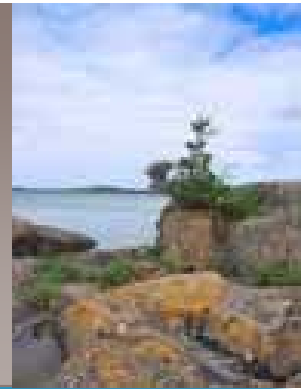


Red Rock Community Consultation



Red Rock Community Consultation Meeting September 15, 2006

A community discussion on workforce
Trends, Opportunities and Priorities in Red Rock.

Facilitated by



Comité de formation du Nord Supérieur

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Red Rock and Region Attendees:

On September 15, 2006 the North Superior Training Board traveled to Red Rock to conduct a Trends, Opportunities and Priorities labour market community consultation. Red Rock is located on Highway 11/17, approximately 100 km east of Thunder Bay and 8 km from the junction with Highway 628. Those attending came from government, labour adjustment, education, business, tourism, and the forestry sectors. The consultation took place in the Red Rock Inn from 2:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

The consultation commenced with an introduction on the mandate and work of the Local Board, its projects and partnerships. Delegates were asked to identify local labour issues with the goal in mind of developing a community partner's action plan to address these issues.

The following issues were identified at the consultation:

The kraft/linerboard mill situated in Red Rock was the largest employer within the two communities of Red Rock and Nipigon, with 433 employees in 2005. The recent announcement of the impending closure of Norampac will leave a large percentage of residents unemployed. As in many other Northwestern Ontario towns, loss of jobs mean shrinking population and out migration of all ages and a much reduced tax base and compromised infrastructure. The Norampac announcement was followed by the news that Nip-Rock Logging would be laying off 30 workers. This loss of employment has also had an impact on neighbouring Aboriginal communities as well as in the communities of Dorion, Hurkett and Thunder Bay. The ripple effect of large mill closures is evidenced throughout the region.

The most significant challenge facing at least 100 of the Norampac employees is that they do not have their high school diplomas with many having only grade 10. This greatly limits the chance for re-employment for these workers as grade 12 is usually the minimum requirement for most jobs, including jobs out in western Canada.

The Superior Greenstone District School Board is currently trying to address this problem. The School Board will be making a presentation in October to those individuals wanting to upgrade their education as well as assessments done of prior learning and maturity credits. One of the challenges is the requirement that the last four credits of a high school diploma be completed within an educational setting. The different options for delivering these are being examined such as offering night school classes. The GED test is also only available in Thunder Bay although Schreiber was able to bring in an examiner so that the test was offered in that community. One of the upgrading options available is courses that are credited towards a high school diploma and a college diploma concurrently. There is also a need for counsellors to be available to ensure that individuals complete the necessary courses needed for future employment.

The effect of these mill closures as well as possible business closures will see a reduction of opportunities presently available to youth, such as Co-op placements. There will also be fewer prospects for apprenticeships with fewer mentors available.

There was a discussion about the need for relevant training, especially for those wanting to obtain trades' tickets. The partnership of training organizations to offer relevant training programs locally is key to ensuring people obtain employable skills. The merit of current training programs was questioned - are people who graduate from institutions such as the College able to get jobs in their fields? Finland was given as an example of area where training is in full step with industry.

The demographics of the community are changing as well. There is an out-migration of youth who are unable to obtain employment after high school or even after post-secondary education. The average age in the mill of management is 49 and labour is 50. These people are homeowners with family ties to the community. There is a great feeling of community loyalty but there needs to be employment opportunities for them to be able to stay here. It was noted that the turnaround time for offering training and employment to these workers is short as people will not likely be able to remain in the area without employment for much longer.

A Labour Adjustment Committee has been struck in Red Rock with an Action Centre established in the community to service displaced workers. There has been a significant increase in clients who include workers who have been recently laid off as well as those who have attempted to seek work elsewhere unsuccessfully and have returned to the community. A new Community Adjustment Committee has been formed in September 2006.

The recent success of GED graduates in Schreiber was cited as positive examples of Community/Labour Adjustment initiatives. The recent opening of Contact North offices in communities such as Nipigon was also raised as an example of possible options for Red Rock. There was strong agreement that the sharing of this type of information is vital and essential. There also needs to be more liaising between Nipigon and Red Rock in these times of economic uncertainty. These communities need educators, businesses and governments to 'think outside the box' and work together to come up with creative solutions.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the North Superior Training Board I would like to extend our appreciation to all those attended the Community Consultation meeting in Red Rock. The feedback received was very positive and all found it a useful event in which to bring a broad range of community stakeholders to discuss local labour market development needs.

Marg Scott
Executive Director