

# BC Skills Force Initiative

June 6, 2005

Squamish, 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

- 50 percent of employers in attendance have vacant positions
- Most foresee greater difficulty finding skilled workers in the future
- Some businesses will be expanding and are concerned about finding workers when they need them
- The group was looking for both skilled and unskilled employees
- There is a need for trades people (i.e., electricians, carpenters, plumbers)
- Wage levels for low skill positions are a concern. There is an issue of what a business can afford to offer versus offering what is a living wage
- There is a need for workers with generalist-type skills (i.e., a multi-tasking handyman)
- It is difficult finding younger workers with skills, a positive attitude, and reliability
- Typical respondents to job vacancies:
  - o 20% with no skills
  - o 70% with some skills but not enough
  - o 10% with the necessary skills - then you get into personality and fit (actual pool to draw from is quite small)

### Skills and Education

- Businesses need to have internal training programs for their staff
- It is important to create a learning culture for small business. This will translate into a learning culture for the employees
- High school curriculum is geared towards preparing youth for University rather than trades training
- Younger workers need life skills training
- Career and Personal Planning (CAPP) program is out of date and has unrealistic expectations of what businesses can do
- There needs to be a proper fit between CAPP placements and the job they are placed in. Too often students are not interested in their work experience placement
- Business owners lack awareness of the CAPP program and its aims
- There needs to be a mechanism for communicating the needs of small business to the school system
- Training for younger workers needs to come from other than normal training institutions. More on-the-job training is needed
- There should be incentives for business to train employees
- Tax credit system to compensate businesses for training would be helpful. For example, business could be given the option to receive a tax rebate of one percent on their business taxes if they invest it in employee training
- Need to promote a learning culture among our older workers

- There is a need to change the attitudes of older workers. They should be taking training courses to upgrade their skills

### **Attitudes**

- Today's younger workers' attitude towards work is not appropriate for the workplace
- Younger workers typically:
  - o can not give change
  - o lack work ethic
  - o do not dress appropriately
  - o lack proper attitude
- There needs to be an attitude change within business and the school system towards training programs
- There is a need to raise the profile of trades as a positive career option for younger workers
- Trades require a high level of skill. They are not for dummies
- Business needs incentives to help train employees
- Business owners are too busy to invest time with training employees
- Employers have a built-in bias towards older workers. Older workers are often seen as slow to change and not as productive
- Need to flip message, look at the positive aspects of older workers

### **Infrastructure**

- There is a lack of information exchanged between schools/service provider/business
- There is an issue regarding federally-funded employment service providers not being allowed to work within the schools because education is a Provincial jurisdiction

### **Hiring Practices/HR Strategies**

- Employers use their own networks to find employees (word-of-mouth)
- They often advertise for vacant positions using local media/web
- Issue of how we draw younger workers into local labour pool from high schools and colleges
- High schools students are often hired through experience they gain from the Career and Personal Planning (CAPP) programs
- CAPP program is seen by employers as a great way for finding workers
- Employee ownership or profit sharing programs need to be considered by more employers
- Employers need to share their business successes with their employees
- More performance-based incentives are needed for employees
- More employers need to offer flexible work schedules for employees
- Retraining is often needed for older workers who are displaced (i.e., 50 plus training or elder learning)

## Succession Planning

- Mentorship programs should be established for older employees to help train younger, less skilled employees
- Terminate mandatory retirement age
- Freedom 55, as portrayed by the media, is not a realistic image
- Many older workers are physically incapacitated. They can not do back breaking work so a change in their work type may be required
- Slower work schedule might be the right strategy for older workers (i.e., 5 hours on work tasks and 3 hours for mentoring younger employees)

## Final Comments

- There is a need to create awareness of the various employment programs and services that are available to the business community
- There is a need for employer tax incentives for training of employees
- There is a need for an attitude change on the part of business owner and schools regarding how to train employees
- There is a need to create a positive profile of the trades and technical training
- There is a need to develop a training manual to assist business owners on how to recruit and retain employees and employee career path development
  - o how to recruit
  - o how to training employee
  - o career path training
  - o succession planning
- Use the Squamish Spirit program. Have a special program directed at employees
- There is a need for a partnership between the general community and the business community regarding workforce development
- There is a need for local organizations to maintain an on-going dialogue between the business community and educational/training institutions (i.e., a platform to enable the right questions to be asked and to have more focus groups of this nature. We need to have vertical/horizontal links.)
- Chamber and Community Futures should play a role
- Support should be available from outside the community, but the local community needs to drive the process. Local organizations need to work together and create platform for dialogue
- Next level would be a community-wide process
- Community needs a channel for planting new ideas and to help follow-up actions in order to move forward