

BC Skills Force Initiative

**A Strategy for Resolving BC's
Skills Shortages**



B.C. Skills Force
Regional Skills Advisory Committee
Northeast Region
Strategic Planning Session
November 6, 2007

LAY OF THE LAND – CURRENT CHALLENGES

- Workers lack basic skills
 - Lack positive attitude towards work
 - Lack work ethic
 - Lack soft skills (interpersonal/communication skills)
- Shortage of qualified educators and trainers in the region – especially for trades where industry is luring them away
- Government roadblocks are perceived as contributing to the skills shortage problems when it comes to finding qualified trainers
- Capital infrastructure is lacking (College is in need of new training equipment)
- Employers' "buy in" is lacking for them to invest in proper training
- Retention of employees - especially when it comes to apprentices
- Small businesses lack the financial resources for employers to undertake training
- Seasonality of jobs (especially in the oil and gas sector) in the Northeast is an added challenge
- The cost of training employees is significant (both time and money) – particularly when employees often leave for other jobs once they are trained
- Lots of mobility within labour force - both across sectors and within the region
- Employers lack human resource management skills
- The negative perception of service-type positions makes it difficult to attract employees
- Lack of daycare facilities
- Lack of affordable housing
- Need for training incentives for small business employers
- Shortage of available workers means need for immigration
- Employers lack the capacity to provide adequate training
- Lack of mentorship or appropriate mentorship for younger workers
- Employers lack skills and knowledge for hiring new employees
- Immigration process is slow
- Lack of local support services for immigrants

- Inability to access a broader pool of workers such as aboriginal, immigrants, older workers and people with disabilities – Employers, in general, are not considering this broader pool of potential workers
- Lack of understanding of how employers could access non-traditional sources of labour
- No strategy in place on how to attract aboriginals into the workforce
- Lack of welcoming amenities for new immigrants
- Competition from other communities

SKILLS-RELATED INITIATIVES UNDERWAY IN THE REGION

North Peace School District

- Apprenticeship training – higher intake than provincial average
- First Nations apprenticeship training

Northern Lights College Programming:

- Mobile training lab
- Video conference – apprenticeship training
- Residential construction program
- Aircraft maintenance training
- Training in geothermal and other energy sources
- Culinary Arts program for First Nations

Northern Opportunities Initiative:

- Transition to Trades
- Consortium of partners involved, including:
 - School Districts
 - Northern Lights College
 - BCIT
 - First Nations
 - Ministry of Energy and Mines
 - Industrial Training Authority
- Literacy Training
- Employability Skills Training

Fort St. John Employment Information Source

- Research phase complete
- Implementation of recommendations to begin

Energy Services B.C. (Oil & Gas Sector)

- Focus on Attraction and Retention
- Increasing the Talent – Tool kit for employee recruitment and retention

Branding the Peace Initiative

- Creating a regional brand that can be used for attraction
- Go2BC is involved in working with the tourism sector

Literacy Society Programming

- Focus is on increasing literacy of under-employed and unemployed
- Regional focus

ACTION FOCUS AREAS

1. Immigration

- Need to establish an “Immigrant Information and Resource Centre”
- Need to focus more on intra-provincial migration
- Need to speed up the bureaucratic process for accessing immigrant workers
- Need to establish a “Recruitment Group” for the Northeast
 - Assess the labour shortfalls
 - Look to other regions
 - Outbound career fairs
- Need to become welcoming communities
 - Profile local success stories
 - Offer ESL training

Lead agencies: Literacy Society and Job Search

Support Agencies: Ministry of Economic Development, Ministry of Attorney General, Northern Lights College, North and South Peace Economic Development Commissions

2. Addressing Attitudes of Workers

- Exploration of the world of work
- Get employers in the school to talk with students
- Raise the understanding of the value of training and experience as much as earning a wage
- This could be targeted not just at young workers
- Employers need to be provided with a framework for training when they participate in work experience programs (i.e., there’s a need for train the trainer programming)
- Develop creative ways of rewarding youth for their efforts

Lead Agencies: School District, Chamber of Commerce, Northern Lights College

3. Communications

- An effective communications system is needed to enable stakeholders easy access to information on human resource related programs and services
 - Internal communication with service providers
 - External communications to employer groups
 - Regional focus
- Inventory of what is currently available to employers
- Updates to service providers of skills development initiatives currently underway – web-based portal
- On-going identification of skill and labour issues
 - Facilitated discussion and development of strategies
- Development of a resource tool for employers
- Initiative underway with the EAS in Dawson Creek that would be of assistance

Lead Agencies: Community Futures of Peace Liard, local Chambers of Commerce, ESBC, Municipal Governments, and NENAS

4. Greater Dialogue between Educators and Employers

- Educators and employers need to discuss practical needs of employers
- Articulate life skills / employability skills / basic skills training and education to career relevancy
- Job shadow program for teachers and career counselors is needed
- Pro D day focused on dialogue with employers
- Have employers develop detailed job descriptions for positions they need to fill, together with detailed lists of the skills required to fill those positions
- Develop Cognitive Apprenticeships

Lead Agencies: School District #60, Education and Training Consortium, Northern Lights College, and NENAS

5. Human Resource Management

- Get government funding agencies to support the provision of “employer focused” services
- Information needs to be shared amongst employers
- Organize human resource training workshops on a variety of topics, such as:
 - Development of effective job descriptions
 - Effective employment advertisements
 - Interviewing skills

- Orientation programs for new employees
 - How to mentor new employees
 - Develop tools and resources for small business employers (CD or DVD format)
 - Hire an HR management specialist and make available to employers
- Lead Agencies:** NENAS, Job Search, and Chambers of Commerce

6. Explore Ways of Maximizing Non-traditional Labour Pools

- Job Sharing
 - Mentoring
 - Flex scheduling
 - More government support for training and skills upgrading
 - Diversity training for employers
 - Educational institutions need to re-adjust schedules and delivery methods
- Lead Agencies:** NENAS, Northern Lights College, and Literacy Society

7. Succession Planning

- Develop methods for employers to do cross training in their businesses
 - Develop Mentorship Programs
 - Utilize older workers, part time workers and/or former business owners
 - Deliver business succession planning workshops
- Lead Agencies:** Community Futures, and Chambers of Commerce

8. Policy Issues

- Lobby federal government for greater provincial responsibility over immigration
 - Lobby to get tax incentives for employers to deliver training
- Lead Agencies:** Chambers of Commerce, and BC Chamber of Commerce