

Labour Market Transfer Agreements Consultation
Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour
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Submission by: Fredericton Chamber of Commerce

Impact (What do we need to know)

1. Given varied and changing labour market conditions, what should employment and skills training programs be trying to achieve and for whom?

Our members have found that targeted, employer-led, programs specific to current and future needs of a region, sector or industry work best. In particular, skills training programs should (a) help unemployed individuals re-enter the workplace in a meaningful way; and (b) upskill existing employees with a focus on helping businesses grow.

Additionally, every province is focused on increasing immigration and retaining more newcomers. English-language training is the most essential skill to facilitate success for newcomers and retention for communities.

2. Are current employment and skills training programs flexible enough to respond to the needs of a diverse workforce, e.g. vulnerable workers, youth, Indigenous Peoples, recent immigrants and other who need particular support? If yes, what in particular is working best, or how can these groups best be supported?

Two groups that require particular flexibility are youth and recent immigrants. Perhaps most importantly, youth need experiential training. Both employers and recent graduates have consistently told us that a major stumbling block to hiring is the lack of experience in the workforce. Small- and medium-sized employers are often not in a position to take a chance on a recent graduate and absorb the additional time and costs required to orientate them to the workforce in general. It has been their experience that students are both unprepared for their first job and have a higher likelihood of leaving that employer as a result. Recent graduates often identify the requirement of having previous work experience prohibits them from finding a job locally.

Recent immigrants sometimes struggle to enter the workforce for two primary reasons: a lack of English-language training and difficulties transferring their previous credentials in Canada. This is a major market inefficiency as highly-skilled immigrants are unable to continue their professional careers due to differences in training and credential recognition. Skills program that could address this issue would have a major impact for employers and newcomers.

3. Are all Canadians, in particular jobseekers and potential jobseekers, aware of and able to access appropriate employment and training programs to find and/or keep a job? If yes, what in particular is working best? If not, who and why?

No. Many employers are not aware of various training programs that are available. Too often, changes in government mean changes in programming, which results in an ever-changing maze of programming. Many people wouldn't know what office, or

department or even level of government to call to ask. Even organizations like a chamber of commerce - which are in the business of knowing this type of information - are frequently ill informed about programs. Even when given information, it seems like changes to programs outpace information dissemination.

Perhaps an even greater barrier is the perception (sometimes warranted) that applying for programs is too cumbersome to be worthwhile. People and businesses are intimidated by red tape, excessive forms, eligibility requirements and the like. Employers sometimes perceive that officials are looking for reasons to deny an application, rather than vice versa.

4. What are the employment and skills training needs that employers see as critical to address their workforce and economic objectives? What is the role of employers versus government?

Most employers would rate technical skills that relate to their area of expertise as their top priority. Beyond these, sales skills are important for every employer. We have also been encouraging our members to think about becoming exporters and training for employees in this area has the potential to make a big impact.

Employers and government should have a close relationship when it comes to skills training. Employers can better identify what skills are needed and government can provide targeted funding to assist industry to grow. Government's goal should be to put business in the best position to grow and sustainably create jobs.

Innovate (future needs)

5. What innovative approaches and partnerships could be used to address emerging issues and needs in the labour market?

Government should work closely with post-secondary institutions, other training partners and employers. Each type of post-secondary institution can be an effective partner. We often do not think of universities as skills-training institutions, but as the economy becomes more digital and global, university-based skills will become increasingly important in highly-skilled sectors. They are the source of much of the innovation and entrepreneurship happening in New Brunswick - a necessary part being identifying future opportunities.

Government must also work more closely with itself. Skills training programs require cooperation amongst levels of government and government departments. For example, provincial training programs should align with provincial economic development strategies and growth plans.

6. How could employment and skills training programs be more responsive? (e.g. changing nature of work, increasing entrepreneurship, diverse workforce)

Outside of technical skills training (which should be employer-led), training can focus on transferable skills or skills that align with other regional objectives (ex: broader economic development plans). Sales skills, computer-based skills and the ability to think and act globally are examples. An entrepreneurial focus should occur at all levels and with all types of training. Entrepreneurial skills can be useful as intrapreneurial skills - which will help business (and the economy) grow.

Inform (what do we know)

7. What kinds of labour market information are most valuable in supporting planning and informed decision making? This could include:

- a. Information to support career planning for a jobseeker; or**
- b. Information for employers to support workforce development needs**

Presumably for jobseekers, information on available jobs and/or skills would be most helpful. From an employer perspective, a skills database for unemployed persons receiving training would be helpful and could make the Temporary Foreign Worker and Express Entry systems more effective.

8. What forms of engagement with stakeholders work best? What approaches to outreach might be considered to improve the sharing of information between labour market partners?

Statistics should be presented in a meaningful way for the average citizen or stakeholder to be able to understand and base decisions on. Raw data should be made available in a sortable manner (i.e. Excel).

Local labour-market working groups that meet on a regular basis with key stakeholders (who can then spread information further) have work in our community for various purposes - examples including natural resource development and immigration efforts.

9. What information do Canadians need to better understand the outcomes of investments in employment and skills training programs?

Make numbers meaningful and relatable for the average citizen; aggregated numbers often do not have the desired impact. Metrics that are predetermined, logical, and clearly communicated would have the most understanding. Focus on visual representation of results (ex: infographics).