

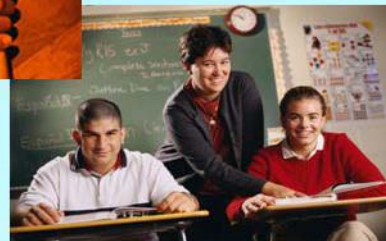


Champions of Northwestern Ontario's Labour Market Solutions

Community Consultation Meeting

Schreiber and Terrace Bay

June 2005



Industry, Business, Education and Local Communities Working
Together to Find Solutions to Labour Market Issues.

Executive Summary

On June 3, 2005 the North Superior Training Board Directors and staff travelled from across the Board region to consult with community partners and stakeholders in Schreiber and Terrace Bay on workforce development issues and the very serious economic downturn in the forestry industry.

The role of Local Training Boards is to engage communities and community partners in local labour market development. By conducting and analyzing local labour market research, trends and planning processes, we work to develop community partnerships to find solutions to local issues.

The outreach began with directors and staff meeting with local educators, municipal leaders and the business/labour community to explore and address the needs and expectations of business and education within the framework of today's world of work. In recent surveys employers have identified the shortages of qualified labour, finding the right person for the job, looking for essential and employability skills and wanting a seamless transition to entry-level employment. By communicating with the local business community, educators were able to speak to the necessity for accurate human resource forecasting needs, where the jobs are and will be, and learn first hand the skills and qualities employers are looking for.

Issues/barriers identified included: lack of training resources/infrastructure available at the local level and the dollars to access what training is available; size of the community and the challenges in securing sufficient opportunities for co-op work experience and a negative stereotype surrounding careers in the Skilled Trades. The recently conducted Business, Retention and Expansion survey conducted in Marathon portrays the most significant barriers to training as cost, distance to a training facility and the inability to provide training locally. These concerns were also stated by those attending the meeting in Schreiber.

Education needs to incorporate a culture of entrepreneurship within the school system as well as encourage students to look at alternate career pathways i.e. trades. There are challenges in recruiting young people to the area as many are unwilling to settle in a smaller centre – this is aggravated by high levels of youth out-migration. While some youth may not want to leave they need to leave to acquire training or skills needed and many simply do not return. Educators, business and parents/students need to work collectively to ensure that the student is responsible, that business is providing meaningful and real skill opportunities and that the schools are using business evaluations in determining grades.

One young person attending the meeting stated that it would be beneficial to have a higher frequency of employers coming into the high schools to let students know what they are looking for in employees. Education should look at providing job readiness and customer service training and focus on the development of essential skills such as work ethic, appearance and a positive attitude. Certification opportunities are important while in high school as young people build their portfolios to enter into the world of work or further study. All those attending this meeting agreed they found it beneficial and would like more time to further explore these issues. Our thanks to Madge Richardson, Chair of Planning on the Training Board, for assisting in planning this event in her community as well as Linda Browning-Morrow, acting Vice-Principal for the Schreiber Public School. Bob Hancherow, Community Development Manager, Superior North CFDC was also in attendance – both Linda and Bob do an outstanding job as representatives on the Board's Passport to Prosperity program which serves to link employers and high school students. The Local Training Board is very pleased to announce that we now have a new youth

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representative on the Board, Daryl Skworchinski, Economic Development Officer for the Town of Marathon and Daryl was also in attendance.

The Directors/staff were fortunate enough to be invited that afternoon to tour Neenah Paper in Terrace Bay and learn firsthand the challenges facing the forestry industry in Northern Ontario. The staff at Neenah are to be commended for the time they took to answer all of our many questions on training requirements, job adjustment issues and future prospects for employment. The forestry industry has been cited by many as being in "a state of crisis" with 7500 jobs across Northern Ontario at risk. The Local Training Board is interested and available to assist with the Community Adjustment activities that are currently taking place in Schreiber and Terrace Bay.

That evening we hosted an informal Community Consultation meeting and invited guests from across the region to join us to openly discuss the many challenges facing northern communities. The Local Training Board is deeply grateful to the people who attended and shared their time, their insights and their obvious passion to work together to effect positive change in Northwestern Ontario. The following represents the summary notes taken during this exchange of ideas.

Attendees:

Donna Martin	NSTB/CFNS
Carolyn Chukra	NSTB/CFNS
Lisa Adamo	Schreiber/Terrace Bay Labour Adjustment Centre
Chrysta Burns	Neenah Paper
Madge Richardson	NSTB/CFNS; Consultant; Adjustment Practitioner
Bob Hancherow	Superior North CFDC
Dave Farrell	NSTB/CFNS
Francis M. Bell	NSTB/CFNS
Frank Hurley	Schreiber/Terrace Bay Labour Adjustment Centre
Gwen Wojda	NSTB/CFNS
Rita McBride	Councillor, Terrace Bay
Peter Monks	Councillor, Terrace Bay
Linda Tolmonen	NSTB/CFNS; Reeve Township of Dorion
Rick Smeltzer	President, USW Local #665
Brian Hiller	Councillor, Schreiber
Bryan Jensen	NSTB/CFNS
Dan Brenzanvich	Economic Development Officer, Schreiber
Lorraine Huard	Councillor, Schreiber
Lila Cresswell	Clerk/Deputy Treasurer, Schreiber
Rob Rosilius	Coordinator, Manitouwadge Community Adjustment
Mayor Don McArthur	Schreiber
Mayor Michael King	Terrace Bay

- It's important to have diversified training. You need to be able to have multi-skills to move from career to career.
- The Labour Adjustment Centre has been open for 1 month and it's already served 100 people; 20 people who have come for support are employed. We are expecting layoffs to come in June, July, and August.
- It's amazing to learn of the many resources there are and how they interact and work together. Great that Terrace Bay and Schreiber can work together.

- As a result of the Provincial Parks from the Lands for Life program, Northwestern Ontario is experiencing a fibre shortage. Government policies are being made without proper consultation. A lot of problems today are due to knee jerk reactions by the government.
- We need to think and speak proactively. We have to adjust quickly because it's happening now.
- We need to try to provide training on a regular basis so people who want to stay in our community can.
- Need to provide infrastructure into our communities.
- There is an immediate knee jerk reaction to lay-offs that see most workers looking to mining and oil patches. We need to look at what we have. We forget about the other natural resources we have here. They're just at a smaller scale than people are used to.
- We shouldn't be surprised with our communities' situation. It has happened in the past, but past practices have been to move from industry town to industry town. We need to think outside the box in order to keep people here.
- We need something to keep the young people here.
- In another 5 years we are going to have a big need for skilled trades people. Not only young people, but adults could be re-trained for apprentices. We need entrepreneurs to create businesses to assist in the training of our workforce.
- I worry about the families/young mothers with children whose husbands must leave to work for a period of time. Could seniors help?
- It's been 7 years since I've heard there will be shortages of skilled tradespeople.
- Trained people can't get apprenticeships. Big businesses will not sponsor people.
- It would be nice if they had incentives for employers. M. Scott circulated the Making Cent\$ of Apprenticeships booklet to the group and told them about the tax credit incentive found inside.
- The new medical school had over 2000 applications. They took 20 students. Why couldn't they take on the 2000? We have doctor shortages and we need to take on more students.

Francis M. Bell, NSTB/CFNS Director asked the attendees:

If you had one wish, what would you want us to say to our sponsors (MTCU & HRSDC)? A primary need for training in your community is...?

- One issue is with severance pay - there is no E.I. You are judged by the amount of savings you have. Therefore, you are penalized for preparing for a lay off. It seems once you have a plan and see what your immediate job may be, your savings ultimately decides what training you can have. You have to jump through a lot of hoops at HRSDC. People are manipulating their assets to get correct funding. We need to wait almost one year before people get back into the curriculum and workforce because of the process.
- Another hurt is that E.I. is so rich. HRSDC has lots of money but they don't share it. People have paid into the program for years.

- Local, available, accessible, relevant training – we need some kind of funding ability that is not prohibited.
- It is important to look at other types of training for the future. Primary/natural resources may not be here. We have to look at the future and diversify our community. We need to be able to move on and diversify our economy and provide the training locally. Non-renewable resource industry.
- We need to look outside of the “Neenah Paper Box”. We need to look at middle pay work.
- We need to establish businesses i.e. a snow shoe company. Let’s have businesses that match our communities i.e. manufacturing canoes “Chestnut Canoe”. We need to partner with First Nations Communities.
- We spend lots of money on people who are voluntarily unemployed compared to people who are not voluntarily unemployed.
- Challenges of the north are not recognized. Why are we treated different than Southern Ontario?
- Would like to see the provincial adjustment program communicate with the federal adjustment program. We need the provincial/federal training agreement.
- We need consultation sessions on the labour market agreement.
- Tell the government we want to be consulted on the labour market agreement to see if it fits the need of N.W.O.
- We need to know exactly what our needs are.
- Will they go back to the OTAB model that failed?
- In the region of 15,000 people (North Shore) we’ve lost 12% of the population. These events were predictable.
- Schreiber’s population has dropped 19%.
- The mayors group meet monthly and speak with one voice to provincial and federal leaders. This is a huge step in the right direction.
- There needs to be more ownership in business and industry.
- We need to take ownership as a community. See www.irrrb.org Iron Range Resources as an excellent example. Our futures are dictated by people who don’t live here. We need partial ownership to know what is happening. We need a plan. Need action items of this plan.
- If we shut down a mill today we will automatically lose 50% of woodlands to the Lands for Life program. If you go to start up the mill again we need to look for more/different woodlands because that initial 50% is now inaccessible.
- We are now trying to mobilize people to think of adjustment and take action, but people don’t want to. They don’t take action until the pad lock is on the doors.
- We need to be proactive not reactive.

- We need the provincial and federal government to be proactive and take action on a predictable adjustment situation.
- They were expecting to have the skilled tradespeople from the mines to go into the mills.
- We will and are now getting skilled tradespeople from out of the country and our children aren't getting trained. Something is wrong.
- We need jobs. Does the training board have the magic wand to give us trained people or direct us towards jobs? Marg and the Directors again explained the role of the Training Board.
- #1 issue is lack of jobs.
- We need to find out what we, as a community, need. What jobs are available to do? Need to talk to the people of the community. Many people have unknown/unidentified skills.
- We are trying to keep people here. A lot of people are multi-skilled. It comes back to dollars and infrastructure. It takes guts and will to take risks i.e. becoming an entrepreneur. A person at the age of 40 years with a family may not be willing to take financial risks. We need a customer base for the skill based entrepreneur.
- The regulations, insurance issues, taxes to start, etc. to start and run a business are hard to overcome.
- Maybe we need to lobby to streamline the process and access the funds.
- 80% of economic growth stems from the businesses already in place. Would it help if the business owners met and discuss how they can expand into other areas of business?
- How do we motivate businesses to meet and discuss the issues and make plans?
- Need to know what training and jobs are needed in the areas?
- A Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) study is being conducted in Marathon.
- There is a Regional Strategic Plan from the Superior North Community Futures Development Corporation.
- A BR&E study should be done in every community and for the region as a whole.
- The un-renewable resource curse. When we find the resources the community doesn't plan for the time when the resource will run out. How do we solve this resource curse?

Final Thoughts from attendees

- We need help. We need to figure out exactly what our needs are. How do we keep our youth? Maybe the NSTB could help us find out what the needs are?
- Ministry of Natural Resources is another regulatory board that is regulating an industry and if it is not brought in line it will put our lights out – based on bad science applied inconsistently throughout the region. Our natural resources are being used really badly. A lot are wasted by being burned or put into the landfill. We should extract the extra oils out of pulp. Communities need to be more involved with our resources and businesses. Out-of-towners run our lives. Everyone except for us gets to say and run our businesses. The communities

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should decide what to do. I would rather sit with community leaders and make decisions. The MNR should be a resource. Communities need to be at the table.

- Thank you NSTB for coming to Schreiber. I hope this isn't the last we see of you.
- As a region we need to keep working together and strengthen as a whole. We need to capitalize on the skilled trade's opportunities and the ideas sitting on the shelf.
- I'm going to keep a positive attitude. I'm going to try my best to keep our people here. There is a turning point in our towns, maybe we can see some changes if we do partner.
- I'm fairly optimistic – need community adjustment. These discussions were great. Partnerships between the NSTB and other towns are great. Maybe we could train people in incubators i.e. entrepreneurs. It may help take the stress away and we'll have new businesses. Many people don't often go to a business to enter into a partnership for training employees. Maybe a training facilitator is needed to train small business employees for similar skills that are required by local businesses.
- Thank you NSTB for coming. We need more community collaboration and partnerships. We may need more facilitated sessions like this one.
- I would like to see people get the tools they need to further their careers.
- Great to hear everyone's comments. Thank you NSTB. I would like to have more sessions like this one.
- I would like to get down to the nuts and bolts of adjustment and learn from every community who is going through it. A lot of communities are at different stages of adjustment. Each adjustment committee should send a representative to a big Regional Adjustment Meeting to discuss what they are going through. Maybe the NSTB could facilitate such a meeting.
- We as a Board lead the way in developing what we are. We function to adapt to change in the region. During our 2005-06 strategic planning we 'front ended' our key deliverables because we know that 40-50% of our work comes up during the fiscal year after the strategic plan is complete. Issues arise that need to be addressed. We don't have all the answers, but we can & are here to help plan & partner. We are the best kept secret that may be out there.
- The NSTB isn't about individuals. We work as a team. We are extremely enthused with the turn out at this session. It shows how important the issues are to everyone. Adjustment isn't easy, but it can be done.