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Montrealers put shine on Chrome

Jason MAGDER *Postmedia News*

MONTREAL — Google is hoping to make its Chrome browser a better social experience, and it's looking to Montrealers to help make that happen.

"Right now, you go to a website, and then you go to your social network," said Shibl Mourad, the director of research and development for Google's Montreal office. "We'd like to make it so that when you are browsing the web, you're always within your social universe."

Mourad said Montreal is taking a leading role in adding social networking to Chrome. He said, however, the difficulty will be to add on to the browser while keeping it simple and fast.



POSTMEDIA PHOTO

Google's new offices looks more like a playground than a traditional office.

"Everything we do is about that," Mourad said.

"The idea is not to have little things popping up all over the place. The idea is to make your life easier. That's the challenge. We don't have the answers, but we have the questions."

Mourad said this is still a research project for the company, so he couldn't say when the change would be coming to the browser.

One thing is sure: Google Montreal is still looking to scoop up top local talent in part to help with this project. The Montreal office recently underwent a major renovation – tripling its surface area and adding an entire floor to its digs.

Within the last year, the company has doubled the number of employees to about 50, and it has room to grow, though local Google brass won't quantify the number of people the company plans to hire.

"We're looking for very, very good developers who are good generalists and can switch to different projects," Mourad said. "We change projects every six months. We build something, and then we build something else. We're always working on the Chrome browser, but within that, there are hundreds of projects."

"The hiring process is very long, and it's more driven by how many good candidates we find,"

Mourad added.

On Monday, Google held an open house for local media that included a tour of the expanded office.

The office looks more like a playground than a place for serious business. Right next to the reception area is the main stairwell, which has a climbing wall adjacent to it, with ropes hanging off the top of it.

The wall, which is made out of clear plastic, is reserved for Google employees.

Other features include a games room, several coffee machines, a large cafeteria with free food, a gym, showers on each floor, a games room, a recording studio, a massage room and a washer and dryer located next to the gym.

Google spokesperson Andrew Swartz explained that the employees had a lot of input in the redesign of the office.

The climbing wall and the recording studio were particular features that they had requested.

"People work really hard, so it's really important to have a great atmosphere," said Nicolas Darveau-Garneau, the general manager of Google Quebec.

In addition to the engineering team, Darveau-Garneau is also building a sales team that will work with local businesses to help them get the most out of Google's advertising products, and its business tools.

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Loonie closes higher after earlier fall below parity

Sunny Freeman *The Canadian Press*

TORONTO — The loonie rebounded to close with a slight gain against the U.S. dollar Friday after earlier falling below parity as commodity prices advanced and Canada's inflation rate rose slightly more than expected.

The loonie added 0.10 of a cent to close at 100.13 cents US after falling as low as 99.79 cents US.

Canada's annual inflation rate rose for the second consecutive month in February as higher prices on gasoline and food pushed the cost of consumer goods in Canada up one notch to 2.6 per cent.

As well, core inflation – the underlying increase in consumer goods excluding volatile items such as energy and fresh foods – rose two notches to 2.3 per cent, above the Bank of Canada's two per cent target.

That's the fastest pace of price increases since 2008, said Emanuella Enenajor of CIBC World Markets.

"It seems there's no solace for consumers from high prices at the pump. An increase in the cost of gasoline in February was yet again a contributor to the month's near-consensus 0.1 per cent gain," she said.

"The rise in the ex-volatile rate could prove temporary, so the Bank of Canada will likely look through today's elevated reading – suggesting limited policy implications."

May oil was up \$1.52 to US\$106.87 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

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