the advantages.

"If I went to Silicon Valley or if I went to Manhattan I would make more money working in those places but my living expenses would be much higher. So it kind of offsets that increase and also you would pay more for things like healthcare and those services you get in Canada," Caraveo said.

It's good news or a bad news story depending how you look at it.

» [Canada NewsWire](#) Even analysts have a hard time determining whether there really is a brain drain. The migration stats can be contradictory, but they do show a defining trend.

"There will always be the people that are driven by wanting to rise to the top in the toughest place of all and those people will naturally gravitate to the Boston or Silicon Valley or wherever they think the action is," said industry consultant **Stuart Mackay**. "But there seems to be a trend among the 25-35 year old towards wanting to have a more balanced lifestyle and not being willing to sacrifice everything to the job."

At 39, Mueller is now thinking about the next 20 years of her career.

"The central thing in my life is trying to bring some balance to it and being in Vancouver kind of enforces it because it has that laid back west coast flavour, but it also has the intellectual stimulus that you need."

She believes Vancouver has so much to offer, she's applying for landed immigrant status.

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