



FAR NORTHEAST TRAINING BOARD (FNETB)
your Local Employment Planning Council

COMMISSION DE FORMATION DU NORD-EST (CFNE)
votre Conseil Local de Planification de l'Emploi

Great Clay Belt Agriculture Workforce Development Study

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For Immediate Release

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(05/24/2017) The Economic Development Corporation of the Municipality of Val Rita-Harty, with the support of the Far Northeast Training Board, your Local Employment Planning Council, steered a collaborative project with 13 municipalities and economic development corporations to examine the existing training and workforce development resources available to support agriculture producers in the Great Clay Belt region (Highway 11 Corridor from Hearst to Matheson).

This project was initiated after OMAFRA formally announced in May 2016, that it is actively planning to carve a strategy for the agricultural sector in Northern Ontario. Part of the strategy is to develop livestock pilots in the Great Clay Belt.

Based on the conclusion of McSweeney, the consulting firm contracted to conduct the study, it appears that there are “no gaps” with respect to support for workforce development and training within agriculture in the Great Clay Belt region. The consultants’ findings indicate that “extensive existing training and workforce development resources are available to agriculture producers in the Great Clay Belt.” Although this current stated conclusion does account for an increased need should there be major developments and increases in the local agriculture sector, it points to the availability of resources and supports to grow and train the required workforce from potential growth in the sector. Other labour market studies within the agricultural sector (at the provincial and national level) point towards a shortage of workforce. This means that attracting from outside the region is likely not an option, but training our own within existing supports and resources is an interesting prospect.

In order to support the region's capacity to develop the agricultural workforce, the consultant highlighted three main areas of focus.

Business Development: identify value added production, evaluate the potential of emerging and niche markets, promote and facilitate cooperative models for supply chain management.

Information and Organization: share farming best practices in the North, provide mentorship opportunities, promote available HR supports and resources.

Education and Learning: include agriculture and food into school curriculum, provide business management training including HR recruitment, retention and succession planning.

Economic Development Officer Alain Robichaud stated "With OMAFRA's future plan to expand livestock in the north, knowing that we have the workforce development and training programs available to existing and potential farmers is good news." Robichaud also added "We hope to use the consultant's study as a guide to grow the sector, support existing farmers and educate our younger generation about farming as a potential career option."

The study can be found on the FNETB website entitled: Great Clay Belt Agriculture Workforce Development Study:

<http://www.fnetb.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Great-Claybelt-Agriculture-Workforce-Development-Study.pdf>

