

New Apprenticeship Training addresses skills gap



The Hyron Regional Economic Development Corporation took a proactive role in partnership with the College of the North Atlantic and industry stakeholders to address concerns about the widening gap between worker skills and industry needs in Labrador West. They designed a project to increase the number of journey-certified trade people needed to address projected skills shortages in the region, and to illustrate the need for local program delivery through apprenticeship training.

Apprenticeship is an industry-based training system that combines on-the-job experience with technical training to produce a certified journey person. A lack of program access in some regions, including Labrador West, was seen as a barrier to labour force entry for many people.

Hyron began addressing these issues in 2006, conducting a survey of local business to determine current participation levels in apprenticeship training, the local numbers per trade at present and local industry projections for apprenticeship training for the next five years.

Uneven distribution of apprenticeship programs throughout the province was identified as a barrier to residents of many regions, particularly for students who must move long distances to attend classes. Hyron and its partners undertook this project to ensure the participation of as many adults as possible in the labour market to ensure that the Labrador West region has enough skilled workers for the future.



The initiative was a success, resulting in the addition of advanced apprenticeship training at the Labrador West College of the North Atlantic. Millwright training is currently offered, with efforts underway to acquire the accreditation for an Electrical program. The program is offered on an as-needed basis as the number of registrants justifies.

Dr. Richard Sawyer, campus administrator for the Labrador West College of the North Atlantic, says Hyron's efforts were instrumental in highlighting the need for local delivery of advanced apprenticeship training.

“One hundred percent of our apprentices were then leaving the area to receive their apprenticeship training in other parts of the province,” said Dr. Sawyer. “This situation created personal and financial hardships on many young families and acted as a disincentive to apprentices to complete their training in a timely manner.”

Employers are also benefiting from local apprenticeship training. It lowers lost production time, recruitment and retention is more focused, and savings are created in areas of man power, overtime, wage subsidies, transportation and accommodations expenses for apprentices. It also creates partnerships between post-secondary institutions, business and labour which strengthen links between education and employment.

The Iron Ore Company of Canada (IOC) is a significant employer in Labrador West, with 146 apprentices on site in early 2010. Wayne Kean, Senior Advisor, Organizational Effectiveness with IOC, was involved in the collaborative process which resulted in the addition of the apprenticeship program in the region. He says local program delivery is a big plus for industry.

“It’s been a big advantage,” says Kean. It’s making it much more accessible, and I would anticipate that going forward we would possibly see more people getting involved in the program.”

Proactively identifying a need and working collaboratively to develop a solution, stakeholders in Labrador West are actively improving the labour market situation for the region.