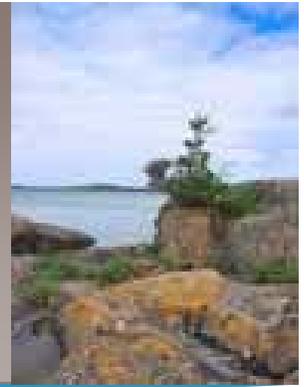


# Nipigon Community Consultation



## **Nipigon Community Consultation Meeting September 15, 2006**

A community discussion on workforce  
Trends, Opportunities and Priorities in Nipigon.

Facilitated by



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Nipigon and Region Attendees:

On September 15, 2006 the North Superior Training Board traveled to Nipigon to conduct a Trends, Opportunities and Priorities labour market community consultation for Nipigon and surrounding communities. Those attending represented the health, business, tourism, government, forestry, economic development and Aboriginal sectors.

The consultation took place at the Nipigon Arena and commenced with an introduction on the mandate and work of the Local Board, its projects and partnerships. Delegates were asked to identify local labour issues with the goal in mind of developing a community partner's action plan to address these issues.

According to the 2004 census estimate, the town's population is 1,944. The kraft/linerboard mill situated in Red Rock was the largest employer within the two communities, with 433 employees in 2005, while the plywood mill in Nipigon is the third largest employer, with 125 employees in 2005, down from 150 employees in 2002.

The following issues were identified at the consultation:

As the pulp and paper industry continues to experience job losses with the closure of mills, workers are faced with the unwelcome prospect of displacement and are required to seek employment opportunities elsewhere. There is a growing shortage of skilled trade's workers and the ability to access skills training or upgrading without being required to leave the area is very limited. The loss of workers from the area has also impacted on apprenticeships as there are fewer and fewer skilled workers available to mentor anyone wanting to enter into an apprenticeship. Residents now find themselves having to hire services from licensed journeymen e.g. plumbers from Thunder Bay as they are no longer available in the community.

While training is being carried out by Confederation College it generally takes place in Thunder Bay which presents challenges with accessibility and affordability. It was recommended that options be explored so as to provide training right in the community. The suggestion was made to have Nipigon become a regional training centre. The example of training centres in Newfoundland which are now providing skills training was referenced and it was felt that if this type of training could be offered there, it could be offered in Nipigon.

The Haileybury School of Mines training facility in New Liskeard that has been re-opened by De Beers was discussed. The mining industry is growing in Northwestern Ontario and there is a shortage of accessible training, both for specialty and common core mining and affordable training that does not require the employee to have to travel lengthy distances to access. Having this training offered in Nipigon would be a good opportunity for the community.

There are a large number of senior workers who are also looking for new job opportunities but feel there is little to mobilize them. At the municipal level there is concern that with fewer tax dollars there will be greater pressure for municipal programming to achieve cost-recovery for publicly offered programs particularly senior groups and programming.

The lifestyle in the community of Nipigon, including family connections, is frequently referenced as to why people want to remain in the area however jobs are essential. While the recruitment of workers by Alberta companies is very active, the reality is once workers get out there, affordable and available housing is extremely limited. As such some are returning here to jobs that require them to travel and provide a lower salary range than that with which they have been accustomed to. The strength of community spirit and the willingness to tackle the economic decline was seen as a major asset. The local media is responsive to the community and often prints good news stories and submits articles from the local economic development committee. The Land of the Nipigon Community Adjustment Committee was established in January 2005 as a partnership of the communities of Nipigon, Red Rock, Dorion, Hurkett, Lake Helen and Beardmore. This group remains active and is seeking renewed funding to take them through to the end of 2006.

The issue of the community's infrastructure was discussed. The loss of jobs will result in reduced population levels which negatively impacts businesses, schools, house values, recreation and will result in a decrease in the tax base. If the community infrastructure is lost, so is the community. The local school has lost 75 students this year and the general decline in population is accelerating. The infrastructure exists i.e. housing, hospitals, schools etc. but what is needed is economic diversification and strategies to attract new industry.

The health sector in Nipigon is challenged with recruitment and staffing challenges typical of communities across Northwestern Ontario. Potential job losses in nursing, laboratory and x-ray technologists will become a factor if families move away from the community. There is one resident doctor who resides in the community on a part-time basis while the other four physicians reside in Thunder Bay.

The tourism industry is strong but not sufficient to make up for the loss of jobs in the mill. The number of visitors to main attractions such as the Suspension Bridge and Ouimet Canyon were down 20% last year. There were a number of factors that would account for this drop such as gas prices and exchange rates. The Red Rock Inn, however, said that their inquiries on-line has gone up. They also discussed the importance of businesses along the North shore cross-promoting one another. There are a number of tourism projects underway that will offer enhanced business opportunities for people but these are still in the development stage.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the North Superior Training Board I would like to extend our appreciation to all those who attended the Community Consultation meeting in Nipigon. The feedback received was very positive and all found it a useful event in

which to bring a broad range of community stakeholders to discuss local labour market development needs.