

Shedding light on the changing workforce

by Gloria Welton

Labour Market Information

In April, the **PEI Career Development Association** held their **2009 Conference** in Charlottetown. Speakers were invited to talk about their services and how they are addressing the changing labour force. It was a time to share challenges, resources, and successes.

How has the labour force changed over the last few years?

- Only a short time ago, the skilled labour shortage was the hot topic on the minds of local economists. The western boom encouraged many trades people to leave PEI for western Canada.
- Skill shortages created opportunities for immigrants and we saw a tremendous influx of people coming to live on PEI.
- More businesses have opened their doors to underutilized groups such as immigrants, mature workers, people with disabilities, and Aboriginal people. Employers have gradually found out more about the supports available to ensure a successful job match with groups they may not have considered before.
- Emerging sectors such as aerospace, bioscience, finance, video game development, and renewable energy created new types of jobs.
- The Information Technology sector is recovering. Local IT companies have expanded and more new companies have settled on PEI.
- Eight Sector Councils were formed to address human resource issues in tourism, IT, aerospace, residential construction, culture, agriculture, trucking and health. As a result, we started to get new information on job options.
- Primary industries have seen business shifts resulting in closures and layoffs in agriculture and forestry. The fishing industry has also faced new challenges. These changes have forced large groups of people to reconsider their career options.
- The rising Canadian dollar hit the manufacturing industry especially hard. The bad news in energy resources and the stock market is leading to downsizing and job losses. Reports say the largest job losses have been in Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia.
- People who left the Island for work out west are coming home and need to find jobs. PEI employers are receiving inquiries from people in Ontario looking for work.
- New bioscience, renewable energy, and video game development companies are coming to PEI, and local aerospace companies such as Vector Atlantic are expanding. There is more focus on research on PEI. The bioscience focus has given farmers new crop options and job seekers have new choices. Islanders and immigrants are starting their own businesses. The health sector will continue to have high demands for workers in 60 plus occupations. Tourism and the cultural sector should benefit from a huge increase in events, activities, and festivals on PEI this year. And infrastructure funding is helping to maintain the construction and road and bridge building industries.

All these changes will result in an opportunity to be more creative and resourceful than ever. It is a time to share resources, concentrate on the positive, and stay informed.

For more information about the **PEI Career Development Association** or to become a member, call **Kim Murphy** at **436-0647** or e-mail **kmurphy@peicda.ca**
Visit **www.peicda.ca**

Organizations help the labour force adapt to change

by Patricia Roy, Stella Shepard and Heidi Riley

Dr. Barbara Campbell, Director of the **UPEI Webster Center for Teaching and Learning** and **Anne Bartlett**, Co-ordinator of **Pathways to Success**, one of the centre's 12 programs.



"Saying 'you are not university material' is not accepted at the Webster Centre," says Barbara. "We believe if you want a degree from UPEI, you can get it with the right support."

The centre's goals:

- navigate students successfully through their first year
- increase academic skills
- develop better study, time management, research and writing skills
- enhance self-awareness and self-esteem
- enhance community awareness.

"The Webster Centre supports students by helping them to develop skills which are beneficial to their academic success and to their future. Universities have a responsibility to help students develop skills to prepare them for careers and to adapt to labour market changes."

Mike Leslie, Career Curriculum Specialist, PEI Department of Education and Early Childhood Development



"Over the past two years, we have worked on a new and comprehensive career education framework," says Mike. "This is the sixth month of a five-year action plan. It is a major undertaking to change an education system created for the 1900s to meet the needs of the future."

They aim to create educational programs highlighting the essential skills required to meet the future needs of the workplace.

"We are trying to create opportunities for students to learn outside the walls of the classroom so they can connect with what they are learning in class. And we want to help them take steps towards their career options."

Blake Doyle, Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce



"We represent 850 employers with a total of 16,500 employees," says Blake.

Blake says businesses remain optimistic at this time of global recession. He mentioned a survey that measured the optimism of business people for the next 12 months. On PEI, 87 percent felt their employee numbers would stay the same or increase.

When the survey asked about what issue would be most important in the next 12 months, 24.8 percent said it was the shortage of qualified labour. "We need to start planning now for a sustainable workforce," says Blake. "When searching for workers, companies often overlook immigrants, older workers, Aboriginal people, and people with disabilities. They could do more to encourage the labour participation of these groups."

For more information about **Career Education** in the school system, call **368-4636**.

For more information, visit **www.charlottetownchamber.com** or call the **Greater Charlottetown Chamber of Commerce** at **628-2000**.

Organizations help the labour force adapt to change (continued)



Joey Jeffrey, PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada (PEI ANC)

The Employment Assistance Service at the PEI ANC helps newcomers overcome barriers in their search for work and learn the skills to find employment.

An employment counsellor works with each newcomer to determine their employment strengths and goals and decide on an action plan for finding work.

They also organize events to bring together employers and newcomers. “We try to get the two sides together to get people to realize that their differences are not as many as their similarities,” says Joey.

For more information, call **628-6009** or visit www.peienc.com

This project is funded by the Canada/Prince Edward Island Labour Market Development Agreement (www.lmda.ca)



Jeff Brant, Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI (MCPEI)

“There is a huge discrepancy between what the employer is looking for and the qualifications of our workforce,” says Jeff. “We need coordination between employers and workers about the realities of each job and work towards successful job matching.”

“Our unemployment rate is 20 to 30 percent. Many of our members face a number of barriers such as low education levels, literacy and numeracy issues, addictions, health issues, and limited day care and transportation resources. Most of our members work in the fishery, and that industry is experiencing a downturn.”

“MCPEI offers an **Employment Services Program** that aims to help our clients find sustainable employment that provides an acceptable quality of life. For the past six years, we have worked to overcome client barriers to help them move ahead.”

For more information, call **436-5101** in Summerside, or **626-2882** in Charlottetown. Visit www.mcpei.ca



Karen Chandler, Trade Essentials

Trade Essentials is a pilot project that aims to help solve the skilled worker shortage. It helps skilled workers update the Essential Skills they need to successfully move forward in a trades career and achieve trade certification.

“We are trying to attract people who would not normally consider entering training,” says Karen. “We help them get back into the Apprenticeship system to get the training they need to reward their years of experience and become formally certified.”

They work with each participant to identify the gaps in technical reading, document use, math, oral and written communication, and computer skills that can be barriers to success in passing the certification exams.

For more information, contact Doreen Eynon at **620-3623** or visit www.tradeessentials.ca

Funding for Trade Essentials is provided by the government of Canada's Pan-Canadian Innovation Initiative and is co-managed by the Apprenticeship Section of the PEI Department of Innovation and Advanced Learning.



Wendy Guindon, PEI Council of People with Disabilities

The Council has over 5,000 members Island-wide. “According to the latest PALS survey (2006), 11,790 Islanders aged 15 to 64 (work force age) identify themselves as having a disability,” says Wendy. “Fifty percent are unengaged in the labour market.”

To help their clients return to work, the Council offers a Pre-Employment program, Employment Counselling and Services, and a Work Abilities Resource Centre. These programs and services help improve job readiness skills and help clients understand and respond to changes in the workplace.

“Clients get help in identifying their skills and interests and in making an action plan for the future,” says Wendy. “We offer employment services to about 280 clients per year and about 80 people on average find employment. The others may enter training or education programs.”

For more information, call the location nearest you:
Charlottetown: **892-9149**
Montague: **838-5878**
Souris: **687-7208**
Prince County: **426-9259**
or visit www.peicod.pe.ca

This project is funded by the Canada/Prince Edward Island Labour Market Development Agreement (www.lmda.ca)



Melissa MacDonald and Yvonne Doyle, Passport to Employment

The number of people between 55 and 64 is growing, while there are fewer younger workers entering the workforce. “The goal of Freedom 55, where people were encouraged to leave the workforce early, is no longer a reality,” says Yvonne. “Now we need people back in the workforce.”

Passport to Employment helps mature workers ages 55 to 64 re-enter the PEI workforce. Participants learn to build résumés, write cover letters, and enhance interview skills. They get help to build confidence and to realize their skills

are valuable and needed. They are helped to improve their computer skills and are encouraged to get their GED and go on to more training so they can achieve their goals.

“The program also encourages Island businesses to find ways to employ, develop, and retain older workers, and to appreciate the qualities older workers have to offer,” says Yvonne.

This project is funded by the Canada/Prince Edward Island Targeted Initiatives for Older Workers.

For more information, call **620-3857** or visit www.peijoblink.ca and click on **Mature Workers**.

www.employmentjourney.com