

**BC Skills Force Initiative  
June 2, 2005  
Nelson, 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

### Employer Labour Needs

- Approximately forty percent of employers present are looking at hiring employees
- Employers are finding it hard to find the right type of employees
- Nelson has a lot of transient workers in the labour pool; they are here for six months to a year and then move on
- Nelson attracts people for the lifestyle rather than career opportunities
- Employers have to take what they can get for employees
- A number of employers are looking for technical skills
- Many employers are advertising across BC and beyond to fill vacancies
- Most times they end up hiring from outside the area
- Meeting wage level expectations is an issue for small businesses
- The skill sets of today's younger workers are not adequate but employers are forced to adjust because there are not enough skilled people
- Employers are hiring employees that need training and it is difficult to find the time to do the training
- Small businesses have to deal with a loss of productivity because they do not have the skilled employees they need. They must make do with less skilled workers or work longer hours
- It is frustrating for small businesses to train people and then see them leave for bigger centers or change careers
- There is a need for trade skills in the region
- Employees are looking for higher wages than owners can afford
- Work force is stretched. There are fewer people to do more work

### Skills and Education

- There is a need to start a Junior Achievement program in the schools
- Today's society has produced many changes in home life. Many families have both parents working and or have only a single parent. The school system is expected to pick-up life skills training that used to be taught in the home
- Our education system is not focused enough on developing job skills and a proper work ethic
- Families need to teach their children about having a work ethic
- CAP Program in school needs to connect better with the business community, so they can arrange for more appropriate job placements
- Employers want an opportunity to evaluate CAP students and provide feedback to the teacher
- There is too much focus on university as the goal for graduating students. A higher profile needs to be developed for pursuing apprenticeship programs
- There is a need for expanded metal/wood/automotive training. All of these have been cut back
- Society needs to create incentives for students to take trades training
- Community projects should be used to train people trade skills (i.e., building a home for low income people)
- There is a lack of support for new immigrants who arrive in the community
- ESL training needs to be made readily available for new immigrants
- Businesses are willing to train unskilled employees if they have the right attitude

## Attitudes

- There is generally a lack of loyalty on the part of employees. They keep moving from job to job
- Experience from employers involved in the CAP program is that kids have unrealistic views of work, how much they need to apply themselves and how long the work day is
- Today's younger generation have too much given to them. This builds an expectation that they will get the same "hand holding" from employers
- A lack of adequate work ethic prevails in younger workers
- Today's youth have no sense of reality. Life skills training is needed
- They hold the notion that the "world owes me"
- Today's society is a "culture of fast food" - we expect instant gratification
- Today's workers feel that employers need to pay what people expect in a wage

## Infrastructure

- The lack of affordable rental housing is a big issue in Nelson
- Younger people can not afford to own a house in Nelson
- Cut backs in health care and social services have negatively impacted the labour pool. It has made access to basic services more difficult

## Hiring Practices/HR Strategies

- Nelson employers should consider targeting the U.S. as a good place for recruiting new employees
- The immigration process to bring employees from other countries is very difficult. There is too much bureaucracy
- One employer used a recruitment agency to fill their last vacancy. The cost was over \$8,000.00
- The skilled workers available today come from outside Canada
- Businesses need some form of tax relief to compensate them for training the work force
- There needs to be a better partnership between government and employers
- Targeted Wage Subsidy program is too narrow in focus. It applies to Employment Insurance eligible workers only. It should be expanded to include all unemployed
- It is difficult for entrepreneurs to create ways to share the ownership of their small businesses or to establish some form of profit sharing program within their businesses. Community Futures could help in this regard by delivering training programs to assist entrepreneurs in this area
- We need to create compensation programs to reward employee loyalty
- We need to reduce government red tape so that businesses can focus on employee training and hire more people -- current bureaucratic system slows business growth

## Succession Planning

- Entrepreneurs need to learn how to build their businesses and then franchise them
- Many are looking at a transfer of ownership to the next generation, within the family
- Many entrepreneurs have no formal strategy around owner succession planning
- Replacing key senior employees is an issue but most businesses have no plan in place to deal with it

## Final Comments

- Businesses need to lobby government to expand the Targeted Wage Subsidy program
- The issue for many businesses is how do we lobby Government?

- We need to create an immigration strategy that works for business
- Businesses need to connect with schools about the skills they need from students
- Businesses need less red tape from government (i.e., reduce paper work for Canadian Revenue Agency, Good and Services Tax, etc. )
- Need to reduce and simplify government reports -- this would allow more time to address employee issues and business expansion
- Stop short-term vision in dealing with skills training issues. The feeling is that employers are not heard
- There is a need to have MLAs and MPs dialogue more with business owners
- College/Employment Assisted Search/School District/Big Business all need to work more closely with small business in developing skills training programs
- Need to better tie our actions to results. We need to know we are moving ahead on issues
- Who can make sure this work happens:
  - o Chamber of Commerce
  - o Community Futures