



Trends, Opportunities and Priorities

Labour Market Update Report

JUNE 2005



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The North Superior Training Board would like to extend its deepest appreciation to all of our incredible community partners for their contributions to the Trends, Opportunities and Priorities consultation and planning processes. This update report is a result of a highly interactive process, stakeholder consultations, surveys, forums and interviews between the Board and community stakeholders. Together we can creatively and collectively address northern challenges and work to ensure a bright future for our communities.

TOP Planning Cycle



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Introduction

This report provides an update to the Trends, Opportunities and Priorities Labour Market Report Community Action Plan 2004-2005 (TOPs) produced in September, 2004. The North Superior Training Board has been working hard over the past 10 months involving community stakeholders in a consultation and planning process that has resulted in a greater understanding of the trends, opportunities and priorities in our region relating to labour force and labour market issues and needs.

Northwestern Ontario is currently facing some very serious economic issues particularly in the forest industry and the soaring cost of energy. Communities across our region are facing significant challenges as a result of mill and mine downsizing or outright closures. A declining population base, youth outmigration, low in-migration, telecommunication challenges, electricity rates, a shrinking job market make up the headlines that northerners wake up to and read daily. Many are calling for a need to re-invent the Northern economy and to build on our strengths so that we are positioned to survive and face the challenges ahead. The North Superior Training Board, as do all Local Training Boards across the province, plays a significant role in creating opportunities for citizens to come together to create solutions which will shape a brighter future for our region. Our *Taking Action 2004 Workforce Development Forum* held last fall is one such example whereby attendees from across the region came together not only to address workforce issues but also to develop an action plan that clearly focused on results.

Over the next several months NSTB will continue to carry out community consultations and research as part of the Trends, Opportunities and Priorities Report Update and Action Plan process. The Local Training Board will work with all of our community partners to build and invest in our most important asset of all – our human capital.

Issue 1: Aging and Labour Shortages

The combined result of a negative population growth, a lack of new immigrants and continued youth out-migration has resulted in the population in this region aging more rapidly than the province or the nation as a whole. An aging and declining population has serious implications for the area's economy and shortages in the labour force. Time spent looking for qualified replacement employees has a negative impact on profitability and may force companies to rethink expansion plans or relocate to remain competitive. While we have some information on sector specific impending shortages there is a need to further analyze other sectors that will be significantly impacted and develop action plans to deal with these issues.

Priority High, Long Term

Next Step/Proposed Action

Prepare sector specific occupational and industrial profiles. Identify occupations in sectors by working with sector specific committees that will be impacted by anticipated shortages and develop strategies to address/resolve these issues.

Partners Lead – North Superior Training Board
Other potential partners: City of Thunder Bay, YES Employment Services, Human Resource Professional Association of Northern Ontario, Lakehead University, Confederation College, Local and regional school boards

Timelines October 2004- June 2005

Expected Outcomes This on-going analysis will provide invaluable information to our community and regional stakeholders in designing strategies to address the needs of potential impending employment shortages in a proactive fashion.

Status This project is linked with Issue 3 re: Human Resource Professionals Association of Northwestern Ontario re: survey to determine human resource needs which they are waiting for funding to launch. We do not have sufficient information at this time or the forecasting tools to determine occupational shortages. NSTB participated in the City of Thunder Bay Business Retention and Expansion implementation committee whereupon survey results identified 60% of businesses do not have a formal training needs analysis in addition to reported skills shortages. The Local Training Board will be carrying out research over the next few months into careers in the health sector and areas of future shortages. We are also looking into a follow-up research project to *The Effect of the Aging Workforce on Skilled Shortages in Northwestern Ontario*. We will be recommending partnerships with the coalition of Northern Ontario Large Urban Mayors in regard to developing a strategy for encouraging immigration to Northern Ontario as well in job creation and Research and Development.
Status – on-going

Issue 2: Apprenticeships

The lack of apprenticeship opportunities in Northwestern Ontario contrast sharply with the projected need due to the aging workforce. According to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's 2003 Skilled Trades Survey, within the next 15 years, 52% of skilled trades people are expected to retire. In addition, 41% of Ontario's skilled trades anticipate that they will face skills shortages in their industry within five years. We need to increase the participation of youth entering workplace and experiential education programs and raise the awareness of the many career opportunities available in Skilled Trades. By creating a highly skilled workforce we will not only strengthen the region's economy but will also serve to address youth out-migration and lower youth employment participation rates.

Priority High, Long-term

Next Step/Proposed Action

To organize stakeholders in an Apprenticeship Forum to discuss concerns and issues of apprenticeships and alternative strategies to address unique Northern Ontario needs – November 2004. To organize and host a Skills Networking event for young women in partnership with local and regional school boards and Skills Canada to promote career opportunities in the Skilled Trades area – winter 2005

Partners

Lead: North Superior Training Board
Other Potential Partners: MTCU – Apprenticeship Branch, Job Connect – Confederation College, Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce, Lakehead School Board, Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board, Ministry of Education, YES Employment.

Timelines

November 2004 & Winter 2005

Expected Outcomes

These activities will assist to increase the number of apprenticeships in the area and assist all stakeholders in developing solutions that address our unique needs in this region.

Status

The Apprenticeship Forum took place on February 10, 2005 at Confederation College with 94 participants. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Apprenticeship Branch, Confederation College, Job Connect, North Superior Training Board and Passport to Prosperity joined forces to present a forum which brought people together from the community and region who were interested in finding out more about apprenticeship workforce issues. See NSTB website for report.

The Skills Networking Event for Women in partnership with Skills Canada took place on April 7, 2005 where 83 participants took part in an exchange of ideas among high school girls, teachers and business/industry mentors to explore the opportunities in skilled trades and technology careers.

The Local Training Board has been involved in a number of initiatives over the past year to promote careers in the Skilled Trades and help retain our youth in Northwestern Ontario. See our website – Partnership Activities and Reports.

Status – on-going

Issue 3: Literacy & Essential Skills Training

The City of Thunder Bay's recent Business Retention and Expansion survey suggests that over 90% of businesses surveyed indicated that workforce skill development is somewhat or very important. The same survey however shows that less than 40% of those same businesses have conducted a formal training needs analysis to assess the future training requirements for positions within their organization. There is a need to invest in training of employees and to carry out a comprehensive training needs analysis.

Priority High, Long Term

Next Step/Proposed Action

To launch TOWES – the Test of Workplace Essential Skills designed to evaluate workplace skills in reading text, document use and numeracy. Identified and validated by the federal government and other agencies, essential skills are those which people need for work, learning and life. An increasing number of employers are recognizing the importance of lifelong learning and workplace skills training particularly in literacy and language skills.

HRPANO – Human Resource Professionals Association of Northwestern Ontario is taking a lead role in creating awareness about the significant role Human Resource Planning has among small to mid size business as well as continuing to monitor and forecast the human resource needs of small to mid size businesses.

Literacy Northwest will conduct several employer group meetings to validate job specific skills demonstrations that have been developed by adult literacy practitioners.

Partners Lead: Confederation College; Human Resource Professionals Association of Northwestern Ontario
Organizations interested in Partnering: Secondary Schools, Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, YES Employment Services, Job Connect, City of Thunder Bay, North Superior Training Board, Literacy Network Northeast

Timelines September 2004- June 2005

Expected Outcomes Introduce, to local employers, tools for measuring worker competency and for developing effective training focusing on identified skill gaps. Provide an opportunity for job-seekers to identify gaps in their essential skills, in order to address those skill gaps and improve career options. Ensure that employees and prospective employees have the essential skills to do their jobs effectively.
To develop an understanding of Human Resources needs relevant to members and non-members (HRPANO) in order to prioritize service delivery and assist the worker and employer community in identifying and developing employer and worker needs.
Adult literacy practitioners that are aware of job specific skills training needs and resources, where to find required information/materials, and that are confident in their abilities to address the basic employment preparation/training needs that will help their adult learners keep and/or find jobs.

Status TOWES – Test of Workplace Essential Skills designed to evaluate workplace skills in reading text, document use and numeracy has been successfully launched in Northwestern Ontario. Pulp and paper mills, grain elevators, WSIB and First Nations are currently involved. On-going.
Human Resource Professionals Association of Northwestern Ontario is continuing to source out funding in order to conduct research into human resource needs for small to mid-size businesses in our region. On-going.
Literacy Northwest in partnership with the North Superior Training Board has conducted the first employer group meeting with security guards in order that people in this field or interested in getting into it now have access to the specific skills required for this career path.
Status – on-going.

Issue 4: Aboriginals – Lack of Employment Opportunities

Northwestern Ontario is home to the fastest growing number of children and young people from First Nations and Métis communities. While Aboriginal communities have the highest population growth, their labour force participation rates (59% in 2001) and employment rates (45%) are lower than for the region as a whole. Youth in Northern Ontario's Aboriginal communities have especially low rates of labour force involvement. The average income of individuals in Aboriginal communities is also lower than the regional and provincial average. Opportunities for employment, education and training, access to business opportunities and revenue sharing must be addressed. Innovative solutions and collaborative projects need to be identified.

Priority High, Long Term

Next Step/Proposed Action

Through community meetings address the employment and training barriers for First Nations and Métis and forge stronger linkages among key stakeholders. Pursue greater access to technical/skills training and develop strategies to engage youth in reserve communities and urban settings.

Partners

Lead: Aboriginal Employment Resource Committee
Other Potential Partners: North Superior Training Board; Fort William First Nation; Ontario Native Women's Association; Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre; YES Employment Services/Job Connect; Aboriginal Recruitment Coordination Office; Mamo-Wichi-Hetiwin; Mattawa; Anishinabek Employment & Training.

Timelines

October 2004- June 2005

Expected Outcomes

To work collectively to assist Aboriginal and Métis people prepare for and keep meaningful employment opportunities and to enhance and promote an Aboriginal workforce through leveraging partnerships and linkages with the federal government to address employment, training and education issues.

Status

The Aboriginal Employment Resource Committee has initiated the GA Nawaabin (Look Ahead) Project which is a website that provides valuable resource information to Aboriginal youth who are seeking information about employment programs and services available to them in Thunder Bay. Education has been identified as key to opportunities and jobs for natives. The AERC is now focusing on upgrading, literacy and communications skills and also on expanding apprenticeship opportunities.

An *Inclusion of Aboriginals into the Labour Force* survey was conducted by the Local Training Board at an Aboriginal Information session. The purpose was to determine the barriers and issues that the Aboriginal community faces re: employment and also sought recommendations for change. Youth Employment Services has enhanced their Aboriginal Entrepreneurship Project (AEP) to provide support services to young Aboriginal people who are interested in starting their own businesses. The Local Training Board in partnership with AERC hosted an event "Experience, Strength and Hope" during the Regional Career Fair 2005. This event featured a panel presentation by Aboriginal community leaders sharing their career experiences, challenges, barriers, strengths and the hopes they developed along the way.

The AERC is looking to develop partnerships with large retail companies to provide training trials, with the chambers of commerce to promote the hiring of Aboriginal youth and also with the March of Dimes to create work opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Status – on-going

Issue 5: Women – Skills Development and Employment

Women have lower labour force participation in this region, are lower paid and are under-represented in the skilled trades and technical occupations and over-represented in the administrative and business occupations (support), clerical and health support services. Women continue to be primarily responsible for unpaid work (homecare, childcare and elder care) and are faced with the lack of access to quality, reliable, affordable child care services. There is a lack of information for training, employment, self-employment and education services available for women and in particular, there is a need to promote skills development and skills opportunities for women.

Priority High, Long-Term

Next Step/Proposed Action

Upon completion of surveys, key interviews, focus groups to analyze skills development and business interests, assets and vulnerabilities and access/barriers to funding, develop a strategic action plan. The strategic action plan will identify awareness and implementation strategies and a system and framework for a Women's Skills Development Program.

Partners Lead Organization PARO Centre for Women's Enterprise – North Superior Training Board
Other Partners: Confederation College – Job Connect; MTCU – Apprenticeship Branch; Superior Credit Union

Timelines October 2004 – March 2005

Expected Outcomes To increase awareness of skill development and innovative entrepreneurial opportunities and supports available to women. To develop a loan fund and increased financial supports to build an environment of learning and accessible funding that is available to all women. To strengthen the skills and opportunities of women in our communities. To increase and sustain economic development in the Local Board area and therefore create broad, positive and permanent impact on the local and regional economy.

Status *Northern Opportunities for Women: A Research Report* was released October 2004. The purpose was to provide data that would form the basis of innovative new programs and services designed to aid women in the District of Thunder Bay to become, and to remain, financially independent. *Northern Opportunities for Women: Strategic Plan* was completed in February, 2005. The Plan's framework includes strategies around building an awareness of support services and programs and how to access them; establishment of training programs; financial assistance and access and eligibility. See NSTB website - Reports
Status – on-going

Issue 6: Knowledge Economy

The growth of knowledge based industries is vital to the growth and development of the Northwestern Ontario economy. The “innovation agenda” is a key element of a knowledge-based economy for this region. Research has shown that communities that remain focused solely on the basic natural resources economy have difficulties competing and surviving in the global economy. The local board area economy since 1991 has consistently been less heavily invested in the knowledge-based occupations. The Northern Ontario Biotechnology Initiative is composed of representatives from Northeastern and Northwestern Ontario. Northern Ontario has been affected by higher than Ontario average unemployment rates and significant youth out-migration.

The I-Team or Northwestern Ontario Innovation Team has been created as an action oriented group representing key players in innovation in the region. The I-Team organize innovation initiatives, lobby and, leverage partnerships for key projects

Priority High, Long-term

Next Step/Proposed Action

NOBI is building a business plan and three proposals that focus upon one of the key strengths for the region, namely, forestry, mining and health. These proposals are currently under development with the assistance of sector specific subcommittees that are composed of regional stakeholders and subject matter experts.

The I-Team is going to build a model which supports innovation and invite stakeholders to identify gaps and areas which need support and develop strategies to address each area.

Partners Lead: City of Thunder Bay, Innovation Team – NWO
Other Partners: FedNor, Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation, Lakehead University, Northwestern Ontario Technology Centre, Confederation College, Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, Industrial Research Assistance Program, Northwestern Ontario Development Network Genesis Genomics, Thunder Bay Ventures/Fast Forward, North Superior Training Board

Timelines 2004-2005

Expected Outcomes The culture of innovation is not a commodity that can be purchased. It is acquired through action, participation and the collective will to succeed. This is particularly important for Northern Ontario as the comparative economic advantage of relying on natural resources declines. The inception of more knowledge-based industries and companies in the NOBI region could provide youth with the incentive to remain in the region.
The NOBI proposals will be to further develop their proposals in forestry, mining and health into investment grade business cases that can be used to attract capital.

Status NOBI has now evolved into the Northern Ontario Commercialization Initiative (NOCI). This new organization will establish a central point-of-entry vehicle to facilitate initiatives that will increase the transfer of knowledge and technology to industry and improve linkages to the local economy. Locally the Northwestern Ontario Innovation Team continues to meet to address a multi-party approach to supporting innovation in the health, forestry and technology sectors. It is interesting to note that a new coalition of Northern Ontario Large Urban Mayors in partnership with the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association and the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities have recently released a policy paper entitled *Creating our Future, A New Vision for Northern Ontario*. They are recommending policy changes that will encourage partnerships that will also develop new industry through innovation in health, forestry, information and communications



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**Status
(Continued)**

technology. As well, they are looking for a package of incentives for northern business and industry that will stimulate a more balanced economic growth and create jobs.
Status – on-going – Summit planned for fall of 2005.