

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

On behalf of the Saskatoon Labour Market Committee, an Employer Needs Assessment was carried out in 2000, which gathered information on the needs of employers with regard to their specific workplace and industry, identified employers and industries having a difficult time hiring and maintaining skilled persons, and identified recruitment and retention issues of Saskatoon employers.

In order to examine in more depth the findings of the 2000 study and develop detailed strategies for the key issues identified by the study, the Committee requested that another Employer Survey be conducted. Innovation Consulting Group is a Saskatoon-based research company with full market research capabilities, and with a new division called *Insightrix*, which specializes in web-based surveys.

## Methodology

### *Literature Review*

The Literature Review from the previous Employer Need Assessment was updated with studies that have emerged over the past 18 months, which were not included in the 2000 survey. These studies included HRDC publications, industry publications, and sector studies.

### *Employer Surveys*

Innovation Consulting Group developed an on-line survey software that uses an email broadcast tool for distribution of an Internet-based survey to companies. This tool was used to send out the survey to 1,102 companies in Saskatoon, of which 784 responded.

Each respondent completed the survey over the Internet, with each page of the survey bearing the Saskatoon Labour Market Committee logo. The recipients responded to the survey by clicking on radio buttons, checkboxes, drop-down menus, and using textboxes to type in comments. Respondents were required to enter their email address before completing the survey, which acted as a unique identifier to prevent duplicate responses.

The information submitted by each respondent was automatically loaded into a database for analysis. Each member of the Saskatoon Labour Market Committee had access by a password to an encrypted web page on which they could view the results of the survey being automatically up-dated on a real-time basis. In short, every time a respondent answered a question, the survey results automatically changed to reflect the new data.

## **Focus Groups and Personal Interviews**

Three focus groups were conducted after the completion of the survey, which followed-up on the key issues of Aboriginal integration into the workforce, out-migration of the labour force population, and the potential for utilizing foreign and immigrant workers.

Personal interviews were also conducted with individuals and organizations in order to further explore issues identified in the literature review and presented in the focus groups. The interviews related primarily to two issues: the Aboriginal workforce and the Health Care workforce.

Concerning Aboriginal labour force issues, interviews were conducted with individuals from the following organizations:

- Aboriginal Human Resource Council of Canada
- Eagle Feather News
- Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations – Corporate Circle
- Intergovernmental Aboriginal Affairs
- Métis Employment & Training of Saskatchewan
- Métis Employment & Training of Saskatoon
- Post-Secondary Education
- Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations
- Saskatchewan Indian Federated College
- Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies
- Saskatchewan Representative Provincial Workforce Council
- Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority
- SaskTel

Concerning Health Care labour force issues, interviews were conducted with individuals from the following organizations:

- College of Nursing, University of Saskatchewan
- Health Care Administration Program, College of Commerce, University of Saskatchewan
- Private Business Owner (anonymous)
- Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations
- Saskatchewan Health Department
- Saskatchewan Health Sciences Association
- Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology
- Saskatoon District Health – Administration Department
- Saskatoon District Health – Professional Leaders (3)

## ***Development of Key Strategies***

Through the focus groups and interviews, the consultants obtained the input of businesses, training stakeholders, the health community, and other key individuals, in order to develop strategies for the following areas:

- a) Employee Attraction and Retention
- b) Aboriginal Integration into the Labour Force
- c) Foreign and Immigrant Workers

## ***Development of Communication Strategies***

The consultants worked with the client on the development of a News Release, News Conference and Follow-up Communication Strategy.

## ***Distribution of Results***

As the database has a record of the individuals that completed the survey, an invitation was sent out by email to all the respondents, giving them a login name and password and referring them to a web page with the Survey Results and Key Survey Findings in a read-only format. As well, a link was provided to the on-line survey, enabling respondents to view the questions and results.

## **Key Survey Findings**

### ***Report on Survey Response***

- 784 organizations responded to the survey, representing a response rate of 71.1% of the email invitations and 44.1% of contacts.
- Of the respondents, 86.5% were in the private sector, 8.4% were in the public sector, and 5.0% were in the health care sector.
- In terms of the number of employees represented by the organizations that responded, 23,712 were in the private sector, 11,670 were in the public sector, 8,985 were in public health care, and 933 employees were in private health care.
- The number of employees covered by the survey was 45,300. The current estimate of the labour force in Saskatoon is 123,600 (employed + unemployed)<sup>1</sup>. Based on this estimate, the survey covered 37% of the Saskatoon labour force.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.sreda.com/industry.htm>

## • **Economic Growth**

### **Growth Statistics**

- 93.2% of respondents indicated their company is currently stable or growing.
- 47.5% of companies indicated that they are currently in a growth stage, compared to 43.2% of companies in the 2000 survey.

### **Increasing Staff Levels**

- 34.6% of respondents indicated their organization is planning to increase staff levels in the next year.
- Of those companies, a total of 1,534 new hires were identified, indicating an increase in staff levels of 3.4% for Saskatoon as a whole.
- Of the respondents indicating they plan to increase staff levels in 2002, 39.1% will require recruits with technical education and 33.9% with university education.

## **Labour Force Statistics**

### **Age Profile**

- Age analysis reveals that nearly half (49%) of the labour force is between the ages of 25 and 44, while 61% of the labour force is less than 45 years of age.
- Education and Government have the highest percentage of employees age 55 and over, at 22% and 21% respectively.

### **Employee Type**

- Of the employees covered in the survey, 66% were full-time and 22% part-time.

## **Retention**

### **Movement to Other Jurisdictions**

- 52.0% of respondents indicated that they do not believe the ability to attract and retain employees in their organization is hampered by an increased movement of employees to other Canadian jurisdictions or the United States, while 33.2% do believe their efforts are hampered.
- The industries with the highest proportion of organizations affected by the movement of employees to other jurisdictions are Construction (68.8%), Health (50.0%), and Communication (46.2%).
- Survey respondents identified a total of 655 employees leaving the province, representing 51.4% of the 1,273 current vacancies and 1.4% of the 45,300 employees included in this survey.
- The organizations that have had employees leaving for other jurisdictions indicated the primary destinations as Alberta (66%), British Columbia (11%), and Ontario (7%).

## Turnover Rates

- The overall turnover rate for all respondents in the survey is 13%.
- The three industries with the highest turnover rates are Accommodation (36%), Communication (29%), and Construction (25%).
- The top reasons employees leave their company were personal reasons (41.0%), better wages elsewhere (35.7%), and going back to school (33.0%).

## Hiring Difficulties

- 60.2% of organizations indicated they have experienced difficulty hiring for certain occupations over the past year.
- Industries with above average difficulty in hiring certain occupations are Construction (81.8%), Accommodation (76.5%), Transportation (74.0%), Manufacturing (69.7%), Trade (66.0%), and Government (64.0%).
- There are hiring difficulties in the Saskatoon Health sector. The following table shows some of the occupations experiencing recruiting difficulties:

Respiratory Therapists	Pharmacists	Neuropsychologists	Psychologists (Ph.D.)
Registered Nurses	Pathologists	Cardiologists	Paramedics
Registered Psychiatric Nurses	Physiotherapists	Psychiatrists	Sonographers
Licensed Practical Nurse	Occupational Therapists	Speech Language Pathologists	
Operating Room Technicians	Public Health Inspectors	Anesthetists	

## Current Vacancies

- Nearly 35% of respondents indicated that their organization currently has vacant positions, in contrast to 28% of the responses in the 2000 survey.
- The industries with the highest proportion of organizations with vacant positions are Government (66.7%), Accommodation (55.9%), Transportation (47.9%), Health (42.3%), and Tourism (41.7%).
- Survey respondents identified a total of 1,273 vacancies in 252 companies, indicating that 2.8% of all positions in Saskatoon are vacant.

## Recruitment

### Recruitment Channels

- Respondents indicate newspaper (60.6%), employee referrals (49.0%), networking (33.8%), and in-house training (26.6%) as the top 4 methods of recruiting skilled workers.
- The adoption of the Internet as a means of recruiting employees was indicated by 17% of the respondents.

### **Recruitment for Difficult to Fill Occupations**

- Organizations experiencing difficulty in hiring particular occupations indicated that they plan to fill these occupations using the newspaper (60.5%), employee referrals (53.3%), and in-house training (47.9%).
- The Internet as a means of recruiting “difficult occupations” was indicated by 28% of the respondents, compared to 17% when recruiting normally.

## **Aboriginal Labour Force**

### **Employment Equity**

- 37.2% of respondents indicated they have an employment equity plan in place.

### **Employment Statistics**

- 34.9% of respondents indicated that over the past year their organization has hired persons believed to be of Aboriginal ancestry.
- The industries with the highest proportion of organizations that hired Aboriginal persons over the past year are Accommodation (73.5%), Social Services (66.7%), Government (57.9%), and Transportation (55.3%).
- A total of 1,133 persons of Aboriginal ancestry were hired in the last year, representing approximately 2.5% of the all employees.
- As a percentage of the current workforce, 5% of the employees in Saskatoon companies are of Aboriginal ancestry.

## **Foreign and Immigrant Worker Labour Force**

### **Foreign Worker Program Awareness**

- 12.3% of respondents were aware of the Foreign Worker Program.
- 8.8% of respondents were aware of the Provincial Nominee Program.

### **Immigrant Worker Program Awareness**

- 49.7% of respondents were aware of the Saskatoon Open Door Society.
- 49.1% of respondents were aware of the University of Saskatchewan International Students Association.

### **Employment Statistics**

- 9.3% of respondents have attempted to hire a foreign or immigrant worker.
- For all the respondents, the total number of foreign or immigrant workers hired in the past two years was 230, representing 0.5% of the employees covered by the survey.

### **Foreign and Immigrant Worker Recruitment**

- Of the organizations that have attempted to hire foreign or immigrant workers, 75.7% did not use any of the available programs surveyed.

- Of the organizations that have attempted to hire foreign or immigrant workers, the top 3 countries/regions to recruit from are the United States (49.2%), Europe (41.5%), and Asia (15.4%).
- Of the organizations that attempted to hire foreign or immigrant workers, 55.7% indicated they were successful.

## **Strategies**

### ***Aboriginal Integration Strategies***

#### **Including Small and Medium Sized Businesses**

Small and medium sized companies of Saskatoon need to be part of the solution. To date, the Corporate Circle has involved primarily large companies, training institutions and Aboriginal organizations. SREDA has proposed that the Corporate Circle be expanded to include small and medium sized companies who would share in the costs of obtaining resources.

#### **Increased Awareness of Employment Services**

Employment Agencies and Political Bodies need to create more awareness of their services. The Corporate Circle concept may promote this, through information sharing and communication between training institutions, agencies and employers.

#### **Promote Successes**

There have been many successes of Aboriginal integration, but there is very little knowledge of these success stories among Saskatoon companies. Promotion of these successes is required to encourage Aboriginal inclusion as well as best practices.

#### **Increase Aboriginal Awareness of Industry Opportunities**

The opportunities provided by different occupations need to be promoted to Aboriginal persons. Industry needs to communicate to Aboriginal training institutions their needs and translate this into promotion to Aboriginal high school students.

#### **Cultural Awareness Training**

Companies interested in implementing a representative workforce require training for the existing workforce in cultural awareness. There is a general lack of understanding of the importance and effectiveness of this training, and where this training can be obtained. SREDA can play a major role in this area. Agreements reached between SAHO and CUPE, in regards to compulsory cultural awareness training, should be replicated with other union bodies.

#### **Role Models**

Large companies can play a role in hiring Aboriginal role models within their organization. These same individuals can play a major role in recruiting other

Aboriginals. The success rate of Aboriginal retention is positively related to the percentage of Aboriginals in the company's workforce.

### **Support Systems**

One of the key strategies a company can utilize to enhance the success of Aboriginal retention is to develop support systems for their Aboriginal employees. Examples include Aboriginal support networks, job and training supports, as well as making diversity management a part of a manager's performance appraisal.

### **Increase Industry Awareness of Strategies**

The interviews and focus groups indicated a high need and interest by industry to learn more about how to successfully recruit and retain Aboriginal employees. SREDA can play a major role in obtaining and promoting such information to Saskatoon businesses.

## ***Employee Attraction and Retention Strategies***

### **Market your Organization**

Companies that sell products or services know the importance of marketing – it is essential to identify your customer, carve out a niche in the marketplace, and manage your reputation if your product is going to be successful. Marketing your company to prospective employees is no different. In the war for talent, you may be just one of several options in a candidate's mind. Anything you can do to boost your reputation prior to the "sale" will give you a competitive advantage.

### **Recognize the values of your workforce**

Employees require fair compensation, challenging work, the ability to make decisions, take risks, be respected, and have a career plan. This is especially true of the younger generations. The young workforce has the advantage of a tighter labour market, the result of which is that employees are more demanding and independent, as well as being less willing to sacrifice lifestyle for a pay cheque. Organizational initiatives need to reflect this. Potential strategies that reflect both the needs of the workforce as well as promote long tenure include the following:

- Competitive remuneration levels
- Flexible remuneration packaging
- Study assistance
- Flexible working hours
- Career counseling and planning
- Rotation into different roles
- Employee share plans
- Improved working conditions
- Long-term incentive plans
- Counter-offering an employment offer
- Deferred incentive payments

- Secondments
- Job redesign
- Leave without pay or sabbaticals
- Conference opportunities
- Choice of assignments

By implementing some of the above strategies, it was felt by the interviewees and the focus group participants that we can retain our experienced workers and our younger workforce. Recruiting the young workers right after their educational training and keeping them employed in a favorable work environment for at least 4-5 years will help bridge them to a stage in their life in which they are ready to settle down and raise a family, most likely in Saskatoon.

### **Promote Successes**

The participants indicated that Saskatchewan does not promote success. The recent “Only in Saskatchewan” initiative by Economic and Cooperative Development was seen as a positive example of Saskatchewan promoting both young people and success in Saskatchewan.

We have to stop thinking “we can’t be as good as other provinces.” We have to quit undervaluing ourselves.

How many people know that Saskatchewan and Saskatoon took a bold lead in attracting the Synchrotron, or that we won location of the facility over Ontario because we raised more money than the Government of Ontario? How many people know that the facility will host up to 2,000 visiting scientists and graduate students a year, and that the Canadian Light Source is Canada’s largest science project in more than 30 years, or that industries all over Canada will pay up to \$40,000 per day to have access to the beamline?<sup>2</sup>

We need to be proud of our accomplishments, and by promoting our successes people will be more inclined to be a part of a growing and thriving city.

## ***Foreign and Immigrant Worker Strategies***

### **One-Stop Shopping**

In order to minimize the confusion between programs and the occupations covered by each, participants indicated the need to have a one-stop shopping portal for applications to use the government program. This place should also include a list of current applicants interested in working in Canada, with their qualifications. In short, there is a need for a foreign worker service bureau – a single point of contact where employers can go to get all the answers to their questions.

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<sup>2</sup> Maclean’s, 21 January 2002, p. 36.

## **Marketing of Programs**

The participants of the focus group had all heard of the Open Door Society and the International Students Association. Many indicated that the Open Door Society had contacted them, informing them of immigrant workers in Canada seeking employment.

The participants all had success in hiring immigrant workers, found many to be hard working individuals, and would be interested in hiring more immigrant workers. However, they were not aware of the government foreign worker programs, and indicated these need to be marketed to employers, indicating the services and occupations covered.

## **Success Stories**

As part of the marketing programs, success stories of foreign and immigrant workers should be shared. These should indicate the supports used and the environment necessary for successful integration, such as cultural awareness training required for the rest of the staff and methods used to improve communication. These success stories may overcome some of the ethical concerns regarding “importing” talent.

## **Health Care Strategies**

Though the development of strategies for the Health Care sector was not part of the mandate of this study, several key findings and strategies emerged from the interviews.

## **Student Survey**

One suggestion was to conduct a survey of the students in the health professions to determine what they are looking for in a future employer. Young adults have unique ideas about what they want from their employer. For example, as one interviewee indicated, many in this age group have the attitude of “chill out and cheer up”. As such, employers need to be aware of what this age group demands and how to work with them, taking into account the diversity in attitudes. As one interviewee said, “we need to look less at why people leave and more at what our future professions require in order to stay, by using a survey or some means to directly solicit this group.”

## **Career Mapping and Development**

As one interviewee indicated, “it is now recognized by recruiters that nurses have careers; they are not just nurses”. Another interviewee indicated that health districts, including SDH, “do not undertake a comprehensive orientation program; rather, they are concerned with getting warm bodies in areas with a low number of staff”.

This type of practice does not increase job satisfaction, and impacts retention in a negative manner. Before hiring, recruiters from other locations explain to applicants the areas in which areas they will work, rotations that will be included to increase their exposure and experience, and, in some cases, financial assistance to pursue further education. According to focus groups conducted by the Conference Board of Canada with post-secondary students, the following were critical factors in choosing an employer:

1. Compensation
2. Challenging Work
3. Work-Life Balance
4. Recognition/Respect
5. Advancement Opportunities

Our personal interviews support these findings. Recruitment efforts that include not only financial support for pursuing a masters program, but also advancement opportunities, are extremely attractive to both students and health professionals in Saskatchewan.

One interviewee indicated “SDH can be more creative in how they offer career development opportunities that not only benefit the health professional but also the quality of care in this province.” One example put forward by an interviewee was the idea of providing rotations to other locations in Saskatchewan. For example, La Loche has a shortage of nursing professionals. Why not have one-month rotations, where nurses can gain rural experience and provide care in different settings and locations?

### **Marketing**

There is concern that the health districts, including SDH, do not market themselves to the health professionals. One interviewee stated it this way: “They must learn to market themselves. They have to communicate to potential employees that they offer challenging work, and career and succession planning. The Americans do this.”

Marketing the community was also identified as important in recruiting health professionals. SDH needs to work closely with SREDA to provide promotional materials on Saskatoon and provide information on services available here for a new recruit and his or her family.

### **Mentorship Programs**

One interviewee expressed that a good quality mentorship program would enhance recruitment efforts. For example, SDH should involve even first-year nurses in a mentorship program. Even though they would lack the clinical experience to work on the ward, they could work with the nurse managers in providing research and administration. It is hoped that through such relationships, the young nurses would be less likely to leave for employment elsewhere.

### **Spousal Recruitment**

One interviewee indicated the following: “The problem with recruiting a highly educated health care person to Saskatoon is that they are likely married to another highly educated person. We need to find jobs for both of them.”

A solution to this problem was a linkage between recruiters in the health sector with a central database of job vacancies and potential employers. “In order to effectively recruit health professionals, one interviewee indicated, “we need access to both the job vacancies and the employers most likely to have jobs that meet the spouse’s needs. Emphasis

becomes one of recruiting the family rather than the individual.” This finding was also expressed by other sectors in our focus groups.

### **Student Loan Repayment Programs**

The remuneration of student loans was indicated as a very effective recruitment strategy. As one interviewee indicated, “why wouldn’t a young graduate move to the United States and agree to work with an employer there for a two year period in order to pay off their student loans, rather than take ten years here in Saskatchewan? Even just paying a percentage of their student loan would be beneficial.”