

St. Lawrence Assesses Mining Industry Needs

The town of St. Lawrence has a rich history in the mining industry. To assess and address labour market challenges, the town, with assistance from the Schooner Regional Development Corporation, initiated a project in May 2009 to develop a human resources profile and mining sector study for the St. Lawrence area. This comprehensive study looks at the short and long-term human resources challenges in the local and provincial mining industry in order to provide strong recommendations for strengthening the industry in St. Lawrence and the surrounding areas.

St. Lawrence Mayor Wayde Rowsell says the town wanted to ensure that it had a competent, available workforce in the region to support future reactivation of fluorspar operations in the town.

“We decided with the support of industry that we should do an analysis. We wanted to make sure qualified people are ready before the project starts,” said Mayor Rowsell. “We want the best mining training that’s available on the ground.”

This one-year project was funded between Service Canada and the Town of St. Lawrence. The labour market researcher identified several barriers to labour market participation in the area, including education levels and availability of daycare services. Furthermore, the Burin Peninsula faces the challenge of retaining a qualified workforce across all sectors, including mining, due to its rapidly aging population.

Gerry O’Connell, Executive Director of the Newfoundland and Labrador Chamber of Mineral Resources, applauds this type of initiative.

“We have traditionally had a strong, available mining work force in the province. However, the combination of an increasing number of new and proposed mining projects, along with an aging workforce, presents the industry with a human resources challenge all across Canada,” said O’Connell. “We are delighted to see St. Lawrence being proactive in addressing this challenge at the local level so it can benefit from the jobs and business opportunities that the proposed reactivation of the fluorspar mines will bring.”

Prior to completion of the human resources profile and sector study in May 2010, several recommendations were already initiated. For example, a public information session was held outlining the skills shortage for the mining industry on the peninsula. Colleges participated in this event to provide information to attendees interested in pursuing training for a sustainable career. An Adult Basic Education program was also set up in St. Lawrence to help those with lower education levels become more competitive in the labour market.

Mayor Rowsell says the information collected by their analyst will also prove valuable as the municipality prepares to meet the needs associated with economic development and works to maximize local benefits. These steps will help remove some of the barriers to labour force entry in the region and work to address the future labour requirements of the

mining industry on the Burin Peninsula and beyond.