



Thunder Bay Community Consultation Meeting
November 15, 2006

*A community discussion on workforce
Trends, Opportunities and Priorities in Thunder Bay.*

Facilitated by





TOP Community Consultation
Prince Arthur Hotel
Thunder Bay - November 15, 2006



On November 15, 2006 the North Superior Training Board conducted a Community Consultation and those attending represented business, health/social services; government; education and training; labour; and employment development agencies. The consultation commenced with an introduction on the mandate and work of the Local Board, its projects and partnerships, and an explanation of how to identify and prioritize issues within the labour market. Delegates were asked to identify local labour market issues in their sectors with the goal in mind of developing an action plan to address these issues.

The following issues were identified at the consultation:

The job losses experienced in the forestry sector and the ensuing out-migration of the skilled work force of Thunder Bay and surrounding communities to western destinations were identified as a top priority. The decline in population impacts on the City's infrastructure and erodes the tax base causing cuts to social service programs, while the demand for these services is increasing.

The skill gaps are creating challenges for those facing adjustment in their lives. There are a number of displaced workers who are in serious need of retraining and skill upgrading and the need for these services must be addressed. The group agreed that partnership development between business, education (secondary and post secondary) and community organizations would be a positive approach in identifying resources for employment programs and services. Career-path planning was seen as essential for both youth and mature adults. Businesses and unions also need current information about employment incentives such as tax and wage subsidies, and co-op programs. The opportunity to foster entrepreneurship should also be considered. Efforts to create employment opportunities to allow people to meet their basic needs must be a priority.

The in-migration of Aboriginal youth and their families into Thunder Bay is increasing. An integrated community approach is needed to address the significant social and economic challenges experienced during this transition to urban living. The need for a proactive approach in dealing with racial discrimination and social inclusion was also recommended.

The mining industry is growing but the training required for these positions is comprehensive and can involve a lengthy process. Although some of the skills that the displaced forestry workers have are transferable, developing training opportunities through partnerships between businesses and educational institutes is needed.

The health sector is experiencing problems in recruiting and retaining qualified professionals. As the population decreases the number of full time positions in all sectors diminishes, making it difficult to attract people to an area where the opportunities for employment for themselves and their families are limited. There has been, however, an increase in employment opportunities with new medical school, the newly-built hospital and with the expansion of the bio-technology sector. Health care sector employment opportunities need to be promoted in the region.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the North Superior Training Board I would like to extend our appreciation to all those who attended the Community Consultation meeting in Thunder Bay. 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

Priorities

1. We need innovative approaches to economy
 - Bio-technology & knowledge economy
 - ensure our labour force is prepared meets the demand

28
2. Skills Gap – for apprenticeships and health care addressing education and life skills gaps.

26
3. Services that assist in meeting basic human needs (shelter, food, health) - the creation of a database of what we have and what we need.

24
4. Cultural Sensitivity - (e.g. Francophone, Aboriginals, mainstream, Women, etc.) - in order to form a strong northern culture to market Thunder Bay.

22
5. Invest in people
 - entrepreneurship mentality
 - adaptive workforce (mining) – retraining

22
6. Improve the employability skills of our people
 - our Aboriginal people
 - our high school completion rates
 - our adult learner opportunities
 - Partnerships - secondary and post secondary education, literacy providers, employers and unions

21
7. Focus on target groups in our community, based on business opportunities
 - silvaculture/forestry
 - mining workers
 - hospitality
 - training people, building business
 - Partnerships – NSTB (gap analysis), Chamber/Chamber committees

20
8. Employment Supports – for both employers and employees. Information about incentives and training programs for employers and opportunities that are available for those seeking employment.

15
9. Retention and Retraining in all sectors in Thunder Bay and the region.

14
10. Career options need to be identified with youth to ensure their secondary education prepares them adequately to participate in
 - business partnerships, apprenticeships
 - post secondary education

8
11. Recruitment– need to identify what the employers’ needs are and ensure that employment and training centres are meeting these

4

Table 1	
Issue	Discussion
In-Migration of Aboriginal Youth and their families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The focus needs to be on support for Aboriginal families, both adults and children. There needs to be a proactive approach to guiding and supporting children to obtain the education they need and the adults to obtain the training they may have missed. This needs to be an integrated community approach to address the education and life skills gaps to help the transition to urban living.
Out-migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is an out-migration of skilled workers/graduates to Alberta and NW Territories.
Health Sector – recruiting and retaining health professionals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Growing issues with recruiting and retaining health professionals (doctors, nurses). Many sectors are experiencing job losses resulting in decreased populations. Opportunities for full time employment are decreasing. It is difficult to attract professionals when there are only limited jobs for them and even fewer jobs for their families.
Promotion of opportunities in the health care sector to students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The wide range of employment opportunities in the health sector needs to be introduced to students at an early age. Youth need to be kept engaged in programs such as science and math to ensure they are prepared to continue with post secondary education.
Career-path planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There needs to be more career-path planning resources for both youth and mature adults who have experienced job loss.
Employment and barriers in skilled trades.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There has been a strong campaign for many years to attract people to the skilled trades but there are fewer and fewer local jobs for these workers. There continues to be many barriers for youth entering skilled trades which is one of the factors in the low success rates.
Obtaining experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The students graduating with post-secondary degrees are finding limited opportunities to obtain experience in Thunder Bay. These graduates need to be encouraged to look at what opportunities are available to obtain the experience they need in entry level positions. ▪ The Co-op model needs to be promoted to both students and employers as a viable option to providing hands-on training and experience – especially in the health sector and trades.
Recruitment and retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employers need to be engaged and educated to understand the various employment incentive programs (e.g. co-ops, wage subsidies, tax incentives) to attract and retain employees. How can this be accomplished? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ A meeting with all members of the businesses (owners, CEO's, Unions) to encourage participation in these programs. Corporate role models would demonstrate the advantages of these programs. ▪ Employers need to recognize what the skilled workers need and want in order to retain a productive workforce. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ The contact centres offer employees higher wages and the opportunity to obtain experience –the results are positive.

Creating new initiatives for economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New industries often lack local suppliers – the initiatives to encourage people to fill these niches need to be expanded (e.g. partnerships with employment centres and the Economic Development Committee).
Business partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More partnerships with businesses. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ The Advisory Committees of College and University programs are models of partnership forums that are effective. ▫ The Chamber of Commerce is a good partner for members. ▫ The City of Thunder Bay’s Community Economic Development Committee is a support office for small businesses.
Table 2	
Issue	Discussion
Mining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Critical shortage of underground miners (globally) – solutions are long term. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Mines having to train on-site unskilled apprentices (Red Lake). Bruce Power partnered with Fanshaw by providing scholarships. ▫ Explosive growth in Asia has exacerbated need for minerals ▫ Shortage of industrial electricians (mainly construction electricians employed in the forestry industry) ▫ High attrition of older workers
Literacy Skills Gap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some workers are unable to participate in the current job market, lacking essential literacy skills (potential, laid off, and under-employed) especially in remote northern communities.
Education – ensuring success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Caledon Institute: Aboriginal enrolment in post-secondary education is low – emphasis needs to be placed on resources to ensure successful completion of high school. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Distance education? ▫ Building trades partnerships? ▫ Literacy resources ▫ minimum requirement of grade 12 completion for apprenticeships and employers
Education – curriculum relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Narrowing focus in high school and elementary school to math, science, computers and emphasis on knowledge economy minimizes recognition of the trades (the ‘hands-on’ approach) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Need for life skills, auto shop, household finance, home economics, Grade 12 math (college-level math) ▫ Need to match job/trade requirements with training (ensure these are built into all training opportunities)
Training - credentials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Need to provide appropriate training to obtain credentials that are accepted across the industry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Partnerships between employers and colleges.
Labour market skill inventory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are local employers looking for?

Table 3	
Issue	Discussion
Mining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ aging workforce ▪ Aboriginal workforce needs to be prepared and involved ▪ Variety of skill levels needed ▪ transfer opportunities for forest sector workers – classifications of trades and skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ retraining needed
Knowledge-Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understanding of knowledge-economy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ biomedical
Women in the workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ want to keep their families in their communities ▫ investing in people ▫ need to attract youth back ▫ how can we support training, employment, self-employment
Repatriation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ encourage workers to return with newly acquired skills/education
Distance Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Distance education opportunities: keep people here <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Smaller communities do not have the same resources Thunder Bay has (i.e. smaller libraries have fewer resources, lack of cultural and recreational venues)
Mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support and mentoring programs for young are declining - the increase in citizens who would normally volunteer for these programs are leaving the communities to find employment.
Why are people leaving?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ pursuing education ▪ high-paying jobs ▪ are there pathways for lower positions to move into senior positions when vacant (succession planning)?
Education/experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is Thunder Bay educating for our economy's labour force needs? ▪ employers still look at qualifications and education rather than life experience
Workforce training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Big sector pushes (welding, computers) have overloaded markets with employable people – need to meet the supply to the demand.
Create a culture for to sustain new industries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Get away from entrenched ideas (i.e. natural resources) ▪ Transitioning to sustainable bio-economy. Northern Ontario has a lot of potential for bio-economy industry/jobs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ using forest residue ▫ farming ▫ job creation ▫ new skills/training/education ▪ Eco-Tourism potential ▪ Educating people could be our industry even if they leave the area upon graduation. ▪ Action: we need to get together! envisioning, creative sessions
Fostering entrepreneurship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Need to start small – success will grow. We need to celebrate successes rather than possibilities. ▪ There is a difference between the US entrepreneur attitude of starting small and growing and the Canadian workers' attitude. How can entrepreneurship/self-employment succeed?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ PARO has a success rate of 83.6% after first year ▪ Newfoundland is making products for Alberta, filling the need and employing skilled people. ▪ An adaptive, flexible workforce and employers are needed.
Forestry Industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Value-added forestry affecting NAFTA.
Literacy/Education Gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Literacy – 40% of the population have trouble with basic literacy. ▪ There is an increase in the percentage of people on Ontario Works who don't have grade 12. These people have skills but no credentials. Employment opportunities need to be available so people can meet their basic needs (shelter, health, etc.)
Health Care Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What made Thunder medical ventures successful? There was a demand. ▪ Need to become <u>Medical Centre of the North</u> by offering services such as addiction services.
Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Many sources of funding are based on population and ours is declining.