

PEI

State of the Field Overview, Prepared September 2012

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Provincial government

PEI Literacy Strategy

PEI recognizes the need to invest in learning at all levels. In 1996, PEI issued a literacy strategy entitled, *Tough Challenges, Great Rewards: A Literacy and Adult Education Strategy with a mission of: “Equal access to adult education is a basic right of all adult learners.”* The Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning took the lead in formalizing the partnerships.

The strategy focuses on bioscience, information technology, aerospace, and renewable energy. These high-knowledge industries have significant potential for further growth in revenues and exports, and offer skilled, well-paid, year-round opportunities for Islanders. The bioscience, information technology, and aerospace sectors have sales of almost \$400 million, and provide about 3,000 jobs. By 2013, PEI aims to more than double sales to \$800 million and to almost double jobs to 5,400 across these three sectors. In the renewable energy sector, PEI is pursuing a fourfold increase in generating capacity, making Prince Edward Island a net exporter of green energy. The strategy will strengthen and support innovation, productivity, and competitiveness throughout all sectors of PEI’s economy. The major goals of the plan over the next five years include:

- A nationally recognized center of biotechnology excellence with 2,000 employees
- An information technology sector that will be recognized for its innovative capacity
- Continued cultivation of our thriving aerospace industry
- Increased emphasis on environmentally-friendly energy sources

Skills PEI

Skills PEI is a division of the Department of Innovation and Advanced Learning. It was established to manage the delivery of skills and training development programming funded by the Canada-Prince Edward Island Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) and Labour Market Agreement (LMA).

Labour market development funds will be focused on building the pool of skilled workers needed for strategic sectors to tap their full potential for growth. Greater emphasis will be placed on increased support to help newcomers integrate and settle placing more emphasis on attracting skilled immigrants, and higher priority on recruiting international students.

Passport to Employment

This is a joint initiative of the Federal and Provincial government to address the employment needs of older workers (55 – 64) wanting to stay in the workforce or return to employment. It is made up of a short course on job skills, knowledge and confidence, that is followed by the opportunity to seek employment through a federally-funded job search program.

Federal Government

The federal government supports training for those with low literacy and essential skills through a Labour Market Agreement and a Labour Market Development Agreement (financial transfer agreements) with the province. Details can be found in CLLN's *Labour Market Transfers and the Implications for Literacy and Essential Skills Labour Market Transfers* report.

<http://www.literacy.ca/content/uploads/2012/03/LMA-report-2012.pdf>

OLES

The bulk of Prince Edward Island Literacy Alliance's work is funded by HRSDC's Office of Literacy and Essential Skills under the Labour Market Partnerships Contribution Agreement. The current agreement for supporting Literacy and Essential Skills in PEI provides funding until October 31, 2012.

Literacy and Essential Skills Lens

Literacy levels are low in PEI and Essential Skills are not yet widely recognized. A few businesses have received essential skills upgrades through Workplace Learning but this is by no means common.

PEI Literacy Alliance (PEILA) was formed in 1990 to be a non-governmental umbrella organization with a mission to advance literacy for the people of Prince Edward Island. Our volunteer Board of Directors works to promote our outcomes or ENDS:

- To make it easier for people with low literacy to get help
- To encourage islanders to build their literacy and learning skills for the benefit of their economic, cultural, political, social, and personal lives
- To close gaps and discourage overlaps in literacy and adult learning services
- To celebrate and value literacy and learning across PEI

In order to meet these ENDS:

- We raise public awareness about literacy issues
- We create partnerships for literacy projects
- We coordinate conferences, workshops and roundtables
- We provide information on and referral to literacy training and upgrading programs in PEI

- We give advice to government and educational institutions

PEILA does not deliver literacy and essential skills programs. We support and serve the field through programs and services such as:

- Scholarships and Bursaries
- Grant programs
- Live and Learn newsletter
- Professional development for adult educators
- Book Bank at the Food bank in Charlottetown
- Plain language workshops and editing

We also organize special events:

- Family Literacy Day
- PGI Golf Tournament for Literacy
- Adult Learners' Week
- Professional Development conferences, events and workshops

Literacy and Essential Skills Training

According to Skills PEI, between 300 and 400 clients received Literacy and Essential Skills training, mainly as students at Holland College. However, the criteria for entry is becoming more restrictive. PEI Volunteers for Literacy has shut down, so one-to-one tutoring is no longer available except for some limited access for people who are working. Holland College used to offer a Levels program for literacy training but it was cancelled in 2012.

The University of PEI (UPEI), Centre of Life-Long Learning is also delivering learning opportunities for adults to increase education levels and also work with priority sectors to increase continuing education for adult learners.

Workplace Learning PEI Inc.

PEI's longstanding Workplace Learning PEI Inc. has benefited from LMA funds with additional financial support. It helps individuals, employers and organizations build strong foundational skills to meet the demands of the changing workplace.

Labour Market

Demographics

The current population is about 145,000.

The *Economic Progress Report* of November 2010 indicates that Prince Edward Island's employment averaged at 71,500 people through to September 2010, an increase of 3.5 per cent from the same period in 2009. Statistics Canada's *Labour Force Survey* shows the labour force at 72,400 in January 2012. Of those, 12% are working in part-time jobs. The growth in the labour force is fairly evenly distributed between men and women. However, increased participation of older female workers (i.e. women 55 years and over) accounted for half of the overall increase in the Island labour force.

The unemployment rate stood at 12.2% in January 2012. Unemployment was higher for older workers and youth (15-24 years); and declined for persons in the core-age group (25-54).

Labour Forces Characteristics by Age and Gender

Prince Edward Island 2011

| | Males | | | Females | | |
|---------|--------------|------------|-------------------|--------------|------------|-------------------|
| | Labour Force | Employment | Unemployment rate | Labour Force | Employment | Unemployment rate |
| 15 – 24 | 6.9 | 5.6 | 18.8 | 6.9 | 6.1 | 11.6 |
| 25 - 44 | 15.3 | 13.3 | 13.1 | 15.5 | 14.3 | 7.7 |
| 45 - 64 | 17.3 | 15.4 | 11.0 | 16.2 | 14.6 | 9.9 |
| 65+ | 2.2 | 1.9 | 13.6 | 1.0 | 0.9 | -- |
| Total | 41.7 | 36.2 | 13.2 | 39.5 | 35.8 | 9.4 |

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour force Survey, CANSIM table 282-0002

Immigrants

Immigrant Work Experience Initiative

The Immigrant Work Experience Initiative provides recent immigrants with a one-time work experience opportunity in order to help them gain long-term employment.

Aboriginal Peoples

In 2006, 1730 people identified as Aboriginal and of them 1010 were aged 0-30. Most aboriginals in PEI are Mi'kmaq. Both the PEI Native Council and the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI provide employment counselling and/or training.

Youth

Youth who drop out of school have few options. Returning to the formal school system is not a preferred option. To enter adult education you have to be 18 or out of school for two years.

Labour Market Trends

Primary and seasonal industries, such as agriculture, fishing and forestry, remain very important aspects of the PEI economy and sustain many jobs and businesses directly and indirectly. Much of the job growth has been in these industries. Tourism has grown in most years (since the advent of the Confederation Bridge) and provides employment for many during the May to September season. Combined, employment was up by 700 persons compared to a year ago. A slight increase in manufacturing was offset by a moderate decline in the construction industry. There are plans to improve infrastructure. A total of 54,400 people were working in the service-sector in January 2012, which was up by nearly 2% compared to the previous year. Employment is likely to increase in the sectors targeted by the PEI Literacy Strategy: bioscience, information technology, aerospace, and renewable energy.

Over the past decade, the skill demands of the PEI economy have risen. At the same time, the population is aging, the birthrate is declining and many educated youth are leaving the province. These

trends are interacting with rising skill demands to create a dramatic and pivotal shift in the labour market. Today and for the future, the key issue for Prince Edward Island is shortages of skills and labour.

Strengths

PEI has good transportation links, a strong sense of community, and a resilient workforce. UPEI and Holland College are available for training. People in PEI enjoy easy access to policy makers.

Challenges

The main employment challenges include: seasonal employment, low prices for natural resources, high rate of school drop out, declining number of youth staying in PEI, lack of skilled workers, few large businesses, aging population, and both levels of government (federal and provincial) closing offices and laying people off. Over 23,000 people in PEI do not have a high school diploma.

PEI faces major demographic challenges, particularly with respect to youth migration, and must take action to attract and hold population. Past investments in learning have fallen short of fully developing the potential of an innovation-based economy – the people.

What's Needed

PEI Literacy Alliance has identified the following key focus areas.

- encourage more employers to invest in the literacy and essential skills development of their employees
- develop connections between literacy and essential skills and workplace education
- create alternative learning opportunities for low level literacy learners who are not at work
- integrate L/ES into college curricula
- provide easier access to flexible training through SkillsPEI
- align adult learning programs and opportunities with the needs of PEI communities, workplaces, and individual learners

Making these opportunities available, accessible and attractive is crucial to PEI's social and economic future.