



**nova  
scotia**



**youth**



**economic  
development**



**education**



**training**

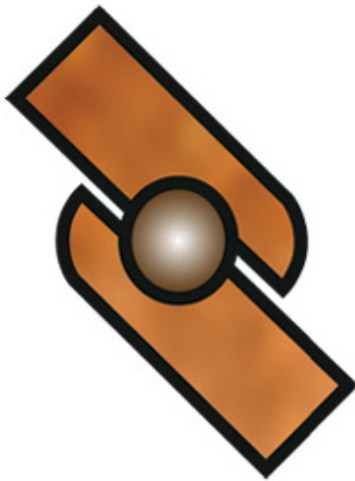


## **Workplace Partners Panel Atlantic Provinces Task Force**

### **“What We Heard” *Summary of Key Findings for the province of Nova Scotia***

April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2006  
Lord Nelson Hotel  
Halifax, Nova Scotia

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# Executive Summary

The **Workplace Partners Panel (WPP)** is a national initiative created by the Canadian Labour and Business Centre and supported by the federal government, specifically to bring business and labour leaders together, to examine different labour market challenges facing Canada. While these are pan-Canadian challenges, the WPP recognizes that long-term solutions must reflect local and regional realities. This is why the WPP's first major initiative was designed to draw out provincial/regional "Best Thinking" on the critical issue of **skills needs in the context of an aging workforce**, and involved the creation of regional task forces.

The **WPP Atlantic Provinces Task Force (APTF)** is comprised of senior labour and business leaders from each province in the region. Given that the issue of skills needs in the context of an aging workforce is so broad and complex, the APTF's exploration involved a review of multiple inputs (provincial deliberative dialogues, online consultation, research report, surveys) and focused on three priority topics:

1. *Workforce*: challenges relating to youth, immigrants, the unemployed and underemployed, older workers.
2. *Economic development*: challenges relating to job creation, productivity, and innovation.
3. *Education and training*: challenges relating to stakeholder coordination, workplace training and lifelong learning, and trades and technologies.

This report synthesizes the key findings from the **Nova Scotia deliberative dialogue**, which was held in Halifax, on April 18, 2006. This report is one of the inputs that the APTF Nova Scotia representatives used to develop their thinking on approaches to address the over-arching challenge of skills needs in the context of an aging workforce.

Please note that all content provided in this report reflects what participants said during the dialogue. As such, the report does not represent the views of the Canadian Labour and Business Centre, the Atlantic Provinces Task Force or the Workplace Partners Panel and its staff. In addition, facts and figures presented by participants and included in the report have not been verified for accuracy.

## 1. Workforce

**Youth:** Dialogue participants placed a great deal of emphasis on youth and how they could best contribute to developing a skilled workforce. They agreed that **youth need to be "given a voice"** in policy discussions on labour strategies. Participants suggested that youth be engaged directly, instead of through intermediaries like academics or researchers, and be asked important questions like "what is meaningful work to you?" They also stressed the importance of dealing with **out-migration** by understanding what motivates young people to leave (or return to) Nova Scotia. Finally, some suggested that engaging young people would also help youth make the **transition from school to work** more effectively. Participants emphasized that seamless



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coordination is required and that helping business, education institutions and youth to communicate better would make this transition easier. They identified several practical options to facilitate this including use of the Internet and “skills matching” between schools and businesses.

**Trades:** Participants agreed that trades need to be more effectively promoted to youth as a viable career option. They thought that trade occupations should receive the same amount of positive attention as professions such as doctors and engineers, and that trades’ employers and information about these careers should be brought into the elementary and secondary school system. Participants suggested using a public image campaign to improve the image of the trades and highlight the pay and opportunities in these jobs.

Throughout the dialogue, participants also touched on several other issues related to the workforce. In particular, participants felt that, at present, **immigration** is not a priority for meeting skills needs, though they did suggest that stakeholders in Nova Scotia needed to work together to address the barriers, like integration and skills recognition, that many immigrants face when moving to the province. Participants spoke briefly about best practices for integrating workforce and human resource planning into business development strategies, and why **older workers** may continue to participate in the labour force past retirement age.

## 2. Economic Development

**Strategy:** Participants called for a strategic approach to the challenge of economic development that connected and coordinated efforts between stakeholders. They agreed that this approach should incorporate plans for creating an environment for small businesses and quality workplaces.

While participants indicated that most **small businesses** are not reliant on government, government does play an important role in creating the conditions that allow small businesses to either succeed or fail. They indicated that Nova Scotia’s small companies employ a large part of the workforce and that enabling their growth is a key part of developing the province’s economy.

Importantly, dialogue members also outlined a need to take a more ‘holistic’ approach to labour force discussions. They stated that people look for a number of factors in employers and workplaces, aside from pay and benefits: a healthy work-life balance, respect for employees, good working conditions and job stability. In order to attract skilled workers, businesses have to create **employee-friendly workplaces**.

In other conversations, participants discussed external factors that shape skills shortages, including **competition** between industries and the availability of **public transit**.

## 3. Education and Training

Dialogue participants started their discussion by agreeing that there needs to be a **change in mindset** throughout Nova Scotia, so that education and training is seen as an investment, and not as an expenditure.

**Coordination in the education system:** Participants thought that the biggest challenge in education was the lack of coordination amongst industry and teaching institutions. At the moment, participants commented, schools and universities do not prepare or provide students with the skills or practical training necessary for work and for life after school. This disconnect means that employers find it difficult to find the skilled staff they need and jobseekers, especially young people, find it difficult to qualify for skilled positions.



At the same time, however, dialogue members acknowledged that coordinating and working across jurisdictional boundaries can create its own challenges. It can, for example, be difficult to get the players around the table at the same time: different government departments at the provincial and federal levels (including those that focus on economic development, community services, and education), business and industry associations, unions, and the Association of Sector Councils. Participants identified the need for a coordination body that has the vision, mandate, and commitment to enhancing learning cultures in the workplace.

**Workplace training:** In addition to educating youth, participants discussed the importance of continuing education for adults, especially workplace training. Some talked about the need for retraining options that are simple, cheap, affordable, provided on-site and incorporated into the workplace. Training options, they said, need to be flexible and make use of alternative delivery models, incorporating technologies like the Internet, cable and satellite to link learners with educators across distances. To help make workplace training **more accessible**, participants recommended starting a National Training Fund for Workplace Education, funded by Employment Insurance (EI) and its surplus that would support continued learning and increase skill levels across Canada.

Dialogue discussions touched on other issues. For example, participants expressed concern about the emphasis on university or extended college training for careers that used to be covered by shorter programs in the college system, like teaching and nursing aids. They also discussed the lack of accreditation or standards for **adult educators**.

#### 4. Strategic Considerations

Participants agreed that, as part of discussions on skills challenges in the context of an aging workforce, it was important to consider **broader global forces** as these have an impact on the province, for instance, environmental issues, geopolitics, dynamics of the global labour market, competition for skills between countries, and between low wage to high wage economies.

They also agreed that it was important to incorporate **labour market and regional information** into strategic planning. Participants stressed that skills strategies must be informed by the regional dynamics of the economy, where areas of unemployment are, and where jobs will be in the future. They added that strategies must also take into account and address the regional disparities within the province.

#### Final Comments

Participants in the Nova Scotia dialogue emphasized that the issue of skills needs in the context of an aging workforce is broad and complex. However, their discussions indicated several priority areas for action:

- Efforts should be made to engage youth more fully and meaningfully in discussions on future workforce skills. This, they said, will make sure that tomorrow's workers are included in today's discussions. They often came back to the need to ensure young Nova Scotians had the skills required to succeed in today's labour market, and to create meaningful employment opportunities that would help retain or repatriate the province's youth.
- Stakeholders should collaborate and coordinate better, particularly to make sure that the skills taught in education facilities match those that industry is and will be looking for.



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- Continuing training should be encouraged and supported, more flexible, and make use of alternate modes of delivery to be more accessible to workers across the province.

Participants in the Nova Scotia dialogue also emphasized the importance of understanding the broader context in which the province operates, noting that this is important for both an accurate analysis of the problems and for determining which would be the most effective solutions.

Finally, participants expressed interest in learning from each other, particularly with respect to best practices in the policy arena.





# 1. Background

*The Workplace Partners Panel (WPP) is a national initiative created specifically to bring business and labour leaders together, to examine different labour market challenges facing Canada.*

*The WPP Atlantic Provinces Task Force (APTF) is comprised of a senior labour leader and a senior business leader from each of the Atlantic provinces.*

The **Workplace Partners Panel (WPP)** is a national initiative created by the Canadian Labour and Business Centre and supported by the federal government, specifically to bring business and labour leaders together, to examine different labour market challenges facing Canada. While these are pan-Canadian challenges, the WPP recognizes that long-term solutions must reflect local and regional realities. This is why the WPP's first major initiative was designed to draw out provincial/regional "Best Thinking" on the critical issue of **skills needs in the context of an aging workforce**, and involved the creation of regional task forces.

The **WPP Atlantic Provinces Task Force (APTF)** is comprised of senior labour and business leaders from each of the Atlantic provinces. The mandate of the APTF was to:

- Demonstrate, through its leadership, the power of dialogue and collaboration between business and labour;
- Help identify and articulate provincial and regional "Best Thinking" on the issue of skills needs in the context of an aging workforce;
- Ensure that the topics explored during the provincial dialogues and online consultation reflect provincial/regional realities;
- Be the "face of the WPP" in their province and in the region (e.g., by hosting their provincial dialogue and presenting a report of their findings to the national WPP board).

To this end, the APTF was provided with a number of different data sources or inputs, to help inform its deliberations. These include:

1. The WPP Atlantic Handbook
2. The WPP Viewpoints Survey
3. The WPP General Population Survey
4. The WPP Online Dialogue
5. The WPP Provincial Dialogues

*Note: The contents and purpose of each of these inputs are described in further detail in Appendix 1.*



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Given that the issue of skills needs in the context of an aging workforce is a broad and complex one, the APTF's exploration of the issues focused on three priority topics<sup>1</sup> – and some of their related challenges – that are inherent to the issue:

*The APTF's exploration of the issue focused on three topics (and their related challenges): the workforce, economic development and education and training.*

1. **Workforce:** challenges relating to youth, immigrants, the unemployed and underemployed, older workers.
2. **Economic development:** challenges relating to job creation, productivity, and innovation.
3. **Education and training:** challenges relating to stakeholder coordination, workplace training and lifelong learning, and trades and technologies.

**This report synthesizes the key findings from the Nova Scotia provincial dialogue, which was held in Halifax, on April 18, 2006.**

*Please note that all content provided in this report reflects what participants said during the dialogue. As such, the report does not represent the views of the Canadian Labour and Business Centre, the Atlantic Task Force or the Workplace Partners Panel and its staff. In addition, facts and figures presented by participants and included in the report have not been verified for accuracy.*

As outlined above, this report is one of the inputs that the APTF Nova Scotia representatives used to develop their thinking on approaches to address the over-arching challenge of skills needs in the context of an aging workforce. Elements of this report will also be included in the Nova Scotia chapter of the APTF's final report.

### How Is This Initiative Different?

#### **Leadership**

- Places business and labour in the driver's seat together.

#### **Ownership**

- Offers a unique opportunity to influence all stakeholders to take ownership of this critical issue.

#### **Relationship**

- Aims to identify common values, i.e. what matters most
- Recognizes and respects differences, i.e. "where we agree to disagree"
- Focuses on opportunities for collaborative action

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<sup>1</sup> These topics and challenges were identified by APTF members based on background research conducted by the WPP team, individual interviews with each of the APTF members and a prioritization of potential topics and challenges by the APTF as a whole.





## 2. Methodology

An important dimension of dialogue is choice work, whereby participants are called upon to make difficult choices, based on what they value or believe to be important. During the deliberative dialogue, participants were invited to share their views and identify their priorities throughout the day.

Participants opened the day by introducing themselves to the plenary and identifying their key concerns or expectations.

### *Expectations and concerns*

The morning conversation was then dedicated to understanding the issue and identifying priorities. The question used to focus the morning conversation was: *What key topics and specific challenges are important to you and why?* This part of the conversation was concluded by a prioritization exercise.

### *Priority challenges*

The afternoon conversation then focused on opportunities for action. In particular, participants explored what needs to be done, by whom and under what conditions. The question used to focus this part of the conversation was: *What actions must be undertaken? By whom? Under what conditions?*

### *Opportunities for action*

As a supplement to their detailed conversations and dialogue, participants were asked to fill out two questionnaires, which would provide additional and more quantifiable assessments of their perspectives. A pre-dialogue questionnaire was administered on the morning of the deliberative dialogue, prior to the start of the dialogue proceedings. A post-dialogue questionnaire, containing the same set of questions as the first, was administered at the end of the deliberative dialogue. The pre- and post-dialogue questionnaires allow for an analysis of participants' perspectives on issues pertaining to skills needs in the context of an aging workforce, and for an examination of how the deliberative dialogue experience itself may have influenced or changed those perspectives.

### *Pre and post dialogue questionnaires*

*The following pages provide a summary of the concerns and priorities identified by participants during the first half of the day. They then summarize key findings from the dialogue as they relate to the three topics proposed by the APTF, including a number of additional strategic considerations that have emerged from participants' discussions. It concludes by providing a summary of the input collected through the pre- and post-dialogue questionnaire.*





## 3. Making Choices



As outlined in section 2, participants were invited to identify their priorities and concerns at various points of the dialogue. Following is a summary of the concerns expressed by participants in their introductory comments, as well as the priorities they identified during the morning prioritization exercise. As mentioned in the previous section, a key component of dialogue is choice work that asks participants to make choices based on what they value most highly.

*Some participants felt that skills challenges in the context of an aging workforce should be viewed as an opportunity, rather than just a challenge.*

### 3.1 Morning Introductions: Concerns and Expectations

During the opening session, participants introduced themselves, and briefly outlined their hopes for the session and some of their key concerns. A number of issues emerged. Some participants discussed the need for strategic action on skills challenges in the context of an aging workforce, through for example the creation of economic development and human resource strategies, and the need to view the over-arching issue as an opportunity, rather than just a challenge. Others talked about the need to recruit, motivate and retain youth in the province, and to take full advantage of older workers before they retire from the workforce. Participants felt that we need to better understand the reasons for the “brain drain” and out migration from the province, and the resulting impacts on families and small communities. Participants also raised the question about what action should be taken in light of the huge number of people retiring.



## Nova Scotia Provincial Dialogue: Participants' Expectations and Concerns<sup>2</sup>

### Strategy/ Concerted action

- How should we deal with challenges in ways that benefit labour, business, and community?
- What can we all do together to make dealing with the skills shortage an opportunity rather than a challenge?
- Having a minority government in Nova Scotia over the last three years has created opportunities for business, labour, and community groups to work together in new ways
- A coordinated strategy attached to an economic development strategy and a plan is required
- Workforce strategies and human resource requirements need to be aligned
- While many of the issues are not new, the dialogue is an opportunity for organizations that don't usually work together to talk about potential solutions, new directions, and who and which organizations could be taking actions to address key labour market issues

### Trades and technology

- Need to cope with changing technology
- People from Nova Scotia and Cape Breton have been the breeders for the rest of the country – this will likely continue. There is a back and forth movement of trade skills across the country

### Youth

- Need to recruit, motivate, and retain young people
- Need to match gaps between youth and skills shortages in trades, as four years are needed to become skilled in certain trades

### Immigration

- New Canadians

### Demographics

- How should we act in light of the huge number of people retiring? How should we transfer the knowledge and skills of the current workforce to the new workforce so that we take advantage of older workers' skills before they retire?
- The workforce in the shipyards is old, and there are insufficient people to replace workers near retirement
- There are no female workers in trades connected with the shipyards
- There is a need to understand the reasons and the impact on families and small communities of the brain/ skills drain and out-migration
- The poaching of the province's skilled workers is a significant factor that contributes to skills shortages in the province

### General

- Changing challenges
- Keep Nova Scotia looking the way it does today (farmer – reports that the average age of NS farmers is 58)
- Personal and professional interests
- Skills development and training
- How small and medium size businesses fit into this issue
- Skills shortages

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<sup>2</sup> As expressed by participants when they introduced themselves during the opening session of the Nova Scotia provincial dialogue.



### 3.2 Prioritization Exercise

*Participants within each group were asked to identify which topics or challenges were most important to them.*

As previously mentioned, the first part of the dialogue was dedicated to exploring the challenges faced by Nova Scotia with respect to the issues of skills needs in the context of its aging workforce in small group discussions. Participants in each group were then asked to identify which topics or challenges were most important to them. In order to get a sense of individual priorities, each participant was given a budget of \$5. They were then asked to indicate which of the challenges (including any their group might have added to the list) they would choose to allocate their limited resources to, and why they made these choices.

Participants could put all of their money on a single challenge or could split their \$5 as they saw fit amongst several challenges. Each group then totalled their individual allocations and reported to the plenary their group allocations. The following table summarizes how funds were allocated across all groups:

*Please see Appendix 2 for a detailed breakdown of how each group allocated its limited resources.*

#### Participants Priorities: \$5 Allocation Exercise

Topic	Challenge	Total (by challenges)		Total (by topic)
		\$	Voices	\$
Workforce	Youth	\$18.50	18	\$42.50
	Immigrants	\$8.00	6	
	Unemployed / underemployed	\$6.00	6	
	Older workers	\$4.00	4	
Economic Development	Job creation	\$7.00	8	\$20.00
	Productivity	\$4.00	6	
	Innovation	\$7.00	7	
Education and training	B/L/G/E coordination	\$14.00	13	\$46.50
	Workplace training and lifelong learning	\$22.50	23	
	Trades and technologies	\$8.00	9	
Other	Labour Market Information	\$5.00	4	\$28.00
	Community sustainability	\$5.00	3	
	Favourable business climate	\$7.00	4	
	Transportation	\$2.00	2	
	Sensitization Communications Engagement re: issue	\$2.50	3	
	Work-learning supports/ transition	\$3.50	3	
	Women	\$1.00	1	
	Rural	\$1.00	1	
	Middle-aged workers	\$1.00	1	



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*Note: the total dollar amount represents the total dollars allocated to the challenge or topic across all groups, while the "voices" refer to the number of participants who chose to allocate their funds to a particular challenge (e.g. 18 people allocated a total of \$18.50 to youth-related challenges). Some participants chose to allocate their money by topic, instead of by specific challenge. These additional dollars are reflected in the "Total by Topic" column.*

*Participants identified the broad topic of "Education and Training" as having the highest priority of all three topics.*

As can be seen from the table above, participants identified the broad topic of "Education and Training" as having the highest priority (\$46.50). Under this broad topic, "Workplace training and lifelong learning" was assigned the most importance (\$22.50), followed by coordination across business, labour, government and education (\$14.00) with trades and technologies earning least importance under "Education and Training" (\$8.00). Participants also took this opportunity to note that a labour market information strategy and supporting collection and dissemination mechanism (\$5) would be required to assist in determining education and training priorities. They also highlighted the importance of work-learning transition supports (\$3.50).

*With respect to "Our Workforce", participants placed a strong emphasis on youth.*

Participants identified "Our Workforce" as being the second most important topic (\$42.50). Under this broad topic, participants felt that the most important challenge to focus on was youth, for a total value of \$18.50. This corresponds with the emphasis that participants placed on youth in their discussions. The amount of money that participants assigned to youth was almost double that of the amount they assigned to immigrants (\$8.00), identified as the second priority under "Our Workforce". Participants felt that with respect to immigrants, the challenge is more retaining them rather than attracting them to the province. Participants also discussed the unique challenges faced by various other groups in the workforce, highlighting that there is no "one size fits all" strategy and that the needs of each group should be recognized and addressed accordingly. As a result, participants allocated \$6.00 to the unemployed and under-employed, \$4.00 to older workers, \$1.50 to middle-aged workers, and \$1.00 to women. Participants also connected development of the province's workforce with the creation of economic opportunities that will help to bring Nova Scotians, who have left the province, back to live and work.

*Under the broad topic of "Economic Development", participants chose a balanced mix of job creation and innovation.*

The broad topic of "Economic Development" was allocated a total amount of \$20.00, including \$7.00 each to job creation and innovation, and \$4.00 to productivity. However, this amount can be augmented by additional investments made by participants in additional challenges they felt should be explicitly mentioned:

- The need to create a favourable business climate (\$7) that would in turn help generate economic opportunities in the province (for example by improving taxation rates);
- Ensuring the sustainability of Nova Scotia's communities (\$5), particularly in rural sectors (\$1);
- The importance of basic infrastructure to support economic development, for example public transportation (\$2).

Finally, and on a broader note, some participants felt that sensitization, communications, and engagement on the skills issue was itself a priority (\$2.50).





## 4. Workforce

*With respect to the workforce, participants focused their conversation almost entirely on youth.*

During the Nova Scotia provincial dialogue, participants spent time discussing workforce-related challenges and possible opportunities for action. While four different groups of people were presented as possible solutions to the challenge of the make-up of the workforce, including youth, older people, immigrants and under-used workers, participants focused their conversation almost entirely on youth. This emphasis is also reflected in how participants chose to spend their financial resources.

Participants also briefly discussed older workers and immigrants, while none of the participants discussed underused and underemployed workers as a potential solution to the province's aging workforce. The following presents a summary of the key points raised by participants throughout the dialogue related to the workforce.

### 4.1 Youth

With respect to youth participation in the workforce, participants approached this challenge from a number of different perspectives. They emphasized that in order to decrease the out-migration of youth from the province, the quality and extent of opportunities for youth needs to be improved. They also saw a need for deeper exploration and understanding of the reasons that compel young people to leave the province. Other issues that participants talked about included giving youth a voice so that key actors better understand their workforce needs, mechanisms to help youth make the transition from school into the workforce, and youth at risk. These areas are outlined in more detail below:

*Participants related the out-migration of youth to the quality and extent of opportunities available to youth in the province.*

#### **Out-migration of youth**

Participants related the out-migration of youth to the quality and extent of opportunities available to youth in the province. Participants also felt that in order to decrease the departure of youth from the province, there is a need to explore and better understand the reasons behind their decision to leave.



## Some Opportunities for Action...

### **Out-migration of youth:**

- Participants talked about implementing a “return to service” commitment program. This would help to fund youth’s training and education in exchange for their commitment to work for a specific length of time in the province.
- During their discussion, participants suggested the use of incentives so that students stay in Nova Scotia for higher education, and the use of incentives in the province’s workplaces to attract youth to stay in the province.

*Participants defined “good jobs” as interesting and challenging and which provide benefits and training.*

### **Quality and extent of opportunities for youth**

Participants felt that in order to decrease the out-migration of youth from Nova Scotia, the province needs good opportunities and economic incentives so that youth are encouraged to stay. Participants defined “good jobs” as interesting and challenging and which provide benefits and training. Participants pointed to the fact that chronic under-employment and limited job opportunity forces people to leave. For example, they said, even when youth complete college or university, they are still sometimes forced into working at minimum wage jobs.

Participants felt that incentives should be offered to prevent youth from leaving the province. They noted that student debt levels might be driving decisions among the current cohort of young workers to leave the province. At the same time, participants also felt it was important to educate employers about what people are looking for in terms of meaningful work and work-life balance to improve retention rates of young people.

*In order to better understand youth’s expectations of work, participants talked about the need to talk directly with youth, and not only with academics and technocrats speaking on behalf of or studying youth.*

### **Giving youth a voice**

Participants felt it was important to talk directly with youth, not just with academics and technocrats speaking on behalf of or studying youth. They felt it could provide a better understanding of why youth decide to leave, as participants questioned if opportunities for work or for money were the sole reason. Better understanding and talking directly with youth will assist in the development of appropriate courses of action to stem the out-migration of youth.

Talking directly with youth could also help to better understand youth’s expectations of work. Participants felt that having dialogues with youth, and starting this conversation with children as young as in Grade 4, would be useful. By having such conversations, youth’s expectations of work, often different from older generations, could be better understood and met. Such questions as “What is meaningful work to you?” and “What’s in it for me?” could be asked.

Participants referred to anecdotal information that they already have about youth preferences. For example, staying in the same job for many years is not generally an attractive feature for youth. Instead, they are more interested in a good quality of life and employers who value a healthy work-life balance.



Participants also felt that youth should be seen as part of the solution, and not as part of the problem. Youth need to be involved in the development of solutions and in their implementation.

### **School to work transition**

*Participants felt that key to integrating youth into the workforce is to broadly share information with youth and their parents about which opportunities exist.*

Participants felt that a part of integrating youth into the workforce is to broadly share information with youth and their parents about which opportunities exist. For example, participants felt that people representing different types of work should speak with youth in high schools, at the point when they are starting to think about what to do with their lives.

Participants also discussed the point at which it is appropriate to start streaming students or young people into a specific profession or trade. Participants felt that while this should begin early in the education system, the system still has to provide youth with enough flexibility so that they can change directions or pathways if they want to. Taking a flexible approach that provides the individual with choices will help to promote the talented to move in directions they are good at and passionate about.

Related to sharing information with youth about which options are available for work, participants discussed the need for mechanisms that would help integrate youth into the workforce. Specific mechanisms that participants talked about include:

- Using the Internet to bring youth into the workforce since they have high rates of Internet usage;
- Closer coordination and working with schools to better match opportunities with skills;
- The creation of apprenticeships and internships;
- Volunteer and community work to be recognized and encouraged; and
- Providing more opportunities for transition and job-sharing between youth and older workers.

*Participants emphasized that seamless coordination is required, so that the journey from education and learning, to work is easier than it currently is.*

Under this last point, participants felt that since so many older workers are on the verge of retiring, arrangements could be made which would allow older workers to work part-time and offer apprenticeships for younger workers. This type of arrangement would allow for greater skills-transfer between older and younger workers, and would provide a form of job-sharing benefiting workers as well as the economy.

Participants pointed out that since so many small business owners are currently approaching retirement, there is a tremendous opportunity for youth to take them over and continue their development. Youth need to know about this possibility, and such transitions from older business owners to youth need to be encouraged.

Participants emphasized that seamless coordination is required, so that the journey from education and learning to work is easier than it currently is. Such seamless coordination also requires that educational curricula, from high schools to post-secondary educational institutions, be better matched.



### Some Opportunities for Action...

#### **Mechanisms to bring youth into workforce:**

- Adapt the aerospace/ small parts mentorship program currently in place in Ontario to Nova Scotia's context. Through this program, students are able to learn about work opportunities in the trades or business.
- Some participants referred to "open door" programs that exist in other countries and jurisdictions, where businesses go to schools to talk about the type of work that they do.
- To provide youth (and their parents) with information about work opportunities that exist in the area, participants talked about "asset mapping" which could highlight work opportunities and labour market skills requirements within a certain radius of the school.
- Encourage industry - education partnerships in the development of curricula and delivery of programs that will help to ensure education and training is directly applicable to the skills needs of the labour market.

*Participants felt trades should receive the same amount of positive attention as professions such as doctor, engineer, etc.*

#### **Promoting the trades with youth as a valid career option**

Participants stressed that when different options are discussed with youth, these options should be presented on an equal footing. For example, participants felt that trades should receive the same amount of positive attention as professions such as doctor, engineer, etc., and that trades' employers and information about the trades should be brought into the elementary and secondary school system. Trades need to be talked about "out loud", they stated. Many felt that students are often given the message that without a university degree, they are failures. This message needs to change, as trades skills require greater respect, from youth, parents and educators. Participants felt that school principals and the Ministry of Education should allow other players such as business, community organizations, and parents to have greater influence on the school system than they currently have.

*Participants discussed the particular needs of youth who are at risk of "falling through the cracks".*

#### **Youth at risk**

Participants had a brief conversation about the particular needs of youth who are at risk of "falling through the cracks". They felt that youth at risk require early intervention, as well as clarity around the possible options available to them through career and life planning. In relation to this, participants talked about the possibility of providing them with mentors, to help address their needs.



### Some Opportunities for Action...

#### **Promoting the trades with youth as a valid career option:**

Participants talked about different actions that could be taken to improve the image of trades, amongst parents, teachers and youth, and thereby encourage youth to enter into the trades. They also talked about the need to make trades “cool”.

- Implement a public image campaign to improve the image of trades. This campaign could highlight the pay and opportunities that exist in the trades. A *ParticipAction* model and a slogan such as “There’s no life like it” could be used, similar to the armed forces campaigns. Video and communications students, sector councils, and Chambers of Commerce could be involved in their development and implementation.
- To attract youth, an exciting dynamic road show about trades could be developed. For example, a film crew could follow a set of trades to identify interesting facts (e.g. number of miles of wire needed to...).
- Through a “champion” campaign, high profile people from the trades industry could be spokespersons to change the image that trades have and promote trades as a viable career option. Actors could include industry, government educators, labour, and successful small businesses.
- Provide clear and relevant information about the trades, through a career options website.
- Training in trades could be linked to the attainment of university degrees. Schools could then give degrees in trades and technology. Workers could be allowed to take part-time courses for credit towards the attainment of a degree.
- Stakeholders could promote learning and work opportunities in the trades. Local examples include the “Champion campaign,” industry scholarships, legacy programs, and the Nova Scotia nursing strategy. Such efforts at communication should be directed primarily towards youth.

## 4.2 Immigration

*Participants felt that at present, immigration is not a priority amongst stakeholders, but that they need to work together to address some of the barriers to attracting and retaining immigrants.*

Participants talked about the need to attract and retain immigrants to Nova Scotia in order to increase the size of the population and of the workforce over the long-term. They felt that at present, this issue is not a priority amongst stakeholders. Participants emphasized that stakeholders need to work together to address some of the barriers to attracting and retaining immigrants. They suggested that it would be useful to look at how previous immigrants were successfully integrated. There are a number of roadblocks that currently exist to attracting and retaining immigrants. These include:

- Limited recognition of credentials;
- Nova Scotia does not always welcome, support and help newcomers to integrate;
- Limited economic opportunities in the province, which can make it difficult for immigrants to build a decent life for themselves; and
- Small businesses do not always have the resources necessary to make the efforts that may be required to integrate immigrants into their workforce (e.g. English as a Second Language (ESL)).



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Participants also felt that business and labour should look more closely at the ethical implications of recruiting professionals (e.g. doctors) from other countries. People in Atlantic Canada complain about Alberta “poaching” the province’s people, yet Nova Scotia poaches doctors from India and different countries in Africa. Participants suggested that labour could partner with unions in other countries and take part in international solidarity work on this issue.

### Some Opportunities for Action...

#### **Create an environment more welcoming to immigrants:**

- Participants talked about how change in attitudes is required so that immigrants feel more welcomed in the province. They noted that children today are often more open and aware than their parents are and felt such open attitudes can be supported and encouraged by the education system.
- Participants suggested that the responsibility for creating a welcoming environment should not only lie with immigrant serving agencies but also with communities.
- Some indicated that the media can help to dispel myths about immigrants, for example, by showcasing immigrant success stories, their contributions to the province, sending the message that immigrants are not “here to take our jobs”; and provide information on why the province needs immigrants.
- Others referred to the need to “walk the talk” and to create a welcoming environment through simple gestures. Actions could be taken by: children, media, education, and labour.

#### **Recognition of credentials:**

- Participants discussed the need to recognize immigrant credentials, which will require a cross-sectoral approach. Participants felt that if business and labour takes the lead on this, government will automatically follow.

### 4.3 Older Workers

Participants talked briefly about the reasons why older workers sometimes choose to continue working past the official age of retirement. For example:

*Participants talked briefly about the reasons why older workers sometimes choose to continue working past the official age of retirement.*

- For older people whose businesses have failed or are not able to support them in retirement, work is necessary.
- Others want to work because they enjoy the sense of satisfaction that it gives them.
- Older people sometimes work longer because young people who could take over jobs are not there.

Participants also mentioned that “older workers” are not homogeneous group, highlighting that older workers approaching retirement and middle-aged workers who are entering the last phase of their careers face very distinct challenges. In particular, they noted that middle-aged workers are often those who are in most need of retraining/reskilling to remain current with their changing work environment (e.g., new processes, technologies, etc.).



Participants did not discuss specific opportunities for action related to older people.

#### 4.4 Other

*There is a need for more research on best practices and best models aimed at integrating workforce and human resource planning into business development strategy.*

In addition to the topics discussed above, participants talked about several different issues related to the workforce. As these issues were only briefly discussed, these points have been presented under the general title of "Other".

- Participants talked about the need for more information on people with disabilities in the workforce.
- They also pointed to the fact that marginalized groups sometimes face literacy issues.
- Participants felt that there is a need for more research on best practices and best models aimed at integrating workforce and human resource planning into business development strategy.





## 5. Economic Development

*Participants felt that concerning economic development, there is a need to better understand the province's niches and competitive advantages.*

**P**articipants in the Nova Scotia provincial dialogue felt that in regards to economic development, there is a need to understand what are the province's niches and competitive advantages. In addition, the province should recognize who we are today (e.g., resource-based, rural, and with a high concentration of small businesses) and define what the province wants to become. This could include building upon the education industry and expanding R&D clusters in health research and other areas. Finally, participants stressed that in order to address the challenge of economic development, an approach that is both coordinated and strategic is required. This approach must incorporate plans at the provincial, regional, and national level, and must be accompanied by measurable targets so that progress can be measured.

Participants talked about economic development from a number of different perspectives and challenges associated with economic development. While three specific challenges were identified under the topic of economic development in the participant workbook (productivity, innovation and job creation), participants did not limit their conversation to these challenges. Instead, they focused their conversation largely on the role of small businesses in economic development, as well as a variety of other related challenges, including:

- Creating an environment that supports small business;
- Creating an environment that attracts workers;
- Quality of employment;
- Technology and training;
- Need for a strategic approach; and
- Competition.

*While participants indicated that most small businesses are not reliant on government, government does play an important role in creating the conditions that allow small businesses to either succeed or fail.*

Participants' comments on each of these challenges are summarized below, as are the opportunities for action that they identified.

### 5.1 Creating an Environment that Supports Small Business

Participants pointed out that Nova Scotia's small businesses employ a large percentage of the province's workforce and make up a large component of the province's business sector. And in keeping with the province's emphasis on small business, participants felt that individuals need to be encouraged to be "job-makers" instead of "job-takers". As such, they felt that small businesses were an important challenge to discuss. While participants



*It was pointed out that while small businesses face similar challenges in urban and rural settings, these challenges are more acute in rural areas.*

indicated that most small businesses are not reliant on government, government does play an important role in creating the conditions that allow small businesses to either succeed or fail.

Some participants felt that governments have to make it more attractive for small businesses to hire and train new workers, including apprentices. Other ways in which small businesses could be better supported is by helping them to pool or share resources across a group of small businesses. This kind of initiative would allow small businesses to reduce costs, and allow them to spend on other requirements or save for future needs.

It was pointed out that while small businesses face similar challenges in urban and rural settings, these challenges are more acute in rural areas.

### Some Opportunities for Action...

#### **Creating an environment that supports small business:**

- Specific items that participants felt could be pooled across a number of small businesses were human resource functions, administrative functions, and Research and Development (R&D). While small businesses have limited capacity for R&D, participants pointed out that other businesses could benefit from knowing about small business innovations.

## 5.2 Quality Employment

*One participant coined the phrase that it has to "pay to go to work".*

Participants talked about workers' need for quality employment. In order to attract and retain workers, employers need to examine the quality of the employment that they offer. They suggested a number of characteristics that people look for in an employer and workplace environment. These include:

- A healthy work-life balance;
- Opportunities for advancement;
- Respect for employees;
- Good working conditions;
- Good wages and benefits; and
- Job stability.

*Participants felt that there is a need to support women in accessing jobs in traditionally male-dominated areas.*

In reference to job pay, one participant coined the phrase that it has to "pay to go to work". However, it was pointed out that low wage, contract term jobs are being created by the provincial government, which helps to create a low wage economy. Women are the main holders of contract term jobs as they often face barriers that prevent them from aspiring to permanent jobs. Participants felt that there is a need to support women in accessing jobs in traditionally male-dominated areas.

Participants pointed to Nova Scotia's high rate of personal taxation, the second highest in the country. This is a huge disincentive to attracting and retaining workers in the province, especially as it's not possible for the province to compete with Alberta's high wage levels.



### 5.3 Competition

*Participants talked about different types of competition that affect the issue of skills shortages in the context of an aging workforce.*

Participants talked about different types of competition that affect the issue of skills shortages in the context of an aging workforce. They pointed out that while there is now more competition for labour, there are also more young people with higher levels of education. With major global competitive forces at play, participants asked how businesses could be encouraged to create new jobs that can compete with other countries that have lower standards. Remaining competitive and encouraging new businesses is especially difficult in light of the fact that products are being brought in at a cheaper cost and lower standard.

### 5.4 Other

In addition, participants talked about a few other issues related to economic development. As these issues were only briefly discussed, these points have been presented under the general title of "Other". Participants noted that:

*Participants made the connection between public transportation and economic development as public transportation helps people to get to work.*

- In order to make the most of our economy, there is a need to shift the focus away from manufacturing and move more towards service-oriented economic opportunities.
- Skills shortages should be addressed at the same time as new jobs and businesses are developed.
- There is a need to invest in technical infrastructure (e.g. machinery), as much of the province's capital is run down and outdated.
- Participants made the connection between public transportation and economic development as public transportation helps people to get to work. One participant referred to a situation in his rural community in which a 24 year-old man who found work outside the village doesn't have a car and can only get to this workplace if he hitchhikes. This man often arrives late, a situation that is not sustainable for him or for his employer. Provision of public transportation, it was felt, helps individuals to contribute to the economy.





## 6. Education and Training

*There needs to be a change in mindset, so that education and training is seen as an investment, and not as an expenditure.*

Participants in the Nova Scotia provincial dialogue saw education and training as a pivotal topic. They emphasized the need for a change in mindset, from seeing education and training as an expenditure to seeing it as an investment in the province's future. Here, they focused much of their conversation on workplace training and lifelong learning. They also pointed out that the commitment of political leadership is required to move forward with certain key actions related to education and training. Some participants pointed out that it is necessary to define a long-term vision for education and training, and move from being more reactive to taking a proactive stance. In addition, the needs of the education and training system as a whole need to be looked at, as well as the needs of individuals.

Participants also stressed the importance of improved coordination across stakeholders (business, labour, government, the education system, communities and parents) to ensure the education system fulfills its role of preparing workers for the labour market, especially given the high number of education institutions in the province. Participants also challenged the emphasis on formal certification and noted the lack of certification for adult educators.

### 6.1 Stakeholder Coordination

*Participants felt that establishing a more direct connection between industry and educational/ training institutions, would help prevent educational trends described as "the flavour of the month".*

Participants talked about the need for better coordination between education and training programs, industry/ business, students and parents to ensure that once students leave school, they are ready to enter the workforce. They felt better coordination was key to helping to provide people with an integrated learning continuum throughout their lives. Participants felt that as the situations stands now, schools and universities do not prepare or provide students with the skills or practical training necessary for work and for life after school. They felt the education and training system needs to become more flexible and responsive to workplace requirements and future skills needs. Participants called for a more direct connection between industry and educational/ training institutions to help to prevent educational trends they described as "the flavour of the month". In short, they said, the closer the coordination, the smoother the school to work transition will be.



*Participants also pointed out that working across jurisdictional boundaries can create challenges in coordinating education and training initiatives.*

In addition, participants noted, stakeholder coordination is key to ensuring that the various steps in the learning process are communicated more clearly to prospective students so that they understand the next choices and opportunities available to them. This requires close coordination and communication between universities, colleges, skilled trades, and other training programs.

Participants felt that a variety of actors need to be involved in stakeholder coordination. They talked about different government departments at the provincial and federal levels (including those that focus on economic development, community services, and education), business and industry associations, unions, and the Association of Sector Councils.

Participants also pointed out that working across jurisdictional boundaries can create challenges in coordinating education and training initiatives and the difficulties that need to be overcome when trying to coordinate with multiple government departments. Participants felt that there is a need to expand whose responsibility it is to design and implement education and training programs, and that a culture of cooperation and a non-partisan approach, which includes all key players, is required.

### Some Opportunities for Action...

#### **Stakeholder Coordination:**

- Participants talked about the need for a coordination body (e.g. the Nova Scotia Labour Force Development Board) that has the vision, mandate, and commitment to enhancing learning cultures in the workplace. A variety of different stakeholders could be involved in this: government (both provincial and federal), employers, workers, unions, and educators.
- Participants noted that since parents have direct contact with their children, they can be supported to play a role in sensitizing them to the realities of the working world and life after school.
- Some felt that business should clearly articulate their needs and what they require to expand their businesses, noting that this approach worked very well with the "One Journey" program.
- Others felt a need to explore how to create partnerships between industry, educational institutions and workplace training programs that would help programs to be compatible and more aligned with industry needs and realities. An example of poor alignment is that students work in the summer and then go back to school when business needs increase.
- Participants suggested a thorough diagnosis is needed to review current gaps in the education and training system, the resources needed to address these gaps, and types of stakeholder coordination required. While participants pointed out that this could be a difficult and expensive process, having a more precise understanding of the problem helps to identify appropriate courses of action. As an example of what is working well, participants pointed out that community colleges are doing a much better job than universities are on working with the business community to develop hands-on practical education that is responsive to business needs.



## 6.2 Accessibility of Workplace Training and Lifelong Learning

*Participants talked about the development of alternate training delivery models, with involvement from a broad range of actors.*

Under the topic of education and training, participants talked about the need for education and training programs to be accessible. They felt that while numerous education and training programs are available, they may not be accessible to prospective students and therefore cannot serve their function.

Some participants talked about the need for retraining options that are simple, cheap, affordable, provided on-site and incorporated into the workplace. For example, they noted, people at the mid-point in their careers sometimes need to re-train, yet have families and other commitments that mean they can't always afford to do so. And as technology changes, the older workforce sometimes needs to re-train. Participants did however question if this should be required if workers are close to retirement.

*There was also discussion about using different technologies (e.g. online delivery) to allow training providers to reach multiple, isolated and rural learners through long-distance training.*

Others suggested that training could be provided in the workplace by using different technologies e.g. remotely via cable, satellite or online. There was also discussion about using different technologies (e.g. online delivery) to allow training providers to reach multiple, isolated and rural learners through long-distance training. In connection with this, participants felt that it would be important to increase the availability of hi-speed Internet and to expand peer learning. Participants talked about the development of such alternate training delivery models, with involvement from a broad range of actors including educators, business, labour, government, colleges and schools, libraries, and community superstores.

*Participants suggested more effort be made to use existing infrastructure.*

Participants suggested more effort be made to use existing infrastructure. For example, existing distance education facilities could be used to deliver remote workplace training programs (e.g. colleges). Similarly, underused community facilities, union halls, and community rooms (e.g. in the Atlantic Superstore) would have the advantage of providing an out-of-school learning environment, especially for those who have had bad experiences with the education system. They also pointed to the need for public transportation so that people can get to training sites.

*Others referred to the challenge that small businesses face in providing employee training, in terms of covering training costs.*

Others referred to the challenge that small businesses face in providing employee training, in terms of covering training costs as well as the impact that the loss of a worker can have, even for a short time, on the small business. Participants suggested that training should be offered at different times to accommodate peak work periods. In order to encourage more workplace training, participants asked: How can workplace training be recognized? And, what kinds of incentives could be implemented to encourage small business owners to invest in more of it?

Participants indicated that the creation of workplace training programs should not be too complicated or bureaucratic. Some referred to a Quebec program where so much paperwork was required that people eventually gave up. Finally, participants felt that it is important to recognize that Nova Scotia already has 55 workplaces involved with 104 education programs, supported by government.



### Some Opportunities for Action...

#### **Start a National Training Fund for workplace education:**

- Participants talked about the possibility of using the E.I. fund or E.I. surplus to establish a National Training Fund for workplace education. This could increase workers' skills level, and help to reduce the numbers of employees at risk of falling through the cracks due to limited skills levels. Employers, governments, and unions could all be involved in this type of initiative.

#### **Innovative ways to provide literacy training:**

- Participants referred to a Brazilian example of innovation where literacy materials are printed on food products as a way of reaching a broad range of people.

#### **Expand workplace-learning opportunities:**

- Participants talked about the need to increase workplace-learning opportunities. They felt that specific steps could be taken to do so: (a) conduct assessments of what workplaces require, (b) develop plans for workplace training, and (c) encourage and stimulate industry-education partnerships for curriculum development, internships, literacy and technical training. Different actors need to be involved in this, including the federal and provincial governments, employers, workers, unions and educators.

### 6.3 Emphasis on Formal Certification

*Participants were concerned that in some instances, the demands for educational requirements were too high.*

Participants were concerned that in some instances, the demands for educational requirements were too high and created artificial barriers to entry. For example, participants expressed concern about the emphasis on university or extended college training for careers that used to be covered by shorter programs in the college system, like teaching and nursing aids.

Participants also mentioned that credentials are not always recognized at their just value or a good indicator of one's skills. For example, they said, in the teaching field, there is no recognition of other degrees even though teachers' college does not always provide the skills necessary for someone to become a teacher.

### 6.4 Adult Educators

*Participants felt that a more structured system is required to organize and better support the work of instructors.*

Some participants felt that the work of training instructors needs to be better recognized, valued and supported. They indicated that instructors are not unionized, and have poor wages, benefits, and working conditions. They felt that the credentials and/or experience of instructors who have been working abroad (e.g. teaching ESL in Japan) should be recognized here in Canada.

Others felt that a more structured system is required to organize and better support the work of instructors. At the moment, they said, "anyone can walk in and say that they can teach adults". They also saw a need for more qualified instructors and felt government, industry (including regional clusters of business), and labour could all be involved in addressing this issue.





## 7. Strategic Considerations

In addition to the three topics discussed in the previous section, participants at the Nova Scotia provincial dialogue raised a number of broad and strategic considerations important to skills needs in the context of an aging workforce. These include:

- Understanding the broader context;
- Partnership, coordination and communications;
- Labour market information; and
- Rural versus urban issues.

*Some participants commented on the difficulty of doing justice to the complexity of the issue in a single day of dialogue.*

Participants felt that each of these topics were important to consider and address when moving forward on the issue of skills needs in the context of an aging workforce. Some participants also commented on the difficulty of doing justice to the complexity of the issues being discussed and noted that spending one day discussing these issues could yield only a surface reflection on what could and should be done.

### 7.1 Understanding the Broader Context

Participants felt that it is important to discuss and understand the broader global forces that are at play, as these have an impact on the province, on its skills challenges, and on its ability to address these issues. Broader global forces include environmental issues, geopolitics, dynamics of the global labour market, competition for skills between countries, and between low wage and high wage economies. Participants cited the example that the province's semi-skilled jobs are going overseas to developing countries, while China and India's doctors are coming to Nova Scotia.

Participants felt that other broad and fundamental questions required reflection as they have a direct relationship with the overall challenge being discussed at the dialogue. These include:

- What is the nature of work and workers today?
- How much can we shape our communities and the social economy?
- What do we value? Do our priorities reflect these values?

*Participants felt that it is important to discuss and understand broader global forces as these have an impact on the province, and on the topic of skills challenges in the context of an aging workforce.*



## 7.2 Partnership, Coordination and Communications

*Participants stressed the need for key actors to coordinate better with one another, whatever the issue to be addressed.*

Participants felt that a common thread that underpins each of the three topics and their associated challenges is the need for key actors to coordinate better with one another, whatever the issue to be addressed. Skills and workforce issues cut across many industry sectors, indicating the need for better-integrated solutions. Participants felt that any real solution will require better coordination, commitment on the part of all stakeholders, and an approach to coordination that involves true partnership.

## 7.3 Labour Market Information (LMI)

*LMI can also identify and raise awareness about existing jobs to counter the myth that "there are no jobs here".*

Participants talked about the importance of good quality Labour Market Information (LMI) so that skills needs are accurately forecasted, skills shortages are identified, and good labour market decisions can be made. They also noted that good LMI could help identify and raise awareness about existing jobs to counter the myth that "there are no jobs here".

In addition, they indicated that differences in the labour market (e.g. rural vs. urban) need to be reflected in LMI so that the full context is understood. However, participants noted that collection of LMI in more rural areas is more difficult to do.

Participants talked about the lack of information about small businesses. Types of information that they felt would be useful included their situation, and the potential impact of the loss of key workers, on businesses and on small communities.

## 7.4 Rural versus Urban

*Participants pointed out that the reality in rural areas and urban areas across the province are very different.*

Participants pointed out that the reality in rural areas and urban areas across the province, especially as they relate to unemployment, are very different. For example, they noted, Halifax has much lower rates of unemployment than rural areas and these differences are becoming more pronounced.

Other participants pointed out that since rural and urban areas are geographically close to one another, this presents an opportunity. For example, many rural towns are only 3 hours away from Halifax, making it possible for people to travel from rural to urban areas for economic reasons if required.





## 8. Pre- /Post-dialogue Surveys

As previously indicated, dialogue participants were asked to fill out two questionnaires, which would provide additional and more quantifiable assessments of their perspectives. A pre-dialogue questionnaire was administered on the morning of the deliberative dialogue, prior to the start of the dialogue proceedings. A post-dialogue questionnaire, containing the same set of questions as the first, was administered at the end of the deliberative dialogue.

*In each of the Atlantic provinces dialogue sessions, a large majority of participants felt that current problems related to skills needs and the aging workforce were serious. Looking out five years, participants believed that such problems would remain as serious issues in their respective provinces.*

There are several methodological considerations to keep in mind when considering the findings from the pre- and post-dialogue surveys. The findings for each province are based on small sample sizes. As a result, small percentage point differences (for example, in the percentage of respondents “agreeing” with a given issue) are actually reflecting differences between only one or two respondents. The number of participants answering the pre-dialogue questionnaire differed from the number answering the post-dialogue questionnaire. The comparison of pre- and post-dialogue findings must therefore be treated with caution. *A more detailed commentary on the methodological considerations can be found in Appendix 3 to this report.*

The following provides a summary of key findings across the four Atlantic provinces, as well as Nova Scotia specific data.

### 8.1 Summary of Key Findings (Regional)

In each of the Atlantic provinces dialogue sessions, a large majority of participants felt that current problems related to skills needs and the aging workforce were serious. Looking out five years, participants believed that such problems would remain as serious issues in their respective provinces. The conversations held during the deliberative dialogue seemed to reinforce these views.

An overwhelming majority of dialogue participants indicated that responsibility for ensuring their province has the skilled workers it needs is a shared one. While specific comments recorded in the dialogue surveys often cited the need for leadership by government, responses invariably pointed out that all parties – government, business, labour, education, and the NGO community – have a role to play in addressing skills needs. Through their survey responses, dialogue participants signalled the importance of “many actions on many fronts” when it comes to addressing



*An overwhelming majority of dialogue participants indicated that responsibility for ensuring their province has the skilled workers it needs is a shared one.*

their province's skills needs. Actions that would encourage investments and participation in training and education; actions that would remove barriers to labour force participation for the unemployed or address literacy issues; actions that would enhance innovation and entrepreneurship; actions that would retain young people and better inform them about career options; all of these were viewed as "important" elements in dealing with skills needs. Not surprising, the vast majority of participants disagreed that inaction, or letting market forces resolve the issues was an option.

The only action that was not judged to be important by a majority of participants was "encourage older workers to continue working for several more years".

*The only action that was not judged to be important by a majority of participants was "encourage older workers to continue working for several more years".*

Although participants viewed many actions as important in addressing skills needs, there were particular actions that received high levels of endorsement as priorities. Foremost among these is *improving coordination across business, labour, government and the education system*. In every Atlantic province, this was the most commonly selected priority action.

*Ensuring that young people understand the benefits of working in the skilled trades and encouraging higher education and lifelong learning* also received high levels of endorsement in each of the Atlantic provinces, ranking among the top 5 priorities in each province.

While a majority of dialogue participants felt that *attracting more immigrants with the job skills we need was important*, it was seldom selected as a priority.

## 8.2 Most Important Economic Problem (Provincial)

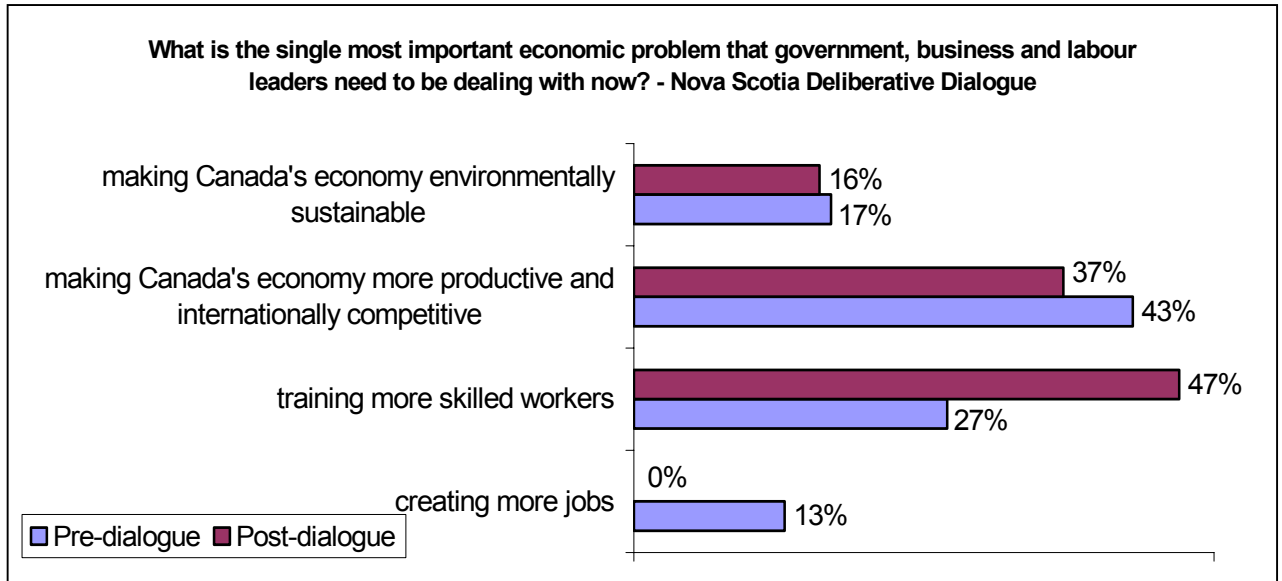
*Among the participants who answered both pre- and post-dialogue questionnaires, 29% had changed their view on the most important economic issue.*

In the pre-dialogue questionnaire, participants were most likely to identify "making Canada's economy more productive and internationally competitive" as the single most important economic problem that required action on the part of government, business and labour (43% gave this response, see graph below). This was followed by "training more skilled workers", which was chosen by 27% of participants. In the post-dialogue questionnaire, these two items remained the top problems, but there was a significant shift in the percentage choosing "training more skilled workers" (from 27% in the pre-dialogue to 47% post-dialogue).

Among the participants who answered both pre- and post-dialogue questionnaires, 29% had changed their view on the most important economic issue. One-half of those who changed their views ended the day choosing "training more skilled workers". See the table below for further information.



**Pre- and Post-dialogue Priorities: Most Important Economic Problem**



**8.3 High Priority Actions (Provincial)**

Participants to the Nova Scotia deliberative dialogue sessions were asked to gauge the importance of 13 different actions that could be used to address skills needs and the aging workforce:

1. Stem the out-migration of young people.
2. Attract more immigrants with the job skills we need.
3. Do nothing – let the market forces naturally resolve the issue.
4. Provide better supports to those who may face barriers to entering the labour market (e.g. the long-term unemployed, minority communities, those with literacy problems, Aboriginals etc.)
5. Encourage older workers to continue working for several more years.
6. Encourage higher education and lifelong learning.
7. Create decent and secure job opportunities for people.
8. Increase economic productivity through investments in R&D and training.
9. Encourage innovation and entrepreneurship.
10. Improve coordination across business, labour, government and the education system.
11. Encourage employers to provide more and better training to their employees.
12. Address literacy and numeracy issues in the general population.
13. Ensure that young people understand the benefits and rewards of working in the skilled construction trades, like plumbing and carpentry.

*Participants were asked to gauge the importance of 13 different actions that could be used to address skills needs and the aging workforce.*



Each action was evaluated along a five-point scale ranging from “not at all important” to “very important”. In addition, participants were asked to specify from the list of 13, the three actions they felt were priorities. Participants carried out the evaluation and prioritization exercise in both the pre- and post-dialogue questionnaires.

Although the dialogue participants placed importance on a variety of actions in dealing with skills needs, there were particular actions that were more likely than others to be described as “very important”. In addition, some actions were much more likely than others to be identified as priorities. Based on this, participants’ “Top 5” priorities were as follows:

*“Improve Co-ordination across business, labour, government and the education system” was the most commonly selected priority in both the pre- and post-dialogue surveys.*

- 1. Improve Co-ordination across Business, Labour, Government and the Education System:** This action was the most commonly selected priority in both the pre- and post-dialogue surveys. It is worth noting that its #1 ranking was significantly strengthened by the end of the dialogue process, as the percentage of survey respondents choosing it as a priority increased from 36% before the deliberative dialogue, to 69% after the dialogue. It would appear that the constructive and deliberative dialogue among participants from diverse communities only reinforced the sense of importance attached to improved coordination. At the close of the deliberative dialogue session, seven out of ten participants judged this action to be “very important” in addressing skills needs and the aging population.
- 2. Encourage Employers to Provide More and Better Training:** This action was more likely than any other to be described as “very important” in addressing skills needs - 66% in the pre-dialogue survey and 84% in the post-dialogue session. In addition, 44% of post-dialogue survey respondents selected this action as one of their top three priorities making it the second most commonly selected priority action.
- 3. Encourage Higher Education and Lifelong Learning:** Almost one in two participants (44%) chose this action as a priority in the post-dialogue survey. More than one-half (55%) judged the issue as “very important”.
- 4. Ensure Young People Understand the Benefits of Working in the Skilled Trades:** In both the pre- and post-dialogue surveys, this action was judged by a majority of participants to be “very important” and in both surveys it ranked among the top five most commonly mentioned priority actions.
- 5. Create Decent and Secure Job Opportunities for People:** Seven out of ten respondents in the post-dialogue survey felt this action was “very important” in addressing skills needs and the aging workforce. Both before and after the deliberative dialogue session, the need to create decent job opportunities was among the top five most commonly selected priority actions.



### What They Said...

One of the most prevalent themes in the comments noted by participants in the pre- and post-dialogue surveys addressed the need for collaborative partnerships to deal with skills needs and the aging workforce:

- "Every group has a different but equal role to play. We cannot expect government to solve this problem. What government can do is create the environment where all partners have a good chance to succeed." *Nova Scotia business participant*
- "Unless labour is included as a strong, full partner in the development of a holistic training program for skilled workers, there will continue to be a skills shortage." *Nova Scotia labour participant*
- "Success in overcoming these issues cannot be achieved without collaboration amongst all the above." *Nova Scotia government participant*
- "This must be a concerted effort with cooperation between all groups along with adequate funding provided to ensure services." *Nova Scotia education participant*

### 8.4 Moderate Priority Actions (Provincial)

Of the 13 actions participants were asked to evaluate in the pre- and post-dialogue questionnaires, there were five that that received more moderate endorsement as priorities:

- Increasing economic productivity through investments in R&D and training;
- Stemming the out migration of young people;
- Providing better supports to those facing barriers entering the labour market;
- Addressing literacy and numeracy issues in the general population; and;
- Encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship.

While a sizable share of participants described these actions as "very important" (between 30% and 60%), relatively few participants selected these items as priority actions.

### 8.5 Low Priority Actions (Provincial)

The three options/actions that were least likely to be viewed as "very important" were "attract more immigrants with the jobs skills we need" (20%), "encourage older workers to continue working for several more years" (10%), and "do nothing – let the market forces naturally resolve the issue" (0%).

In both the pre- and post-dialogue surveys, these were the least popular options. In the post-dialogue survey, no respondents identified any of these actions as a priority.



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What emerges from the pre- and post-dialogue survey results is that a multifaceted strategy in dealing with skills needs and the aging workforce would likely find support among the dialogue participants in each of the Atlantic Provinces.

The table below provides detailed information on how participants ranked each of the challenges in their pre- and post-dialogue surveys.

**Priority Actions: Pre- and Post-Deliberative Dialogue Response**

Action	% saying action is "Very Important"				% saying action is a priority				RANK (based on % saying action is a priority)		
	Pre-dialogue	Post-dialogue	Pre-dialogue	Post-dialogue	Pre-dialogue	Post-dialogue	Pre-dialogue	Post-dialogue	Change in rank (pre minus post)		
Improve coordination across business labour government and the education system	61%	71%	36%	69%	1	1	1	1	0		
Encourage employers to provide more and better training	66%	84%	32%	44%	4	2	4	2	2		
Encourage higher education and lifelong learning	44%	55%	23%	44%	5	3	5	3	2		
Ensure young people understand benefits of working in the skilled trades	54%	71%	32%	38%	3	4	3	4	-1		
Create decent and secure job opportunities for people	57%	70%	36%	31%	2	5	2	5	-3		
Increase economic productivity through investments in R&D and training	41%	30%	23%	19%	7	6	7	6	1		
Stem the out-migration of young people	32%	40%	23%	19%	8	7	8	7	1		
Provide better supports to those who face barriers entering the labour market	46%	60%	23%	13%	6	8	6	8	-2		
Address literacy and numeracy issues in the general population	39%	50%	18%	13%	9	9	9	9	0		
Encourage innovation and entrepreneurship	32%	32%	14%	13%	11	10	11	10	1		
Attract more immigrants with the job skills we need	30%	20%	14%	0%	12	11	12	11	1		
Encourage older workers to continue working for several more years	10%	10%	18%	0%	10	12	10	12	-2		
Do nothing - let the market forces naturally resolve the issue	0%	0%	0%	0%	13	13	13	13	0		
<i>Number of respondents</i>	29	20	22	16	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		





## 9. Final Comments

**P**articipants in the Nova Scotia dialogue emphasized that the issue of skills needs in the context of an aging workforce is broad and complex. However, their discussions indicated several priority areas for action:

- Efforts should be made to engage youth more fully and meaningfully in discussions on future workforce skills. This, they said, will make sure that tomorrow's workers are included in today's discussions. They often came back to the need to ensure young Nova Scotians had the skills required to succeed in today's labour market, and to create meaningful employment opportunities that would help retain or repatriate the province's youth.
- Stakeholders should collaborate and coordinate better, particularly to make sure that the skills taught in education facilities match those that industry is and will be looking for.
- Continuing training should be encouraged and supported, more flexible and make use of alternate modes of delivery to be more accessible to workers across the province.

Participants in the Nova Scotia dialogue also emphasized the importance of understanding the broader context in which the province operates, noting that this is important for both an accurate analysis of the problems and for determining which would be the most effective solutions.

Finally, participants expressed interest in learning from each other, particularly with respect to best practices in the policy arena.

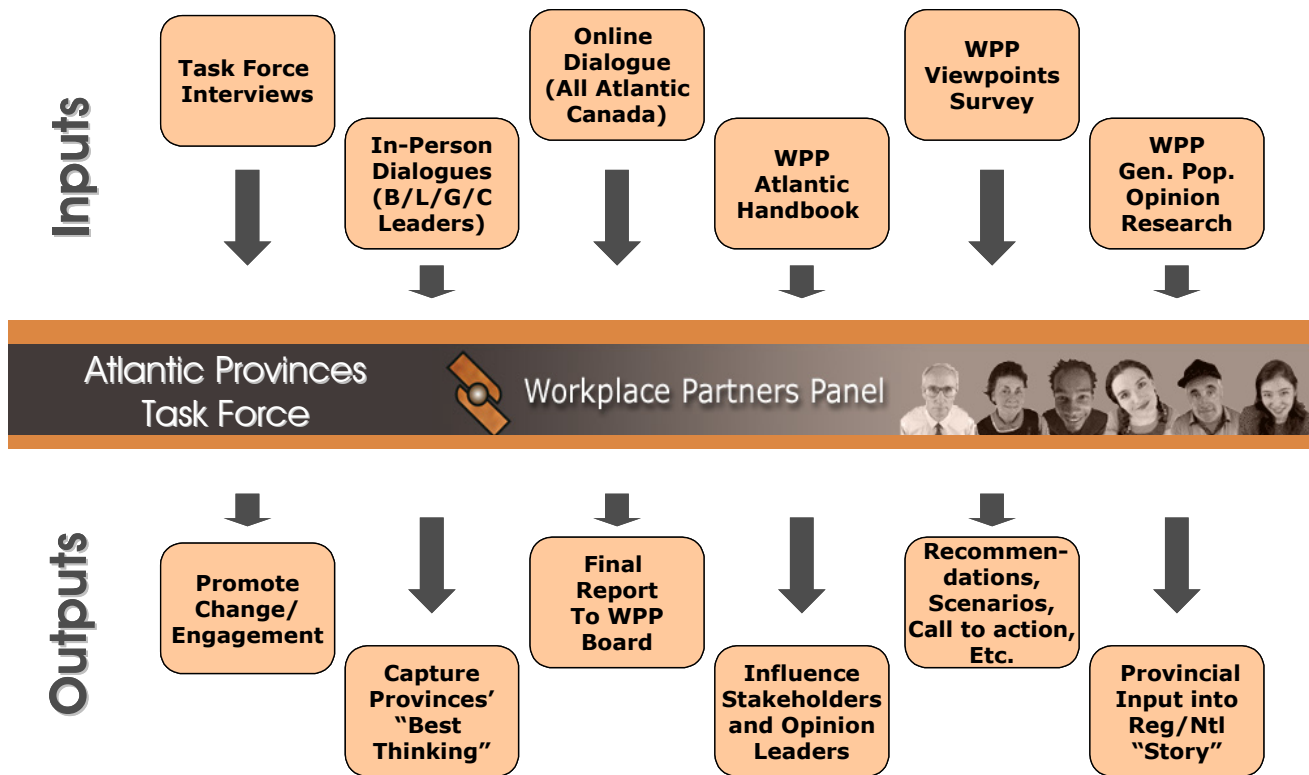




# Appendix 1 : APTF Inputs

The following diagram summarizes the key inputs into the APTF’s deliberation, as well as some of its potential outputs:

## APTF Inputs/Outputs



This appendix summarizes the contents and purpose of each of the inputs under consideration by the APTF.



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## **WPP Provincial Dialogues**

One provincial deliberative dialogue was held in each of the four Atlantic provinces. The purpose of these deliberative dialogues was to:

- Engage business, labour, government and community leaders in an inclusive, reflective, values-based and transparent process;
- Enable a collective stocktaking of the issues, priorities, and action.

These were daylong facilitated dialogues with up to 50 participants, representing the province's business, labour, community and government voices. Participants were provided with a workbook that helped them reflect on the issue of skills needs in the context of an aging workforce.

This was accomplished through a mix of small group and plenary discussions. Participants were pre-assigned to one of three small groups (labelled Blue, Green, and Red), to ensure that each group included labour, business, community, and government perspectives.

The morning conversation was dedicated to understanding the issue and identifying priorities, with a focus on exploring underlying values, differences and common ground. The question used to focus the morning conversation was: ***What key topics and specific challenges are important to you and why?*** The afternoon conversation focused on action. In particular, participants explored what needs to be done, by whom and under what conditions. The question used to focus this part of the conversation was: ***What actions must be undertaken? By whom? Under what conditions?***

Participants in the in-person dialogues were also asked to complete pre- and post-dialogue questionnaires on-site to assist in measuring shifts in their perspectives as a result of their participation in this event.

The **Nova Scotia deliberative dialogue** was held in Halifax, at the Lord Nelson Hotel, on April 18, 2006. It brought together 32 Nova Scotians, representing the perspectives of business (28%), labour (25%), the community (34%) and various levels of government (13%).

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**WPP Online Dialogue**

The online process was designed to parallel the in-person deliberative dialogue. The objective of the online process is to ensure that all interested Atlantic Canadians are able to share their views and ideas on the issue of skills needs in the context of an aging workforce in the four Atlantic provinces.

The online workbook, like the print workbook provided in face-to-face sessions, allowed online participants to explore the issue by considering relevant information before answering questions. It also allowed them to identify priorities for action.

The online process also allowed participants to share their ideas and perspectives on what needs to be done to address the issue of skill needs in the context of an aging workforce.

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**WPP Atlantic Handbook**

The *WPP Handbook: The Atlantic Provinces and Skills Shortages* provides a factual starting point to better understand skills needs in the context of an aging population for the Atlantic region. It provides a fresh look at the demographic and labour market trends that will shape both the challenges and the possible solutions. This document has been produced as a supporting reference for the Atlantic Provinces Task Force – a project of the Workplace Partners Panel.

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**WPP Viewpoints Survey**

In October, November and December 2005, the WPP surveyed 1,169 leaders from the business, labour and public sector (education, health, and government) communities to determine their perspectives on the critical human resource issues facing Canada's economy and labour market. The survey captures **managers' and labour leaders' views** on the actions seen to be most important in addressing current and future skills needs.

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**WPP General population Survey**

In February 2006, Viewpoints Research Ltd. was commissioned by the Workplace Partners Panel to conduct a survey of people living in the Atlantic region, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. The survey captures **general population views** from each of these provinces, regarding their concerns about skills shortages and their perceptions of proposed solutions to mitigate these problems.

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# Appendix 2 : Participant Priorities

## Participant Priorities: \$5 Allocation Exercise

Topic	Challenge	\$		Voices		\$		Voices		Total Challenges		Total Topic	
		\$	Voices	\$	Voices	\$	Voices	\$	Voices	\$	Voices		
Our workforce	Youth	\$7.50	5	\$3.00	3	\$8.00	8	\$18.50	18	\$42.50	35		
	Immigrants	\$1.00	1	\$6.00	4	\$1.00	1	\$8.00	6				
	Unemployed / underemployed	\$3.00	3	\$1.00	1	\$2.00	2	\$6.00	6				
	Older workers					\$4.00	4	\$4.00	4				
Economic Development	Job creation	\$2.00	3	\$3.00	3	\$2.00	2	\$7.00	8	\$20.00	22		
	Productivity	\$1.00	3			\$3.00	3	\$4.00	6				
	Innovation			\$2.00	2	\$5.00	5	\$7.00	7				
Education and training	B/ L/G/E coordination	\$4.00	4	\$5.00	3	\$5.00	6	\$14.00	13	\$46.50	46		
	Workplace training and lifelong learning	\$10.50	9	\$4.00	4	\$8.00	10	\$22.50	23				
	Trades and technologies	\$3.00	3	\$2.00	2	\$3.00	4	\$8.00	9				
Other	LMI			\$5.00	4			\$5.00	4	\$28.00	22		
	Community Sustainability			\$5.00	3			\$5.00	3				
	Favourable business climate			\$7.00	4			\$7.00	4				
	Transportation			\$2.00	2			\$2.00	2				
	Sensitization Communications Engagement re:issue	\$2.50	3					\$2.50	3				
	Work -learning supports/ transition	\$3.50	3					\$3.50	3				
	Women	\$1.00	1					\$1.00	1				
	Rural -aged workers	\$1.00	1			\$1.00	1	\$1.00	1				





## Appendix 3: Pre- / Post-dialogue Surveys

### Methodological Considerations

There are several methodological considerations readers should keep in mind when considering the findings from the pre- and post-dialogue surveys. First, the findings reflect the responses of dialogue participants, who for the most part, were from the business, labour, education, and community services sectors. Their views are not necessarily representative of these communities, or of the general population.

Second, the findings for each province are based on small sample sizes. As a result, small percentage point differences (for example, in the percentage of respondents “agreeing” with a given issue) are actually reflecting differences between only one or two respondents.

Third, the number of participants answering the pre-dialogue questionnaire differed from the number answering the post-dialogue questionnaire. The comparison of pre- and post-dialogue findings must therefore be treated with caution. In those instances when the findings of the two surveys are different, it could be due to a “real” change in thinking among dialogue participants, or it could simply reflect a change in the nature of the group answering the pre- and post-surveys. In an attempt to address this limitation, additional analysis was carried out for the smaller group of respondents who answered both the pre- and post-dialogue questionnaires. The results of this analysis were used as an indicator of the validity of the findings presented in this report.

In short, these findings are generally consistent with those presented in this report, and suggest that the change in response between the pre- and post-dialogue reflected a “real” change in thinking and not an “artificial” change due to differences in the survey samples.





## Appendix 4: Dialogue Participants

### **Alexis Allen**

First Vice-President  
Nova Scotia Teachers Union

### **Kathy Burnett**

Program Coordinator  
Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre

### **Richard Cashin**

1st Vice-President  
Federal Government Dockyard Trades and  
Labour Council East

### **Graham Conrad**

Executive Director  
Automotive Sector Council of Nova Scotia

### **Sue Drapeau**

Manager Institutional Research & Analysis  
Nova Scotia Community College

### **John Hugh Edward**

Extension Department  
St. Francis Xavier University

### **Paul Gillis**

Director, Policy and Research  
ACOA Nova Scotia

### **Glenda Hill**

Manager - Human Resources  
The Shaw Group Ltd.

### **John Jacobs**

Director  
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Nova  
Scotia Office

### **John Kavanagh**

Entrepreneurship Officer  
ACOA Nova Scotia

### **Catherine Arseneau**

Program Administration Office  
Nova Scotia Department of Education

### **Heather Carter**

Older Worker Project Navigator  
Cumberland Regional Economic Development  
Association

### **Rick Clarke**

President  
Nova Scotia Federation of Labour

### **Hal Davies**

Past Chairman  
Aerospace and Defence, Human Resources  
Partnership

### **Stephanie Edge**

Student  
NSCC Institute of Technology

### **Kevin Gerrior**

Manager, Apprenticeship Training  
Nova Scotia Community College

### **Leanne Hachey**

Director of Provincial Affairs  
Canadian Federation of Independent Business

### **Gail Isles**

Manager of Employee Relations  
Halifax Regional Municipality

### **Ken Jones**

Dean  
Nova Scotia Community College – Kingstec  
Campus

### **Donna Langille**

Operations Manager  
Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture



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**Liz MacDonald**

Vice-President (retired)  
Emera Inc.

**Brian Matheson**

International Representative  
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

**John Odenthal**

Director, Knowledge Economy Report Card  
Nova Knowledge

**Paul Reeves**

Human Resources Manager  
Ultra Electronics Maritime Systems

**J.L. (Janet) Thomas**

Human Resources Manager  
Minas Basin Pulp & Power Co. Ltd.

**Linda Wentzel**

Workplace Education Co-ordinator  
Nova Scotia Federation of Labour

**Michael MacIntyre**

Vice-President - Nova Scotia Division  
Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters

**Cliff Murphy**

President  
Cape Breton Island Building and Construction  
Trades Council

**Linda Power**

Executive Director  
Nova Scotia Government Employees Union

**Rene Ross**

Project Coordinator  
Social Assistance Reform

**Larry Wark**

Area Director  
Canadian Auto Workers Rail Division Local 100





## Appendix 5: WPP Atlantic Task Force

The WPP Atlantic Task Force is comprised of 8 senior Labour and Business leaders representing each of the four Atlantic Provinces.

The mandate of the Atlantic Task Force was to:

- Help identify and articulate provincial and regional “Best Thinking” on the issue of skills needs in the context of an aging workforce;
- Seek out multiple perspectives to inform its work and ensure that its conclusions are grounded in provincial realities;
- Demonstrate, through its leadership, the power of dialogue and collaboration between Business and Labour;
- Be the “face of the WPP” (e.g., by hosting the provincial dialogues and presenting a report of its findings to the national WPP board).

**Reg Anstey**

President, N.L. Federation of Labour

**Colleen Baxter**

Director Human Resources, J.D. Irving Ltd (N.B.)

**Michel Boudreau**

President, N.B. Federation of Labour

**Rick Clarke**

President, N.S. Federation of Labour

**Clarence Dwyer**

V.P. Corporate Affairs, Rutter, Inc. (N.L.)

**Ed Lawlor**

President, DeltaWare Systems, Inc. (P.E.I.)

**Liz MacDonald**

Emera, Inc. – Retired (N.S.)

**Carl Pursey**

President, P.E.I. Federation of Labour

