

# BC Skills Force Initiative

June 14, 2005

Duncan, BC

## AGENDA

1. Introduction of facilitators Paul Wiest & Ron Trepanier
2. Introduced the BC Skills Force Initiative
3. Introduction of participants
4. Overview of project
5. Background research
6. Focus Group discussion
7. Next steps
8. Wrap up

## Comments and Discussion

Number in attendance: 24

### Employer Labour Needs:

- Ten employers were having difficulty hiring for vacant positions
- There is a need for qualified trades people (i.e., floor layers, gas fitters, carpenters)
- Full-time hospitality operator has openings for a broad range of skills (i.e., people with social/technical skills)
- Being in a rural area means employees need to be drawn in from outside the area
- There is a difficulty in attracting people to small communities
- Wage levels also are an issue in the hospitality sector
- High-end technical skills - computer
- Finding younger workers with appropriate skills is difficult
- Good success through Job Wave program
- Most young workers lack communication skills
- Employee drug issues are becoming more of a problem
- At the top end, employers have key positions where, once the employees retire, they will be tough to fill
- It is hard to keep less skilled employees

### Skills and Education:

- There is an issue around apprentices having to go to the Lower Mainland for training. This creates a hardship to both the apprentice and the employer
- There is need for more localized trades training
- Age of older workers requires we revisit mandatory retirement age
- Younger workers lack basic skills (i.e., how to dress, how to act, how to provide customer service, how to do math, etc.)
- There is no interaction between the business community and schools. This needs to occur and there is a willingness on the part of business to connect with the school system
- University graduates lack practical skills
- Older workers are not willing to update their training
- Younger workers need multiple skills to effectively do the work required by small business and they lack these skills
- Business owners have to do everything - they are having difficulty keeping up
- Employers need to spend time to train unskilled workers yet they still need to also manage their day-to-day work

- Cost of apprenticeship training, to the employer, is estimated to be \$65,000 to \$85,000 when you consider the training time that is required from senior staff/business owner
- Businesses need government tax credits or some other form of compensation for staff training
- Owners often train employees, and then the employee leaves
- It is difficult for small business to invest the time for training
- Society gives too much in terms of training for free
  - o Employees need to appreciate and pay for training
- Not enough value placed on apprenticeship vs university education
  - o Trades are not valued by school system
- Practical, technical skills should be introduced in the school system
- Apprenticeship programs need to be subsidized like university training
- There is no recognition for an employee's investment in tools and the costs for apprenticing. There should be a tax credit for the trades person who invests in tools
- Employers need both general skills and specialized skills
- Schools need to educate the upcoming work force on the skills required in the work place
- Employers need to be allowed into the school system
- High school students are not prepared for being employees
  - o CAP could be better
  - o They need to better understand the expectations of employers
  - o Youth are not in touch with the real world of work
  - o ABE program locally works pretty good
- There are Workers Compensation Board issues for taking on CAP students

#### Attitudes:

- Expectation levels of recent university graduates are too high regarding the type of work and pay level they can expect in the workplace. Expectations are not realistic given their skills are entry level
- Younger workers are more transient
- Young workers (16 to 25 years of age) don't have the work ethic of those mid-twenty and older
- Younger workers often have no vision of a career path - they are like butterflies hopping from flower to flower
- Employers need to look for appropriately skilled people - they have difficulty knowing how to find the right people
- Employers lack strategies to find the right people and develop career paths for their employees
- Employers don't look at disabled as a potential labour supply. Employers need to tap into this resource
- We need to look at the international perspective and how it can impact us (i.e. competition from China where manufacturing is cheaper and good quality)

### Hiring Practices/HR Strategies:

- Employers generally provide on-the-job training
- The key for employers is finding the right employees with the right attitude vs skills
- We need to creating a culture of doing better vs the attitude that if it ain't broke don't fix it
- Employers need to shift thinking towards developing personal growth plans for their employees (i.e., creating a life plan which is striving for excellence)
- Employers need to create a good environment at work (family spirit at the business) to retain employees

### Succession Planning:

- There is a recognition that succession planning is important but most employers have no formal system in place
- Business owners do not have a formal plan on how to replace themselves

### Final Comments:

- There needs to be a dialogue between the business sector and the school system
- We need to reduce the transient nature of our workforce
- Skills development for younger workers needs to include life skills
- We need to promotion apprenticeship development
- We need to offer tax credits for employee training
- School system needs to be better in touch with workforce issues
- Employers are having difficulty finding skilled employees and also finding employees with the right attitude
- Most high school graduates are encouraged to pursue academics
- Pay level for small business employees needs to be considered
- Employer groups need to be able to reach students in schools - high school/university
- Basic life skills training is needed in the schools
- Broader scope of training needs to be delivered in university/high schools
- There needs to be a closer interface between businesses and schools
- Developing a clear career path within small businesses is important
- Employers need to develop human resource strategies
- Federal and Provincial Governments need to show leadership on this issue - long-term approach
- We need to create a means for time sharing of specialists between businesses
- We need to offer incentives for employees to train (i.e., soft incentives such as flexibility in hours, time off etc.)

- Business owners recognize they need to pay more attention to human resource management and be sensitive to worker needs
- Employers need to create a culture where employees strive to be the best that they can be