

# WORKING TOGETHER

A local labour market plan for the Far Northeast Training Board (FNETB) Region



## ACTION PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

*Working Together: A Local Labour Market Plan for the Far Northeast Training Board (FNETB) Region* was developed with broad consultation and advice from industry, community and learning stakeholders, as well as government departments. It is also based on information and data on local labour market indicators. The use of evidence-based observations and those that reflect local knowledge allowed us to develop a plan that is supported by a solid baseline of labour market data, and that also reflects and respects local realities and priorities. The plan also aims to better align education and employment programs with local labour market needs, and establish local commitment to help implement the plan and guide continued planning efforts.

*Working Together: A Local Labour Market Plan for the Far Northeast Training Board (FNETB) Region* reflects the collective commitment of local stakeholders to:

- Increase access to region-specific and current labour market information
- Recognize and retain the skilled workers and professionals that the FNETB area has and support them in the work they are doing.
- Build a representative workforce by providing opportunities for all to participate in the local labour market.
- Find innovative ways to keep and attract people to our region by providing them with training and employment opportunities.

### OUR MISSION

*To promote the effective planning of training and workforce development programs and services so that qualified workers are available to meet the needs of the local labour market.*

## **CONTEXT**

To compete and prosper in today's economy, we need labour market solutions that will have a lasting positive impact. In order to achieve this goal, we need to develop partnerships that will allow us to: meet the needs of employers and workers; match skills with jobs; enhance inclusiveness of under-represented groups; identify and address gaps in programs and services; and maximize outcomes by sharing resources.

The challenges ahead are significant. With a slowing economy, involvement in a highly competitive world marketplace, and an aging workforce, we need to take steps that will position our region for the decades ahead. We must build bridges with employers, develop long-term solutions, and better coordinate efforts within the region.

Even if our economy isn't growing, the region faces challenges related to maintaining an adequate workforce. The aging of the region's population combined with fewer numbers of young people moving into the labour market due to low birth rates and out migration means that we will have to be creative in filling future job openings, so that local businesses can keep pace in a highly competitive international marketplace. Equally important, jobs in the FNETB area's knowledge-based economy require higher levels of education and technical expertise than in the past. Workers in the FNETB region will need to continually update their skills to keep pace with changing technology, and to command top dollar in the job market. Plus we must ensure that the workers we have today are able to work as productively as possible, by providing access to employment-focused and workplace training.

The local labour market is based on complex relationships between workers and employers, with educational institutions and government playing a supportive role. The collective efforts of all key partners are essential for ensuring an appropriate and responsive training, education and support system to meet local labour market demands now and in the future.

### ***Working Together – A Local Labour Market Plan for the Far Northeast Training Board (FNETB) Region***

This plan for the three years commencing April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009 was prepared under the direction of the Far Northeast Labour Market Planning Committee, with the collaboration of the Far Northeast Training Board and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU). A local Inter-Government Committee also contributed to the process.

This plan does not belong to government, nor does it belong to any particular group or organization. There is a need for action from educational and training institutions, businesses, industry associations, labour, as well as government. Meeting current and future labour market needs requires our collective attention and our concerted efforts.

Everyone who has a stake in the economic success and future vitality of this region has an interest and a responsibility to participate in the solution. This also includes all parents who want their children to have the choice to learn, work and live in the Far Northeast Training Board region. The collaboration and commitment of all stakeholders will be vital to help implement the plan and to guide continued planning efforts.

**GOAL #1 Labour market planning in the FNETB area is innovative, flexible and responsive to changes in the local labour market.**

**Strategies**

- 1.1 Continue to build local capacity for integrated local labour market planning by enhancing the availability of, and access to, relevant and user-friendly labour market information.
- 1.2 Enhance local labour market information and data communication.

**Proposed activities:**

- a) **Produce a document on Local Labour Market Indicators**
- b) **Produce a Local Occupational Supply and Demand Forecast 2010-2020**

The documents will present information for the FNETB region as a whole and also for each of the six CFDC areas within the FNETB region. Local stakeholders have been increasingly requesting more “community specific” data in a timely, consistent and user-friendly format. This activity will allow the FNETB to provide relevant information to assist stakeholders in their efforts to develop and implement initiatives, programs and services to meet local needs. The intent is to develop these reports/data sets in a format that will serve as a common baseline for all stakeholders involved in local economic and workforce development. The information will also be formatted in a way that will allow us to easily update it in the future. Most importantly, the two reports will provide our communities with essential information that will support integrated local labour market planning in this region.
- c) **Host six labour market information workshops**

The workshops are intended to help local stakeholders fully understand labour market indicators and their impact on the local labour market and on the overall economy, and how to use that information in the context of evidence-based planning. The workshops will bring together stakeholders involved in local economic and labour market development. Workshops will be held in each of the six CFDC regions within the FNETB’s catchment area. The objectives of the workshops are two-fold. On the one hand, they will serve as a forum to present and explain the information and how it links to local economic and labour market development. Secondly, we want the workshops to provide an opportunity for participants to give input on the relevance of the information for their respective planning processes and purposes. Capturing that information will allow us to continue to build our local capacity to implement and promote integrated local labour market planning.
- d) **Develop and launch a locally supported web-based labour market and workforce information network/portal for the region**

In order to ensure that the dissemination of local labour market and career information does not become overly time consuming, we propose to develop a user-friendly process that will allow stakeholders to easily access local labour market information on their own, as they need it.

**GOAL #2    The education and training of the current and future workforce in the FNETB area is aligned with labour market requirements.**

**Strategies**

- 2.1 Promote the advantages of training and re-training to encourage greater participation from both employed and unemployed individuals.
- 2.2 Assist workplaces by promoting and providing accessible quality training and workforce development services and programs.

**Proposed activities:**

**a) Develop an inventory of essential and life skills required by local employers**

This project is two-fold. The first component involves collecting information on employer requirements in regards to basic/essential and life skills, as well as gathering information on existing programs. Secondly, it involves developing locally tailored programming to address employers' needs.

**b) More aggressive promotion of existing literacy and basic skills programs**

This project consists of developing a follow-up plan to the local *Celebrating Literacy* initiative launched in 2007. The campaign will target those already in the workforce and it will aim to encourage them to update their skills while still at work so that they are prepared to transition within and/or outside the company or sector where they are currently employed.

**GOAL #3    The FNETB area has a sufficient number of professionals and skilled workers to meet the needs of the local labour market.**

**Strategies**

- 3.1 Improve the FNETB area's self-sufficiency by increasing our capacity to train more skilled workers and professionals.
- 3.2 Improve the retention and recruitment of skilled workers and professionals in order to meet the region's local labour market needs.
- 3.3 Increase the number of employers in the FNETB area who provide opportunities for students and graduates.

**Proposed activities:**

**a) Develop a directory of best practices regarding Succession Planning**

This project consists of investigating and tracking information on local best practices for workforce succession planning. Providing concrete examples of how some companies have successfully implemented succession planning strategies could provide incentives for others who have not yet begun such processes. This project also has the potential to identify and promote upcoming local job opportunities, therefore allowing for proper planning of training for future demand.

- b) **Organize a regional workforce development conference**  
More and more, stakeholders emphasize the need for succession planning for the existing workforce in light of the high number of people approaching the age of retirement. There are also concerns about finding a balance between the different needs and values of a multi-generational workforce. The proposed conference will help address both these issues by increasing public awareness and by providing an opportunity for local employers to network and exchange best practices.
- c) **Develop and implement a local/regional retention and attraction strategy**  
This project includes consistent and ongoing promotion of the quality of life and benefits of living in the FNETB region. It involves the development of common messages on the benefits of learning, working and living in the FNETB region for use in promotional materials by different organizations. The intent is to build on the *Northern Pride* campaign that was launched by the FNETB in 2004.
- d) **Support local institutions in their efforts to increase local delivery of training**  
Continue to provide up-to-date local labour market information to support the efforts of local post-secondary institutions to enhance their facilities and use of technology to augment the number and variety of programs offered locally, particularly in the health care sector and in trades and technology.
- e) **Organize a local trades and apprenticeship awareness week**  
This project consists of implementing region-wide strategies and initiatives during a week dedicated to Trades and Apprenticeship. The objective is to promote the value of skilled trades to the FNETB area's development and growth.
- f) **Develop an employer recruitment strategy for school to work transition programs**  
Expand the existing employer database to increase the number of school to work initiatives and job placements for youth. This activity involves one-on-one interviews with local employers in order to maximize the use and promotion of the Employer Registry that was developed as part of the *Passport to Prosperity* initiative.

#### **GOAL #4**

**The FNETB region has a workforce that is more representative and inclusive.**

#### **Strategies**

- 4.1 Enhance access and opportunities for under-represented groups to acquire the skills and work experience necessary to fully participate in the local labour market.
- 4.2 Develop strategies to address barriers to employment for under represented-groups.

#### **Proposed activities:**

- a) **Develop an action plan to align the supply and demand sides of the labour market equation in the James Bay Coast area**  
This activity involves targeted research and an ensuing innovative applied strategy to help the First Nations along the James Bay Coast increase their participation in the labour force opportunities that are being introduced as the economic climate continues to evolve

in their region. These First Nations communities include: Moose Factory, Moosonee, Fort Albany, Kashechewan, Attawapiskat and Peawanuk. The objective of the activity is to harmonize the needs of industry with the newly-trained Aboriginal workforce. The activity consists of three components: creating a database of employable Aboriginals within a set scope of parameters, including barriers to employment, creating a directory of companies (in the region and/or contracted to work in the region in joint-venture businesses) in order to identify current/forecasted employment vacancies, and providing the framework for the implementation of a strategic plan of action. This is an initiative to develop a research-driven process to ensure that supply meets demand in a labour market that has been previously untapped and underutilized.

In an effort to address the transition issues from education and training to the workplace, a Workforce Transition Steering Committee has been established to embody these concerns for the First Nations People of the James Bay region. The committee brings together people from each First Nation Band as well as representatives from the following sponsoring agencies Mushkegowuk Education and Training Services (METS), James Bay Education and Training Board (JBET), Education Authorities, Housing Authorities and Northern College. This committee will become the foundation for this project, will act in an advocacy role and as a liaison between the First Nation communities.

A rapidly changing economic climate continues to evolve in the First Nations communities of the James Bay region, resulting in critical labour force supply and demand issues. In terms of labour market activity, one of the most significant mining projects of the past 40 years is the DeBeers – Victor Diamond Mine located near Attawapiskat First Nation. DeBeers created and continues to create 350-400 well paying mining operations positions. The Impact Benefit Agreements negotiated between companies like DeBeers and the First Nations along the James Bay Coast ensure that first preference for employment accrues to the Aboriginal residents of the area, provided they have the skills and training to do the job. The majority of the skills training has taken place, however, the transition to employment in the mine, or in the many related joint-venture companies, remains a challenge. Locally trained individuals do not always readily transition into the workforce.

**b) Provide ongoing academic upgrading programs in First Nation communities of the Far North East Training Board (FNETB) region**

With the increase in employment opportunities created by companies such as DeBeers Canada and others, an awareness of the need for increased academic credentials is becoming a significant factor in the education, training and employment realms. As economic development opportunities arise so does the need for increased academic levels (academic upgrading). Education Authorities in First Nations communities provide funding to individuals, mainly for post-secondary programs; there is limited or no access to educational opportunities to attain the entrance requirements for college or apprenticeship programs. As employment opportunities arise these individuals find themselves in positions where they cannot compete for “jobs”. The lack of academic credentials AND essential skills become instant barriers to securing employment. As such there is the need for academic upgrading opportunities for First Nations members in the communities along the James Bay Coast.

Individuals and employers along the James Bay Coast will benefit directly from this research and pilot innovation project. The research will help identify barriers in the transition from education and training to the workplace, while the database will facilitate

the transition to gainful employment for participants. The research will also help identify areas where more skills training may be necessary to fill a gap in the demand. The database will contribute to the growth and development of communities by allowing the matching of skills required by employers with skilled labour available in the region. The ultimate goal of this initiative is to develop and implement a process to ensure that labour market supply meets demand by means of matching skilled and work-ready First Nations individuals with current and forecasted employment opportunities – in a timely, efficient and cost-effective way.

- c) **Evaluate the possibility of setting up a Social Planning Council in the FNETB region**  
This initiative consists of evaluating the interest of local stakeholders in the establishment of a social planning process in the region. It also consists of evaluating the feasibility of the project. If feasible, this initiative will involve the development of an implementation plan. Should the results of the initiative reveal that the establishment of a formal social council is not feasible, the process will nonetheless allow us to identify the social barriers to employment so that they are better reflected in future local labour market planning initiatives.
- d) **Develop a profile of the Francophone population in the FNETB region**  
This project involves the development of a detailed profile of the Francophone population in the FNETB region (ie: educational attainment, workforce participation, migration, etc.) in order to get a clear understanding of the challenges and barriers to education and training so that adequate measures can be implemented to address these challenges. This will be done in partnership with Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité (RDÉE) and other Francophone organizations in the region.

## MOVING FORWARD

*Working Together: A Local Labour Market Plan for the Far Northeast Training Board (FNETB) Region* will not provide an immediate remedy to the skills shortages that currently exist or to those that are now anticipated. Rather, the plan is a multi-year initiative to build local labour market planning capacity. It is essential that government and community partners and stakeholders move forward in a timely manner on the actions prescribed in this action plan. To do otherwise would jeopardize our ability to build a strong local labour market capacity.

To be truly effective, *Working Together: A Local Labour Market Plan for the Far Northeast Training Board (FNETB) Region* requires coordinated delivery and continued monitoring. To facilitate this, the Far Northeast Training Board is tasked with stewarding the implementation of the action plan. Ensuring that this plan remains a living and dynamic process rather than a fixed or rigid document will require continuous monitoring and evaluation. Regular monitoring will also allow for alternative actions to be taken to achieve the objectives if the prescribed intervention is not working. Periodic reporting on the actions outlined in this local plan will include progress reports in October of each year, and annual updates in March.

## EXPECTED RESULTS

With the release of *Working Together: A Local Labour Market Plan for the Far Northeast Training Board (FNETB) Region*, we have set out an ambitious agenda. The actions laid out in this plan will build a local capacity for planning that is integrated, relevant, responsive, efficient and accountable. Ultimately, it will help improve employment outcomes, increase employers' competitiveness and support continued economic and social development in the region.

The goals, strategic directions and actions that are presented in this document are not intended to be exhaustive. We are confident that other opportunities for action will be identified as the report is circulated and the initiatives begin to roll out. We are also certain that new issues, challenges and opportunities will develop in the coming years. In these cases, the information, approaches and strategic partnerships that are identified may provide guidance for future action and evolving solutions.

With the full cooperation of a range of partners, we expect that *Working Together : A Local Labour Market Plan for the Far Northeast Training Board (FNETB) Region* will generate continuous progress over the next three years, on top of what will be achieved through various initiatives already underway.

- Post-secondary education participation rates (including universities, colleges and apprenticeships) will increase year over year.
- An increased number of apprenticeship programs offered locally.
- An increased number of registrations in local literacy and basic skills programs.
- The proportion of the population with post-secondary education will reach the provincial average.
- Annual growth in the number of post-secondary and continuing education programs in the region's post-secondary institutions and in the number of students graduating from them.
- More local partnerships between community colleges and universities to increase the availability of training and professional development in the health care sector.
- Reduction in the gap between under-represented groups and the overall population.
- Increased employment rates for Aboriginals and youth.
- Information about career and job options will be made available to job seekers, as well as to young people and their parents.
- Decrease in the number of out-migrants.
- Increase in the number of in-migrants.
- Increased number of organizations linked to the Integrated Local Labour Market Planning Process.

For additional copies of this document or for copies of the full report visit [www.fnetb.com](http://www.fnetb.com) or contact :



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