

# Opportunities 2000

A Model for Creating Healthy  
Businesses and Communities

# Agenda

- Labour market challenges in Saskatoon
- Other challenges
- Business concerns (2004 SLMC study)
- Strategies to address business concerns
- The Opportunities 2000 Model

# Labour Market Challenges in Saskatoon

- Co-op, practicum and apprenticeship programs are not widely available
- Most Saskatoon businesses still prefer word-of-mouth recruitment. What does this mean for:
  - Workers with disabilities?
  - Youth?
  - New citizens & people considering a move?

# Other Challenges in Saskatoon

- One of Canada's highest rates of violent crime
- Growing gap between rich & poor
- Highest dependency ratio in Canada (44% of citizens are under 19 or over 65)
- Public transportation limits access to jobs

# Other Challenges in Saskatoon

- Large, untapped labour pool
- Second-highest rate of disability in Canada (one in five citizens)
- 1 in 10 citizens are Aboriginal
  - 2-3 times the rate of disability
  - Incomes are 40% less than the city average
- Saskatchewan workforce is the oldest in Canada

# Business Concerns in Saskatoon (2004 SLMC Study)

- Low immigration
- Out-migration in almost every industry
- Difficult to attract & maintain skilled workers
- Labour shortage emerging across all sectors

# Strategies for the SLMC

(from Fast Consulting, 2004)

- Increase awareness of SLMC to identify & address evolving labour market needs
- Share human resources best practices, new regulations, & training grants or subsidies
- Broadcast information through information sessions, presentations and through organizations

# Strategies for the SLMC (from Fast Consulting, 2004)

- Develop an HR Toolkit for employers including info on recruitment & retention, industry associations, apprenticeships & funding
- Promote Saskatoon success stories
- Create a promotional package

# What is Opportunities 2000?

- An innovative strategy led by the business community to address labour and poverty issues in Kitchener-Waterloo
- Mission: to reduce poverty in the Waterloo Region to the lowest in Canada
- A strong business case for addressing poverty issues while focusing on best practices in human resources

# Fundamentals of Opps2000

- Poverty means lack of opportunity, assets, support and (often) hope
- Community success requires collaboration
- Businesses create jobs and wealth, therefore business leadership is essential to address poverty issues
- Strategy must have a positive tone and offer realistic, practical solutions

# Highlights: HR Toolkit

- Committee of HR professionals (KPMG, RBC, U of Waterloo...) led development
- Researched best practices that were consistent with anti-poverty and attraction & retention issues

# Highlights: Addressing Poverty Makes Business Sense

1. Improved prosperity means more customers
2. Reduced welfare burden impacts the rate of taxation
3. Decreased crime rate & social unrest
4. Enhanced business reputation & profile
5. Improved ability to attract & retain workers
6. Increased access to untapped labour pool
7. Enhanced quality of life

# Highlights: Key Barriers Affecting the Poor

- Childcare & Transportation Issues
- Language skills
- Initial work-related costs
- Training costs
- Emphasis on academic rather than skill requirements
- Disability & health-related costs
- Low self-esteem

# Highlights: HR Toolkit

- PR professionals donated resources for layout & design of final product
- Launch of HR Toolkit capitalized on business competitiveness by:
  - Highlighting local businesses in the Toolkit
  - Peer-to-peer marketing, rather than promotion by the committee – more willing to take calls from someone they know

# Highlights: Peer-to-Peer Marketing

- Business volunteers identified their peers & invited them to a breakfast meeting
- Breakfast meeting was concise:
  - Volunteer would describe their own involvement with Opp2000
  - Short PowerPoint presentation & video clip
  - Focus on clear message, offering solutions and options for businesses to consider

# Highlights: Launch of the Toolkit

- Support from Chamber of Commerce and United Way
- Extensive media coverage and editorial in business section of newspaper
- 2,000 copies of the Toolkit were distributed (only by request)
- Chamber developed a recognition award

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