



**STRATEGIC  
SOCIAL PLAN**  
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

*Central Region Steering Committee*  
For The Strategic Plan

# **“Joining Forces” in the Central Region Phase I**

**Final Report**  
**Human Resources Project**  
**Central Region Steering Committee**  
*September 2003*

*Submitted by*  
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# Executive Summary

In 2001, organizations in Central Newfoundland, through the Central Region Steering Committee for the Strategic Social Plan, began discussing the challenges they were facing with respect to the recruitment and retention of professionals. This was a particular [and growing] concern for the health and education boards. A process was undertaken to investigate the issues more thoroughly and out of that process, the *Joining Forces Project* was born.

This project has enabled us to gather additional information and to identify ways that we can improve on our efforts to attract and keep professionals in our region. We initially identified some of the recruitment and retention challenges according to seven categories. We also identified some particular issues and interventions, which were beyond the scope of regional partners. Therefore, the work of the Joining Forces Project has been focused on *what we can do within our region* to make a difference. Needless to say, there are many factors (financial and legislative ones, for example) that impact employee recruitment. These are factors that require advocacy at a regional level and action by provincial and federal stakeholders.

Phase I of the Joining Forces project is now completed, and Phase II will continue to June of 2004.

## ***What did we know?***

We embarked on Phase I of the Joining Forces project with an understanding of the current environment for recruiting and retaining qualified people in key positions within the health and education sectors. We knew that:

- ❑ Organizations in our region are experiencing difficulties in filling particular positions and keeping people in positions, particularly in more isolated areas
- ❑ Based on demographic trends and increased competition with other provinces and countries, the situation will most likely get worse. “These are factors beyond our control”
- ❑ There are no short-term fixes
- ❑ Finances, and the ability to meet financial demands, are limited
- ❑ There are many things, aside from financial considerations, that affect our ability to recruit and retain people..... marketing savvy and resources, flexibility in policies and legislation, professional development opportunities, and so on
- ❑ Regional organizations are expending considerable effort and resources to recruit people to work for them
- ❑ There have been numerous actions taken recently, at both a regional and provincial level, which are intended to address some of the human resource difficulties being experienced.

This was the context in which the Joining Forces project began.

## ***What did we learn?***

The Joining Forces project looked at practices, from a regional perspective, which could be developed or enhanced in order to improve our chances of attracting and keeping professionals in our region. Surveys, a literature review and round table discussions at a human resources forum all helped to clarify what is being tried in our own and other jurisdictions, and what should be priorities for action here.

Through Phase I of the Joining Forces project, we learned that:

- ❑ Organizations in developed countries are becoming more proactive and innovative in their efforts to compete for qualified staff
- ❑ Long-term strategies to recruit employees are being developed, in addition to the implementation of more immediate strategies
- ❑ Financial compensation is important. However, other factors are also reported as very important in terms of employee satisfaction: work environment, professional development and support, community and lifestyle
- ❑ Some people in certain professions use rural communities and provinces as ‘launching pads’ to other positions and locations. Turnover is a given with this proportion of people, especially in the health sector
- ❑ The people most likely to stay in our region are those who are originally from here or have strong rural roots
- ❑ Providing support and orientation for spouses of new recruits, including practical support like assistance in finding a job, has become very important as part of many recruitment and retention strategies.
- ❑ In many areas, the more successful recruitment and retention strategies are developed in partnership between organizations, educational institutions and communities
- ❑ We recruit ‘people’, not just professionals. People are interested in what is provided outside of the work environment. Therefore, marketing strategies increasingly focus on the whole person....providing information on an organization and position, community features, infrastructure and lifestyle.

Although the focus of this project has been on the health and education sectors, many of the themes and potential strategies are applicable to other sectors, including the private sector. The following report summarizes the activities and findings of the Joining Phases project – Phase I.

# Central Region Steering Committee

The Strategic Social Plan (SSP) was introduced in 1998 by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador as a framework for long-term social development in the province. It is being implemented on a regional basis through steering committees established for six SSP regions.

The Central Region Steering Committee (CRSC) came together in 1999 and works to link social and economic development and better coordinate service delivery.

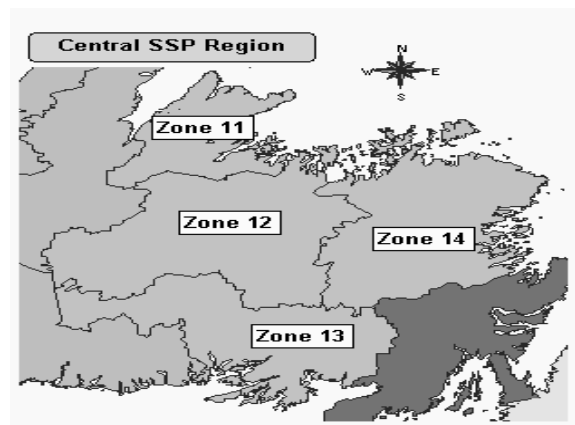
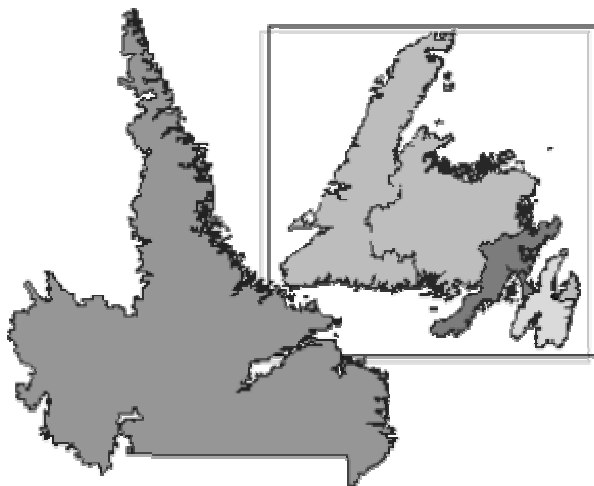
The Committee includes organizations that provide a wide range of services in this region related to health, education, economic development and employment.

The goals established by CRSC are to:

1. Link social and economic development
2. Coordinate service delivery
3. Encourage and build partnerships to address regional needs
4. Involve communities in the Strategic Social Plan and help to promote community growth and well-being.

CRSC compiles information on resources and issues in the region and currently has four general areas of interest and several related initiatives:

1. Early Childhood Development
2. Youth
3. Community Capacity Building
4. Research



# Introduction

## Baby Boom

Canada, like many countries, has been vastly influenced by the baby boom, the mass of people generally born between 1945 and 1961. The majority of the boomers are now entering middle age and continue to significantly impact the social and economic profile of Canada. There have been fluctuations in the birthrate due to the different age populations and this has led to an unusual population age structure. The differences in population among various age groups are more pronounced here than in other countries, although some of them [including the United States] have a similar profile. The key fact about the Boomers is the sheer number. As they pass into their fifties, this group creates profound ripple effects in everything from the economy, to housing development, to retail/commercial successes, to education and social services delivery<sup>1</sup>.

## Newfoundland and Labrador Demographic Trends

Newfoundland and Labrador has demographic patterns similar to Canada and to other Provinces, but also has some distinct features that impact social and economic planning.

1. Newfoundland and Labrador experienced a  $-7\%$  change in population between 1996 and 2001, compared with an overall 4% increase in population for Canada as a whole<sup>2</sup>
2. Our Province has the lowest birthrate in Canada and one of the lowest in the industrialized world. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the fertility rate has dropped steadily from its peak of 5.9 children per woman in 1957<sup>3</sup> to 1.15 in the year 2001<sup>4</sup>. Considering the replacement level is 2.11 births per woman (in the child bearing years) our provincial population is projected to continue to decline for years to come.
3. Our average age is increasing faster than on a national basis; it is projected that half of the population will be 45 years of age or older by 2020.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Foote, Dr. David, Boom, Bust and Echo 2000

<sup>2</sup> Strategic Social Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador: [www.gov.nl.ca/ssp](http://www.gov.nl.ca/ssp), Community Accounts: [www.CommunityAccounts.ca](http://www.CommunityAccounts.ca)

<sup>3</sup> Kinchora Research. (1998). *Demographic dimensions of slowing population growth in Newfoundland and Labrador*. Report prepared for the Department of Education, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

<sup>4</sup> Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information. *Annual Report*. Annual (2000-2001). St. John's: Author

<sup>5</sup> Strategic Social Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador: [www.gov.nl.ca/ssp](http://www.gov.nl.ca/ssp), Community Accounts: [www.communityaccounts.com](http://www.communityaccounts.com)

4. Youth 15-24 years of age are the most likely to migrate; for example, in Central Region the age group 15-19 years showed a population change of –20.1% from 1996-2001, while the age group 20-24 years showed a population change of –31.5% for the same period<sup>6</sup>
5. Our workforce is also aging and many of the people migrating from the province are those with higher levels of education.<sup>7</sup>
6. Our Province is experiencing increased urbanization, with the population declining less dramatically along the Trans Canada corridor than in other rural communities. Approximately 50% of Newfoundland and Labrador citizens live within an hour of St. John's.<sup>8</sup>
7. Newfoundland and Labrador still has a predominately rural population.<sup>9</sup>

## Labour Force Implications

All of these factors are affecting our labour force and long-range plans for human resource development. Newfoundland and Labrador's rural status, combined with its aging population and out-migration, has created significant challenges for organizations as they plan and deliver services.

The Central SSP Region of Newfoundland encompasses four economic development zones and includes the area east as far as Eastport, in the west to Green Bay and White Bay including the Baie Verte Peninsula, the south coast to Harbour Breton and north to Twillingate. The Central Region has a population of 99,880 (2001)<sup>10</sup>, a change of ±10.3% since 1996. It includes 177 incorporated and unincorporated communities. The majority of those communities have less than 500 people living in them. Only two towns, Grand Falls-Windsor and Gander, have more than 5000 people. It is a large geographic area, many communities are small and isolated, and the delivery of quality services is a challenge for all regional boards and departments.

One of the main issues that has emerged for regional boards and organizations is the recruitment and retention of people to fill professional positions. There is difficulty in attracting and keeping

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<sup>6</sup> Strategic Social Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador: [www.gov.nl.ca/ssp](http://www.gov.nl.ca/ssp), Community Accounts: [www.CommunityAccounts.ca](http://www.CommunityAccounts.ca)

<sup>7</sup> Strategic Social Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador: [www.gov.nl.ca/ssp](http://www.gov.nl.ca/ssp), Community Accounts: [www.communityaccounts.ca](http://www.communityaccounts.ca)

<sup>8</sup> Strategic Social Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador: [www.gov.nl.ca/ssp](http://www.gov.nl.ca/ssp), Community Accounts: [www.communityaccounts.ca](http://www.communityaccounts.ca) SSP Presentation to Central Region Labour Market Development Agreement Committee

<sup>9</sup> Strategic Social Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador: [www.gov.nl.ca/ssp](http://www.gov.nl.ca/ssp), Community Accounts: [www.communityaccounts.ca](http://www.communityaccounts.ca)

<sup>10</sup> Strategic Social Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador: [www.gov.nl.ca/ssp](http://www.gov.nl.ca/ssp), Community Accounts: [www.communityaccounts.ca](http://www.communityaccounts.ca)

health professionals such as doctors, nurses, psychologists, speech language pathologists, audiologists, social workers and so on.

The education sector reports shortages of teachers to fill specialized positions and for administrators/principals. All CRSC partner organizations identify that the majority of people in their own workforces are getting close to retirement age, and there may not be people to fill those positions when the need arises.

According to the CRSC Stakeholders/Recruiters Survey that was conducted within the health and education sectors in the Central Region, organizations are facing great challenges with recruiting various positions.

Some of the occupations for which the Health Boards are experiencing difficulty in recruiting qualified candidates include:

- ❑ Laboratory Technologists
- ❑ Diagnostic Imaging (X-Ray Technologist)
- ❑ Management positions
- ❑ Licensed Practical Nurses
- ❑ Registered Nurses
- ❑ Social Workers

It was also predicted that these positions would be the most affected by retirement within the next five years.

In the education sector, positions predicted to be the most affected by retirement in the next five years were:

- ❑ Management/Administration
- ❑ Special Education teachers
- ❑ French teachers
- ❑ Science and Math teachers and
- ❑ Speech Language Pathologists

It was estimated by one organization that 50% of all classroom teaching positions would be affected by retirement within the next five years. It should also be noted that for professions like Speech Language Pathology and Guidance Counseling, filling positions in the first place is becoming more and more difficult.

Logically, as our general population approaches retirement so does our physician population. However, it appears that physicians as a group are aging at a slightly faster rate than the general population. The In Practice Age Report, and In Practice Demographic Report [sections of the most recent departmental supply report] indicates that a high percentage of our physician workforce will be eligible to retire in the next 15-20 years.

Most of our physicians are between the ages of 40 and 59, accounting for 61% of our current physician population. Additionally, physicians who are 50 years of age and above account for 38% of our supply. Assuming that these individuals will retire between the ages of 65 and 70, approximately 40% of our current physician supply could retire in the next 15 to 20 years.<sup>11</sup>

*Practicing Fee for Service (FFS) Physicians in Central East and Central West Catchments, by specialty, age and Country/Province of origin. Note that 58 out of 81 Physicians are in the age range 35-54 years of age.*

Practicing FFS Physicians in Central East and Central West catchments						
Total	Male	Female	Full Registration	Provisional Registration	Primary Specialty Certified	Primary Specialty Non-Certified
81	66	15	65	16	41	40
<b>PDF's on Primary Specialty, Age Range and Graduating Country</b>						
Primary Specialty	Number	Age Range	Number	Country/Province	Number	
Internal Medicine	5	25-29	1	Sri Lanka (Formerly Ceylon)	3	
Anesthesia	3	30-34	6	Egypt (United Arab Republic)	2	
Dermatology	1	35-39	12	England (UK-England-Wales)	1	
Neurology	1	40-44	20	India (Goa)	6	
Psychiatry	1	45-49	11	India	1	
Pediatrics	1	50-54	15	Ireland	3	
Diagnostic Radiology	5	55-59	9	Alberta	1	
Emergency Medicine	2	60-64	1	Newfoundland	35	
General Surgery	6	65-69	5	Nova Scotia	9	
Orthopedic Surgery	3	40-74	1	Ontario	1	
Urology	1			Nigeria	1	
Ophthalmology	4			Pakistan	3	
Otolaryngology	1			Philippines	1	
Obstetric & Gynecology	2			Zimbabwe (Rhodesia)	1	
Family Medicine	20			Scotland	1	
General Practice	25			South Africa	11	
				Wales	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>		<b>81</b>		<b>81</b>	

*Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association – October 2003*

According to the Canadian Teachers' Federation study of Canadian School Boards on Supply and Demand Issues<sup>12</sup>, which was carried out in 2000, 100% of Newfoundland and Labrador

<sup>11</sup> Recruitment and Retention Throughout the Life-Cycle of a Physician in Newfoundland and Labrador: A Discussion Paper; Prepared by Derek Fleming, Department of Health & Community Services, NL July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2003

<sup>12</sup> Canadian Teachers Federation Survey of Canadian School Boards on Supply/Demand Issues, Canadian Teachers Federation Website: <http://www.ctf-fce.ca/E/docs/press/ESB00-5.PDF>



school districts reported that the following factors would create shortages or make it harder to find qualified teachers over the next five years:

- ❑ More teachers reaching retirement age
- ❑ More students with special needs
- ❑ Fewer graduates from teacher education
- ❑ Lack of interest in teaching as a career

As well, it should be noted that...

- ❑ 75% of Newfoundland and Labrador school districts reported that higher turnover of experienced teachers who are leaving the profession but not retiring would create shortages or make it harder to find qualified teachers over the next five years.
- ❑ 78% of all Canadian school districts surveyed viewed retirement as the primary factor expected to lead to teacher shortages over the next five years.
- ❑ Half of Canadian school boards surveyed found it harder to attract qualified candidates to full-time teaching positions during 1996-1997.
- ❑ Retirement is the most common reason for turnover in the positions with the highest rates of turnover at District 5 and District 6 School Boards and College of the North Atlantic, according to the CRSC Stakeholders Survey.

Major service organizations are facing tremendous challenges in filling key positions in Central Newfoundland. These challenges are expected to worsen as the majority of people in many managerial and specialized positions move closer to retirement age and there are fewer people coming along to fill the gap. Lack of immigration to our Province and comparatively low salaries exacerbate the situation. It is becoming increasingly difficult to provide quality service delivery through qualified personnel. Specific positions now go unfilled for long periods of time and turnover in rural areas can be very high.

## History of the ‘Joining Forces’ Project

These factors, and discussions between sector representatives about their impact on regional hiring practices, led to the development of the *Joining Forces Project*. Due to the challenges facing regional boards, long-term planning and development aimed at improving our chances of attracting and keeping qualified professionals in our communities are a necessity. Interagency cooperation and cross-sector partnerships are vital to that planning and development. The reports from the Joining Forces Project in Central Region are intended to assist both organizations individually, and the Central Region Steering Committee as a collective, in enhancing recruitment and retention strategies.

### Rationale for Project

After the establishment of the Central Region Steering Committee for the Strategic Social Plan, a number of concerns were tabled regarding challenges that regional organizations were experiencing in recruiting and retaining professionals. As a result of these discussions, it was acknowledged that the overall problem was a serious one, and potentially would only worsen with the aging population and continued out-migration from our Province.

In order to explore the matter further, a group of people met on two occasions in 2001. This group included representatives from CRSC partner agencies and included human resource managers from the major boards and departments, as well as other interested representatives. The first meeting was used to confirm the specific issues that were being identified. The second meeting was used to categorize and prioritize those issues.

Through the discussion and some preliminary research, it was identified that there are several problem areas with respect to the recruitment and retention of people to professional positions in Central Region.

These key issues include:

- ❑ Training and development
- ❑ Marketing and promotion
- ❑ Long-term planning
- ❑ Finances
- ❑ Demographics/geography
- ❑ Legislation/policy/contracts
- ❑ Research/ additional information required

The participants agreed that there were three top priorities for action, *within the region*<sup>\*</sup>. They were:

1. Marketing & Promotion
2. Training & Development
3. Research/additional information

## **Planning and Implementation**

Although research was identified as a separate priority, it was also acknowledged that additional research was integral to all other priorities. The group recommended to the Central Region Steering Committee that a proposal be developed to hire a planner-researcher to conduct research relative to the priorities, and to assist with the development of effective, coordinated recruitment and retention strategies for Central Region.

Due to the significant numbers of people employed in the health and education sectors, and because of research being carried out in other jurisdictions with industry/the private sector, it was decided that the focus of the human resources project for Central Newfoundland would be on the health and education sectors.

The Central Region Steering Committee approved a proposal in principle on October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 and approved the parameters for a grant request on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

A proposal for a one-year project was developed with input from CRSC stakeholders. Funding for the project was subsequently provided by Human Resources Development Canada under the Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA), and was supplemented by a contribution from the Strategic Social Plan implementation funds. The College of the North Atlantic agreed to administer the SSP funds and also to provide space for meetings of the working group and videoconferencing where possible. The Department of Human Resources and Employment agreed to be the overall project sponsor and provided office space at the Provincial Building in Grand Falls-Windsor, administered LMDA Project funds and provided daily support for the staffing position.

A Planner-Researcher was hired in September of 2002 and works in conjunction with the Manager of Corporate Services of the Department of Human Resources & Employment in Central, and the Regional Planner for the Strategic Social Plan – Central. The Planner-Researcher also worked in cooperation with the Newfoundland Statistics Agency to develop appropriate research tools.

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<sup>\*</sup> *It was noted that these were factors that were, for the most part, within the mandate of regional organizations and managers. It was also identified that other factors have a major impact but require a provincial or national approach and many additional partners. Some factors were suggested for follow-up by CRSC in its discussions with provincial departments or through the SSP process.*

## **Working Group/Partners**

A Working Group was established to provide direction and support throughout the length of the project. This group consisted of representatives from a variety of organizations in the health and education sectors as well as some representatives who originally participated in the initial discussions in 2001.

The working group was comprised of the following:

1. *Colin Forward*, District Administrator  
College of the North Atlantic
2. *Robert Turner*, Manager, Corporate Services  
Department of Human Resources and Employment (HRE)
3. *Dave Vardy*, Planning and Development Specialist  
Department of Industry, Trade and Rural Development (ITRD)
4. *Patricia Bridgeman*, Director of Human Resources  
Health and Community Services-Central (HCS-C)
5. *Terry Ings*, Director of Human Resources  
Central East Health Care Institutions Board
6. *Tanya Ivany*, Manager of Human Resources  
Central West Health Corporation
7. *Bonnie Lane-McCarthy*, Assistant Director- Personnel  
Baie Verte-Central-Connaigre School Board
8. *Claudine Wells*, Assistant Director- Personnel  
Lewisporte-Gander School Board
9. *Fran Kirby*, Project Manager, Professional Development  
Faculty of Medicine, Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN)
10. *Heather Hillier*, Regional Planner - Central  
Strategic Social Plan (SSP)
11. *Susanne Hobbs*, Planner/Researcher  
Joining Forces Project - Central SSP Region

## **Project Goals and Objectives**

### ***Goals***

The vision for the Joining Forces Human Resources Project is that of an increased capacity in the Central SSP Region for the recruitment and retention of people in professional positions.

The Goals of the project were as follows:

1. To plan for multi-sector (human resource) professional needs over the next 5-10 years in Central Newfoundland
2. To coordinate and enhance joint recruitment and retention strategies in Central Newfoundland
3. To increase the number of people recruited to fill professional positions

## ***Objectives***

The Project Objectives were to:

1. Determine human resource requirements for key professional positions in Central Newfoundland
2. Research and identify successful recruitment strategies which attract professionals to rural areas
3. Develop and implement a survey and other tools to determine who is being successfully recruited to the Central SSP Region in professional positions, and why people stay in these positions and this region
4. Recommend the most effective strategies to meet our regional needs
5. Compile materials and recommend materials for a regional promotional package for human resource recruitment purposes
6. Plan and deliver a regional forum on human resource recruitment and retention, to promote awareness and address broader issues
7. Communicate long-term regional projections with respect to professional needs to District 5 and District 6 School Guidance Counsellors, for career planning purposes
8. Communicate projections to post-secondary institutions for program planning purposes

## **Intended Outcomes for Project**

### ***Short-term***

The short-term outcomes expected as a result of the Joining Forces Project included:

- ❑ Enhanced knowledge about rural human resources strategies, who is being successfully recruited to this region and why they stay
- ❑ Improved awareness and knowledge amongst regional stakeholders on ways and benefits of working together in developing human resource plans/strategies
- ❑ Increased awareness, problem-solving and advocacy about issues affecting recruitment to rural areas
- ❑ Improved awareness amongst target populations about positions available in, and the qualities of, Central Newfoundland

### ***Long-term***

Long-term outcomes expected as a result of the project being implemented were:

- ❑ Organizations will have comprehensive information relevant to human resource recruitment and retention, and will plan cooperatively in the region to meet professional needs
- ❑ More people will be recruited to Central Region to fill professional positions

# Project Methodology and Results

## Overview of Major Activities of the Project

Several methods were used in gathering information for the “Joining Forces” Project. They included:

- ❑ Surveys and interviews with Human Resource Recruiters/Managers of key partner organizations with the Central Region Steering Committee (CRSC)
- ❑ Survey with people in the Central Region who have been recruited and retained here to fill specific professional positions
- ❑ Review of best practices/strategies developed internationally, nationally, and provincially for recruitment and retention of professionals to rural areas
- ❑ Human resources forum to improve awareness of the recruitment and retention issues facing organizations in the region, specifically health and education organizations

## CRSC Stakeholders/Human Resource Recruiters Survey

### *Implementation*

Information gathering with CRSC Stakeholders was conducted during the months of November and December 2002 by the Planner-Researcher for the purpose of determining:

- ✓ whether organizations have comprehensive, formalized human resource plans
- ✓ the challenges, as recruiters in the region see them, regarding recruitment and retention
- ✓ the effect of retirement rates and other such factors on organizations

Representatives from the six regional health and education boards were interviewed. Interviews were conducted, based on a survey designed with the assistance of The Newfoundland Statistics Agency. The survey divided the questions into three sections:

1. *Organizational profile* - asked questions that related to the size of the total workforce in the organization, the number of senior supervisory and managerial people in the workforce, the annual turnover rate for all positions, what positions experienced high turnover, the reasons for turnover, and things that are affected by turnover in an organization
2. *Recruitment* - asked questions related to the strategies in place in organizations for recruiting professionals, the professional positions available in organizations, the turnover rates associated with those positions, and the challenges with regard to recruitment
3. *Retention* - asked questions related to the challenges regarding retention in organizations, the specific strategies/practices for increasing employee retention, and positions that will be affected by retirement in the next 5 years

## *Summary*

The survey/interviews reinforced the challenges facing regional organizations with respect to attracting and keeping people in professional positions, particularly in smaller communities.

All organizations have someone who is solely responsible for human resource recruiting and other functions. The majority of organizations (four out of six) have between two-four people with that responsibility. Four out of the six organizations surveyed had between 5-25% annual turnover rate within their organizations during April 2001-March 2002, and all organizations considered this to be high.

Retirement was the most common reason for turnover in the education sector, while some form of resignation was the most common reason for turnover in the health sector. Two out of three health boards track turnover by departments or programs, while the other boards do not track turnover in this way.

Half of the organizations surveyed have human resource plans that have been developed within the organization to guide planning and policies. One of the six organizations has policies/procedures in place for recruiting students to positions of employment with their organizations. In the other organizations there are informal practices to fill vacant positions by targeting interns/students who perform well.

The methods used to recruit professionals were similar among all organizations. The internet, recruitment fairs, advertising in papers/other publications, and the use of a job bank were among those methods. All of the organizations promote the benefits of the position such as compressed workweek/flextime, job security, insurance and pension plans, etc.

All organizations agreed that retention is increasing in importance in their organization and four out of six have specific strategies aimed at increasing employee retention. The organizations that do not have specific strategies are beginning to address this area. The organizations with specific retention strategies in place rated them as needing improvement.

From the perspectives of the recruiters, the main reasons influencing professionals to leave were lack of career development opportunities, salary levels, and isolation. Half of the organizations surveyed reported that geographic isolation was the number one factor causing professionals to leave.

The survey size is limited (six interviews/six organizations). However, the health and education sectors account for significant employment in our region (up to 5000 employees), and the survey provided qualitative information on the perspectives of people responsible for hiring staff in a large, rural region. The information they gave reinforced what was being heard in previous discussions. Those interviewed assisted the process by compiling statistics and other materials within their organizations.

It is important to note that there are few forecasting models being used at the current time, and in the subsequent research, it was difficult to find good examples of forecasting models or practices. While associations and provincial departments may be able to forecast the number of (new) nurses, for instance, that may be needed in the next five years, there do not appear to be accurate methods in practice to compute turnover, organizational change, retirement rates and other factors into numbers useful to smaller agencies. The regional organizations could not predict, based on research, trends and planning, the number of people they will need to fill specific roles within their organizations in the next few years.

## **Survey of Professionals Recruited and Retained in the Central Region**

### ***Implementation***

A survey was conducted to gather information on why health and education professionals choose to work in the Central Region, how they were made aware of job openings in the Central Region, what things contribute to retaining them to the Central Region, as well as any reasons that would cause them to leave.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency provided assistance in survey design, survey sampling, coding and data entry, as well as statistical analysis.

The health and education organizations in the region assisted tremendously in distributing and delivering the surveys to randomly selected individuals. Professionals who have worked in the Central Region for five years or less were the targets of this survey, however a high number of respondents to the survey have worked in the region for more than five years. Only those professionals with an employment status of permanent full-time, permanent part-time, or full-time temporary/contract were included in the sample for the survey.

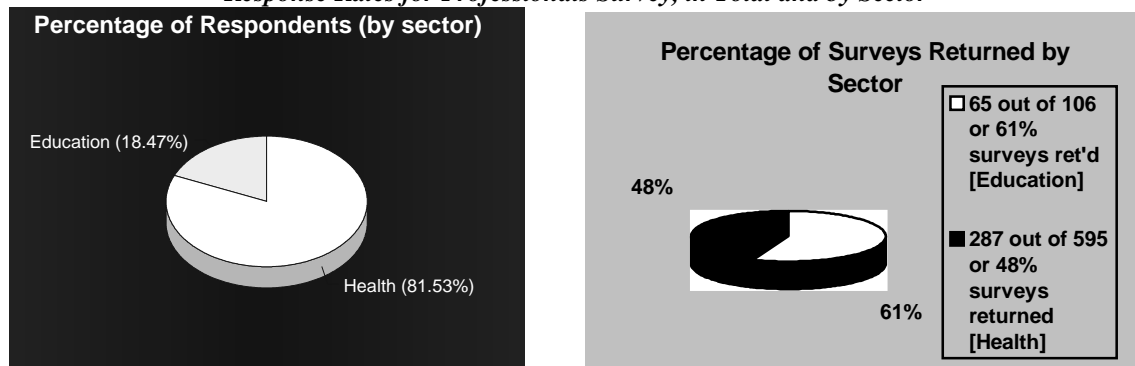
The survey size was as follows:

- ❑ The total population size for the survey was 2037
- ❑ The sample size was 701, therefore 701 surveys were distributed
- ❑ 352 surveys were completed and returned, which provided an overall response rate of 50%
- ❑ 18.47% of the total number of respondents represented the Education sector while 81.53% represented the Health sector
- ❑ For the Education sector, 106 surveys were distributed and 65 surveys were returned, for a response rate of 61%
- ❑ For the Health sector, 595 surveys were distributed and 297 surveys were returned, for a response rate of 48%.

An overall response rate of 50% is considered high for a survey of this type. Normally, a survey of this size receives a 30-35% response rate.



*Response Rates for Professionals Survey, in Total and by Sector*



The survey was promoted through a press release (one being posted on the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador website and many others being printed in local area newspapers in the region) as well as internal memos within participating organizations. These forms of promotion stressed the purpose and importance of the survey to future human resource planning for organizations within the region.

## *Summary*

The survey of professionals offers a general profile of those living and working in the Central Region of Newfoundland and provides stakeholders with a greater understanding of the reasons why professionals come to work in the region, why they stay, and what would cause them to consider leaving.

The survey results show that people who are originally from the Central Region or elsewhere in Newfoundland and Labrador may be more likely to be successfully recruited and retained in the region.

The rural background of these people is one factor that can be attributed to this success. Past studies have shown that there is a relationship between the successful recruitment and retention of professionals and the rural backgrounds of those professionals. To recruit and retain rural professionals, organizations should consider targeting candidates with rural backgrounds or with personal characteristics or educational experiences that predispose them to life in rural areas.

**68%** (health) and **59.4%** (education) of respondents grew up in communities with a population of less than 5,000. **48.6%** (health) and **53.9%** (education) respondents are currently living in communities with a population less than 5,000. When respondents were asked to rate reasons for choosing the Central Region as a place of work, “originally from the Central Region/ Newfoundland and Labrador” was the most common reason given.

This information supports the idea of “growing our own” professionals to fill positions in high need areas of the region. The most common methods of recruitment that were used to recruit the respondents were job advertisements/job banks and newspapers or other publications. It

should be noted that recruitment fairs were used to successfully recruit only **6.2%** of education respondents and **3.3%** of health respondents. A large percentage of health respondents (mainly licensed practical nurses) were recruited by making their own contact with the respective organization.

Quality recreational and cultural activities were mentioned as being very important factors in retaining professionals in the Central Region. One comment made by one professional surveyed stated that, “If the social life of professionals in the region was improved, along with increasing community involvement for people with families, retention wouldn’t be such a big problem”. As well, there were comments made about professionals needing to feel included in the community and not just the organization. One person suggested that there should be better orientation so that new professionals are better acquainted with the community in which they live and work.

Assistance with the employment of spouses and children also stood out in the comments section of the survey. It was felt by some respondents that if organizations could assist with job placement for spouses of professionals, it might eliminate the need for some professionals to leave because their spouses could not secure employment.

Recommendations were made about information that should be included in recruitment packages, such as information promoting the quiet, rural communities and lifestyle, and the overall beauty of the region. Some respondents thought this could be accomplished through the development of a PowerPoint presentation or even a video showcasing the region and what it has to offer.

Overall, the survey had a good response rate and valuable information was obtained on how people living and working here view particular issues.

## **Literature Review of International, National and Provincial Strategies and Best Practices for Recruiting and Retaining Professionals to Rural Areas**

### ***Implementation***

Research was conducted between October 2002 and June 2003 to obtain information on best practices and strategies relevant to each priority identified by CRSC (i.e. training and development, marketing and promotion, financial, human resource planning, etc). In some cases, they overlap and may actually address more than one area. Sources used to gather the information included the World Wide Web, Government Departments, printed resources, and Central Region Steering Committee partner agencies. The World Wide Web was the most commonly used source to gather information. After researching best practices/strategies from the websites of many organizations, contact names listed on a number of those sites were used to follow up on the evaluation of the best practice/strategy.

The literature review has three major sections under the two areas of interest, health and education. They are:

1. **International Findings**
2. **National Findings**
3. **Provincial Findings**

It was believed that having these three sections included in the literature review would help to develop a broader understanding by stakeholders of what other parts of the world or country are doing to overcome the problems associated with recruiting and retaining professionals.

In the *International Findings* sections, a majority of the examples are from organizations in the United States or Australia. The United States and Australia (especially Western Australia) are experiencing similar effects of the baby boom generation as well as aging professionals in the health and education sectors. Competition for qualified professionals in those sectors is steadily increasing, which leads to increased recruitment and retention problems for organizations.

In the *National Findings* sections, a majority of the examples are from organizations in the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario and in the Yukon. These areas seem to be very aware of the issues they are facing regarding the recruitment and retention of professionals and are perhaps the leaders in successfully dealing with these issues through several different initiatives. For example, in 1991 the Alberta Government established a Rural Physician Action Plan (RPAP) as a comprehensive action plan for the recruitment and retention of rural physicians. Since the Plan's inception over one dozen initiatives, some short-term and others long-term in nature, were implemented "on the basis of influencing physicians' decisions about moving to and remaining in a rural Alberta community".

In the *Provincial Findings* sections, the emphasis is on the best practices/strategies used in Newfoundland and Labrador. Most of the examples given in this section are government initiatives to overcome the problems the province is experiencing with the recruitment and retention of professionals in the health and education sectors. Other practices and/or strategies listed in this section are a result of the partnerships developed between the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association, Memorial University of Newfoundland, and the Government. Similar partnerships between the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, Memorial University of Newfoundland, and the Government also exist.

The majority of best practices/strategies mentioned in this literature review are rural examples. However, there are examples from larger areas included because they appear to be relevant to our situation in Central Newfoundland and Labrador. Many examples in this literature review address more than one category. For example, some best practices/strategies relate to training and development, marketing and promotion, and finances. It was decided that these examples would be included in the category that best suited them. The majority of examples in the literature review pertain to training and development and marketing and promotion. It was difficult to find clear-cut examples for some of the other categories.

In the research section of the review, it should be noted that there are some gaps in the information. For example, there was not a lot of information available about the role unions may be playing in the recruitment and retention of health and educational professionals.

## *Summary*

The literature review presents a snapshot of the many innovative strategies that are being used in the recruitment and retention of professionals in the health and education sectors.

Some of the highlights from the literature review include:

- ❑ The development of programs that target individuals who are looking for a mid-career change
- ❑ Increased emphasis on professional development in the workplace
- ❑ Mentoring of new professionals
- ❑ The increased use of the internet as a means of web-based recruiting
- ❑ Well-developed marketing strategies/plans
- ❑ A focus on lifestyle factors when recruiting professionals
- ❑ Supporting spouses and children of newly recruited professionals
- ❑ Exposing students, at a younger age, to possible careers in education and health
- ❑ Exposing post-secondary students to rural communities and rural practices
- ❑ Community involvement in recruitment and retention, in partnership with organizations
- ❑ Recognition of outstanding education and health professionals

**Mid-Career Programs** appear to be a commonly used method in the United States for recruiting professionals to the education sector. Such programs tap into individuals who are changing careers to become teachers. These programs offer longer-term, part-time study to allow prospective teachers to work while they go to school. Other programs offer flexible scheduling on weekends and evenings, as well as internships and apprenticeships. These programs sometimes carry stipends and offer alternatives to traditional course work to accommodate the lifestyles of adult learners. In one area, retiring and separating military personnel are choosing teaching as a career at a higher rate than perhaps any other single profession.

It became apparent that there is a significant focus by many organizations on professional development for current health and education professionals. The tools for delivering training and development vary, from on-line resources to conferences, seminars, courses and other educational events. However, overall there is the belief that the provision of professional development opportunities leads to greater retention.

**The Rural Health Education Foundation** is a non-government, not-for-profit organization that provides distance education on a no-charge basis, to health professionals living and working in rural, regional and remote Australia. The Foundation provides distance education to reduce professional isolation and improve health care outcomes. Over 4000 health care professionals and community workers sit down together bi-weekly in their local hospital to watch television. The educational programs have covered issues as diverse as snakebites through to youth suicide.

Each show features an expert panel, which examines each subject with live audience feedback through talkback, fax back, and shortly, through internet comment. The programs are invaluable to doctors, pharmacists, specialists, nurses, and other health workers because they are interactive, harnessing all the power of “talk back” television.

The **Virtual Teacher Centres (VTC)** available to teachers in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador is another great source of professional development. The Virtual Teacher Centre is an online professional development branch of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teacher’s Association that has a mandate to provide educators with quality online learning experiences in support of children’s learning. In addition, the VTC functions as a portal to educational web resources and as a knowledge management tool for teachers of this province.

There also appeared to be an emphasis on mentoring new and current professionals in the health and education sectors. Through mentoring programs, such as the **Teacher Mentorship and Mentoring Principal Program**, which is offered by the Department of Education in the Yukon, new teachers can avail of a mentor to provide advice and support on issues, while the principal of a school works closely with new administrators as a support for educating them on operational procedures, policy interpretation and general day-to-day operations.

**TeachWA** is a website developed to promote education teaching opportunities available in Western Australia. It lists the available employment opportunities, teaching career choices, district and school lists, teaching vacancies, links to more important information, a teacher exchange program, the Teacher Induction Program, and teaching scholarships. This website also has links to the Western Tourism Commission, the Department of Housing and Transport website, the Australian Government Schools, and most importantly – <http://www.westernaustralia.net>. This website promotes Western Australia as a great place to live and work. It contains information on quick facts, holiday specials, the tourism sector, etc.

A well-developed marketing plan/strategy is becoming increasingly important to the success of recruiting and retaining the right person. According to the literature, a marketing strategy for organizations should be: *attractive, appealing, of high quality and have a strong clear message*. It should cover the 4 Cs:

*Compensation          Community (culture, core values, etc.)          Colleagues          Curriculum*

An advertisement should discuss what it is like practicing medicine (promote the positives of the organization, colleagues, equipment), for instance, as well as what it is like not practicing medicine (community, culture, education, affordable homes, thriving economy).

**Virtual Job Fairs**, which assist spouses and children of newly recruited professionals to find employment are becoming common among organizations, as well as **Rural Physicians Spousal Networks**, which promote the retention of rural physicians through spousal networking, communication and programs that foster personal growth and satisfaction with rural living. A group of rural spouses, who experienced the need first-hand and wanted to make a difference, started the Network.

The **Future Teacher Newsletter** is one method used via the World Wide Web to promote a career in teaching to middle and high school students. The newsletter is produced by the Recruiting New Teachers website, based out of the United States. The newsletter is accessible through their website and is also distributed through schools in the United States. Future Teacher provides information and resources to its readers. It is a newsletter about recruiting, developing, and supporting a qualified and diverse teacher workforce. It discusses programs that are put in place to recruit teachers, partnerships that have been formed to grow your own teachers, amongst other things.

One long-range plan started by Memorial University, Faculty of Medicine is based on the premise that physicians who come from rural areas are more likely to return to rural areas. **Med Quest**, started in 1990, is an exciting summer program for students in grades 10-12. It is a career-oriented program specifically designed for students in Newfoundland and Labrador. During each Med Quest session, students are introduced to many health professions in areas such as medicine, nursing, pharmacy, occupational therapy, and physiotherapy. These health careers and special topics are presented through lectures, demonstrations, experiments, guest speakers, research projects, job shadowing, role playing, small group discussions, and tours of health facilities.

**Rural Placements-** Based on the idea that an effective way to attract new physicians to rural areas is to expose them to rural practice early in their training, all Memorial University medical students are required to complete a two-week rural visit during first year and locations can vary from sites with hospitals (e.g. Burin) to sites with just clinics (e.g. Glovertown). Sites are pre-selected. During this visit, students are required to observe only and keep a journal on their observations. During third year (first clerkship year), students are required to complete one four-week rural family medicine rotation in rural Newfoundland or rural New Brunswick.

In 1998 a three-year demonstration project, the **Recruitable Community Project (RCP)**, began in West Virginia, US. The project focused on building awareness and skills in rural communities in order to improve their recruitment abilities. This was done through broad-based community development initiatives, providing information about recruitment and retention issues, and helping trainees become familiar with rural communities. The ultimate goal of the project was to increase the recruitment of healthcare providers to rural areas of the State. There have been twenty-four additional healthcare providers recruited among RCP communities since the introduction of this Project.

The **Rural Physician Award of Distinction** was designed to recognize the achievements of outstanding physicians in rural Alberta. Beyond their medical practice, such physicians often contribute to the fabric of rural life by teaching other health professionals, conducting research, and volunteering in their community. This award is presented annually to a family physician who currently lives in rural Alberta and has done so for more than four years. The individual must demonstrate superior commitment and contribution to the community.

Many more examples of best practices/strategies used to recruit and retain professionals in the health and education sectors can be found in the literature review.

## Human Resources Forum

### *Implementation*

On June 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, 2003, a Human Resources Forum was held at Gander, Newfoundland. “Communities have a vital role to play in helping to attract and keep professionals living and working in rural areas,” was the theme of the forum. Approximately one hundred participants from across the region left the forum with a new awareness of the issues facing us with respect to the recruitment and retention of professionals, along with ideas about building a ‘community approach’ to address those issues. *Jim Hornell*, Regional Director of Professional Development at Central West Health Corporation and of Jim Hornell Consulting, facilitated the event.

The forum opened with *Sister Elizabeth Davis* (The Royal Commission on Newfoundland and Labrador’s Place in Canada), who commented on the society we are currently living in and the leadership needed to meet the challenges. Following her address, *Heather Hillier and Susanne Hobbs* with the Strategic Social Plan-Central provided an overview of the “Joining Forces” Project as well as an update of activities and findings. *Fran Kirby*, Faculty of Medicine at MUN and *Scarlett Hann*, Coordinator with the Provincial Physician Recruitment Program, informed participants about the pros and cons of recruitment and retention of doctors for rural areas. Next, *Mike Bruce*, Regional Manager of Community Capacity Building with Human Resources Development Canada, encouraged community leaders to include human resource development in their strategic plans, and emphasized the importance of working together to solve the recruitment and retention issues.

The afternoon session ended with small group discussions, by sector (health, education, and community and economic development) about what organizations can bring to a regional approach on recruitment and retention, as well as what they need.

Day one ended with an evening banquet, and guest speaker *John Fisher* who, along with his wife is the Owner/Operator of Fisher’s Loft and Fisher Associates in Port Rexton, talked about the small business approach to employee retention. The night ended with entertainment by The Split Peas, local performers from Twillingate.

Day two of the forum began with an encouraging speech from *Danny Huxter* who is a Consultant and Community Volunteer, as he talked passionately about life in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, and ways to keep our young people committed to it.

The remainder of the morning was spent in small group discussions (cross-sector) about regional strategies to recruit, retain and grow our own people to fill high need positions in Central Newfoundland.

Minister of Health and Community Services and Lead Minister for the Strategic Social Plan, *Gerald Smith*, provided closing remarks at the end of the Forum. He reminisced about the value

of living and raising a family in a small community in Western Newfoundland and Labrador and talked about the importance of people coming together in such ways as the regional forum.

## *Summary*

The Human Resources Forum was very well received by a majority of participants. The feedback forms from both days showed that participants were pleased with the outcome of the forum activities. The feedback showed that 46% of those who completed forms learned about the forum from the mail-out materials that were distributed. 37% of participants completing the feedback forms represented health organizations, while 15% represented education organizations and the rest of the participants were a mixture of government and community representatives. The most common reason for people attending the forum was that their organizations were experiencing difficulties with recruitment and retention (52%).

When asked what they liked best about the forum, participants completing the feedback forms mentioned the following things:

- ✓ Good exchange of ideas
- ✓ Terrific speakers, great facilitator
- ✓ Energy and willingness of groups to work together
- ✓ The presentations, because they were informative
- ✓ Major concerns of our community were addressed
- ✓ The amount of involvement of the participants
- ✓ Realizing that other organizations have similar recruitment problems
- ✓ The realization of the importance of the social aspect of recruitment and retention

When asked what they least liked about the event, a number of participants indicated that the forum wasn't long enough, they would have liked to have had more time for group discussions and it would have been useful to have included information on other sectors/industry.

There were many positive comments made by those who attended. They included:

- ✓ Thank you for the opportunity to learn about these issues as they relate to Central
- ✓ Need specific action plan developed and identify who will follow through on each action and will they report back
- ✓ Great starting point to develop a multi-disciplinary team approach for recruitment and retention in our area.
- ✓ Excellent idea in holding the forum. I realize health and education were priority, but are you considering looking at all sectors, specifically in the skilled trades industry?
- ✓ Keep up the great work
- ✓ Real eye-opener. It is important to realize that recruitment and retention is not a single sector approach and will require more than a single sector solution.

Overall, 74% of those who completed feedback forms rated the agenda and content of the forum 8.5 out of 10. 98% of those people rated the organization and facilitation at 9 out of 10.



When asked if there was a need for a follow-up forum, 66% of those who provided written feedback did see the need. Some suggested topics/speakers were:

- ✓ Action/implementation focus
- ✓ Building community partnerships in recruitment
- ✓ Strategic planning
- ✓ Presentations by Mike Bruce, Danny Huxter, the Premier
- ✓ Presentations by communities that took the next step
- ✓ Following through on directions and getting updates on success

The forum was intended to help stakeholders learn more about the issues and identify ways to work together to improve our recruitment and retention strategies. It targeted people with interest in and/or direct responsibility for human resource planning and recruitment and retention of staff, as well as those with a broader interest in labour market and community economic development.

## **Development of Promotional Materials**

### ***Current Status***

During the course of the project, there was an opportunity to learn about the various types of promotional and marketing tools that organizations are using to promote themselves as well as their regions, communities or provinces. Many innovative methods are being tried in order to address recruitment and retention issues. It appears that organizations no longer promote only the work environment and professions. They also promote the community for which they are recruiting, so potential recruits are made aware of what the community as well as the organization can offer them in terms of work and life.

There is evidence that well-developed marketing strategies can lead to successful recruitment of professionals. The National Teacher Recruitment Clearinghouse suggests that to be successful in today's competition for teachers, district personnel need to become savvy marketers and use innovative techniques to advertise and promote the unique features of their district. It emphasizes the importance of making recruitment materials attractive, noting that appealing, high-quality promotional materials may cost more up front, but are often worth the investment. Districts are also encouraged to add a personal touch by including real-life stories of why teachers came to their district (testimonials).

Overall, it appears that developing and sticking to a strong, clear message in marketing materials is important. Advertisements should play up the combination of rural amenities and recreational opportunities that exist. It is valuable to make a potential recruit aware of what it is like to work with an organization as well as what is available for them to do when they are not working.

**Opportunitynorth.ca** was developed by the Northern Alberta Development Council, in conjunction with health authorities and school jurisdictions, for employers to use in recruiting professionals to Northern Alberta. They have developed a website, CD-Rom, business cards and

brochures. The website was launched in April of 2001, and currently gets approximately 11,000 hits per month. The website offers visitors information on possible careers in the north, the communities, climate and lifestyle, and includes a photo gallery, maps and a virtual tour of Northern Alberta.

It is important for recruitment/marketing packages to include information on the local area in which the position is available and not just the organization. For instance, when recruiting staff, Health and Community Services-Western Region promotes the many tourists attractions Western Newfoundland has to offer. Pamphlets, brochures, website addresses, free passes to attractions, etc. are included in the package sent to potential recruits.

One of the activities planned as part of the *Joining Forces Project* was the development of some regional promotional tools that could be used by relevant organizations. As indicated, the literature review provided numerous examples of promotional strategies and tools that have been developed for use in the recruitment of people to positions and communities. Once this information had been gathered, a focus group was held in Grand Falls-Windsor to gather advice from a number of people about the best possible ways to promote the communities and culture of the Central Region.

Based on the research and consultation to date, several steps have been taken or are planned:

1. A draft promotional strategy has been outlined for the Region
2. A PowerPoint presentation is being developed on the Region by a Communications Firm
3. Negotiations are underway to have College of the North Atlantic human resource and marketing students assist with the implementation of the promotional strategy
4. Additional tools will be developed, based on input from the Working Group and a second focus group to be held in mid-winter, 2004.

## **Outcomes of the Joining Forces Project – Phase I**

A brief review of the goals and objectives for the Joining Forces Project - Phase I indicates that the overall expectations established for the project have been met. To review:

### ***Project Goals:***

1. To plan for multi-sector, human resource professional needs over the next five to ten years in Central NL.

*Due to the lack of forecasting models it has been impossible to confidently predict professional requirements for the Central SSP Region for the next five to ten years. However, there has been documentation of the reasons for turnover in staff, retirement rates, and the positions for which the health and education sectors have most difficulty recruiting and retaining people, among other things. The information gathered through the surveys, literature review and forum could be useful to regional bodies for human resource planning purposes.*

2. To coordinate and enhance joint recruitment and retention strategies in the region.

*Over the past year, a cross-sector working group has supported the Joining Forces Project. It has included representatives from education and health boards, the Departments of Industry, Trade and Rural Development and Human Resources and Employment, Memorial University of Newfoundland and the College of the North Atlantic. Actions taken through Phase I to coordinate and enhance strategies have included communication across sectors about the issues, identification of the common factors influencing recruitment and retention, development of regional promotional tools, and the promotion of a cross-sector approach through the regional Human Resources Forum.*

3. To increase the number of people recruited to fill professional positions.

*This is a long-term goal, and considering the challenges that we face as a region with respect to professional recruitment and labour market development, the implementation of long-term actions in addition to those of Phase I will be required to accomplish this goal.*

### ***Project Objectives:***

1. To determine human resource requirements for key professional positions in Central Newfoundland

*While information is not available to allow us to determine specific human resource requirements, general needs for organizations over the next few years based on retirement rates and occupational information have been identified.*

2. To research and identify successful recruitment strategies which attract professionals to rural areas.

*Through the stakeholder survey, professionals survey and literature review we have a much better sense of what attracts professionals to rural areas. For example, the evidence shows us that people originally from our region or from a rural background are more likely to be recruited and to stay here. The factors which people in today's professional job market look for in the workplace have been confirmed. The most successful marketing tools have been identified. This and other information will be valuable in the development of regional strategies for recruitment and retention.*

3. To develop and implement a survey and other tools to determine who is being successfully recruited to the Central SSP Region in professional positions, and why people stay in these positions and this region.

*This survey was completed with the assistance of health and education boards. A healthy response rate of 50% from a randomly selected group was achieved. The survey was developed with the assistance of the Newfoundland Statistics Agency and provided information to us on how people were recruited to positions, their backgrounds, and perspectives on what is needed to attract and keep people here.*

4. To recommend the most effective strategies to meet our regional needs.

*Based on all of the information gathered from Phase I, we are now recommending actions that can be considered by individual organizations, by CRSC as a collective and by other regional and provincial bodies. We expect that the strategies arising from Phase I will continue to build on the cross-sector partnerships and a collaborative approach to recruitment and retention. The key directions for meeting our regional needs are to*

- a) *Grow our Own* and
  - b) *Develop a community approach in the region.*
5. To compile materials and recommend materials for a regional promotional package for human resource recruitment purposes.

*Throughout Phase I, information on a variety of promotional tools has been gathered. They include brochures, information packages, folders, websites, PowerPoint presentations, and videos. We have also determined that there is a lack of materials for our region that promote communities or 'life outside of work'. Through this initiative, we are seeking to address this gap, and are undertaking the finalization and implementation of a regional promotional strategy and generic marketing tools focusing on lifestyle,*

*culture and community.*

6. To plan and deliver a regional forum on human resource recruitment and retention, to promote awareness and address broader issues.

*The Joining Forces Human Resources Forum was held in June of 2003 with approximately 100 participants attending. Feedback from the forum participants was overwhelmingly positive and they provided valuable input regarding ways to recruit and retain people to our region.*

7. To communicate long-term regional projections with respect to professional needs to District 5 and District 6 School Guidance Counsellors, for career planning purposes.

*Due to the fact that all of the findings from the Project were not compiled until near the end of Phase I, there was not time to address this objective once we had a better sense of what information would be useful to provide to students. However, the evidence has shown that targeting secondary and post-secondary students can be an important factor in long-term recruitment plans, and we view this as a valuable activity to be addressed in Phase II.*

8. To communicate projections to post-secondary institutions for program planning purposes.

*Both Memorial University of Newfoundland and the College of the North Atlantic have been active members of our Joining Forces Working Group. Both representatives are committed to ensuring that the information is shared within their respective institutions. Discussion with both post-secondary institutions about particular issues and needs will be part of Phase II.*

## ***Intended Outcomes***

Overall, the goals of Phase I of the Joining Forces Project have been achieved. However, this is not a simple matter and there are no simple solutions. While good information has been developed, there is now a need to *turn that information into action.*

Long-term, collaborative strategies that are based on good information can be effective in addressing a number of the regional recruitment and retention issues. It is anticipated that the highest employment growth over the next few years will occur in the service sector. This “Joining Forces” Project can help to ensure that Central Region organizations meet our human resource challenges in a pro-active manner.

In order to build on the work completed in 2003, a proposal to extend the Joining Forces Project – Phase II was approved by Human Resources Development Canada through the LLMP program. *Joining Forces Phase II* will continue to enhance partnerships and promote a regional perspective and approach in attracting people to our area to live and work.

# Recommendations

## Themes from the Research

Through the information gathered during the Joining Forces Project – Phase I, there were a number of examples of what organizations and communities are now doing to ensure that they are able to fill professional positions in the health and education sectors with qualified people. A number of themes have emerged from these examples. These themes can help inform the discussion within and between organizations about recruitment and retention practices.

1. The organizations that will be the most successful will be those that are *proactive*. Those organizations that ignore the issues and continue traditional practices around recruitment and retention will be less successful in attracting new and experienced people. Long-term planning and comprehensive strategies to help organizations meet their human resources needs are vital. Successful recruitment takes a lot of work. It is becoming more and more common for organizations to establish this as a role or full-time practice in order to do it right. Addressing the issues requires an equal focus on recruitment AND retention. Organizations often go to great lengths to get people into their workforce, but neglect to address retention issues once people are hired. High turnover is often more expensive (or at least as expensive) as not being able to hire in the first place.
2. *Partnerships* are essential. Building a skilled workforce to meet local needs cannot be done in isolation. It requires government actions and commitment, dedicated resources by regional boards/organizations, dedicated resources and innovation by educational institutions, and partnerships with communities (particularly service centers) and community-based agencies. ‘People’ are recruited to a workforce, not ‘nurses’ or ‘doctors’ or ‘speech language pathologists’ or ‘educational psychologists’. Basically, people want:
  - ❑ Adequate financial compensation
  - ❑ A supportive and progressive work environment
  - ❑ Professional training and development opportunities
  - ❑ Community infrastructure relevant to their situation (e.g. schools/recreation, access to arts/theatre, outdoor activities, cultural orientation, etc.)
  - ❑ Recognition of their work/contributions

The provision of those things requires a sector-partnership approach.

3. We need to target people from the Central Region. Evidence shows that those most likely to be successfully recruited and retained to rural positions of a professional nature are those with a rural background and links to small communities. Special strategies and supports to target *potential local recruits* are valuable.

Such strategies can include a number of things such as:

- Education subsidization
  - Early recruitment
  - Family and spousal support
  - Actions to reduce professional isolation.
4. Long-term strategies to target *students* appear to be important. Initiatives like graduate registries, financial incentives, and awareness/promotional strategies aimed at middle, high school and post-secondary students are becoming more common. Linking strategies with career development studies in schools makes a great deal of sense.
  5. Organizations need to build on *training and development* opportunities. Training and development can be an incentive for recruiting new people, as well as a resource for retaining people within organizations. Supporting career transitions, mentoring, training for internal positions (succession planning), and professional development for specific professions can all be part of an overall recruitment and retention strategy.
  6. *Marketing and promotion* are very important. This requires dedicated resources and quality tools. The right tools need to be used in the right manner to reach the right people. Web-linked tools are essential and increased sharing of resources and materials could benefit regional organizations.

## Community Approach

Through all of the activities of the Joining Forces Project, one thing has become clear. In order to improve our recruitment and retention practices, we need to strengthen partnerships and develop a *community approach* to the matter. The concept of a community approach should be an over-riding consideration for all that we now do in this region related to improving recruitment and retention practices.

Many examples from the literature review talked about the role that communities can play in attracting and supporting people in key positions. Participants in the Joining Forces Forum, held in June, emphasized the need for communities and organizations to work together.

Communities, organizations, and educational institutions can combine resources and coordinate activities in order to:

- ❑ Promote an employment position and the organization, community and lifestyle where the person will be working
- ❑ Offer a mix of financial and other incentives to potential new recruits
- ❑ Provide information, orientation and support to people moving to the area
- ❑ Offer spousal and family assistance for new recruits, particularly those from other cultures
- ❑ Recognize and reward exemplary professionals in our Region.

## Recommendations

Keeping in mind the long-term challenges that we are facing in this region with respect to attracting and keeping people in key positions, and the themes from the research through the Joining Forces Project – Phase I, a number of areas for action or further exploration have been identified. These recommendations are based on a community approach to the issues. Some recommended activities are short term while others are long-term. Some are for consideration by the Central Region Steering Committee for the Strategic Social Plan, and others by individual organizations and communities. A project work plan has been developed, based on the recommendations, which identifies the activities to be carried out as part of Phase II of the Joining Forces Project and provides direction for the Planner-Researcher and Project Working Group. Longer-term strategies will need to be addressed through CRSC and individual organizations as determined to be appropriate. CRSC accepted the draft final report and recommendations at its meeting in November 2003.

The following recommendations discuss ways to improve our practices so that we are doing what is possible as a Region to fill professional positions with qualified people, and to keep those people living and working in Central Newfoundland.

The recommendations are outlined according to four key focuses:

1. **Increasing Awareness** of the issues
2. **Growing our Own** professionals with personal ties to the Central Region
3. **Recruiting** people to live and work in our region
4. **Retaining** current employees of organizations in our region.

### I. **Increasing Awareness** of the issues and potential solutions

#### **Recommendation #1**

**Increase awareness by stakeholders of the demographic and other challenges facing our region and their impact on recruitment and retention.**

##### *Activities:*

- Distribution of Joining Forces Final Report and related documents.
- Presentations to regional boards and departments on the issues, potential solutions and a ‘community approach’
- Presentations at public venues (e.g. Chambers of Commerce, special events)
- Sessions with town representatives, economic development officers from service center communities, development associations, zone boards, etc.



***Important because....***

Due to demographic changes, the aging workforce and rural nature of our region, it will continue to be difficult to recruit people to our area. It is important to increase awareness about those factors because many stakeholders, community leaders and members of the general public do not have a good understanding of how they are affecting us, or about what is involved in the recruitment and retention of people for high need positions. If people in the region understand the issues better, they may be more supportive of regional recruitment and retention efforts.

**Recommendation #2**

**Increase communication and information sharing between regional representatives and provincial departments regarding current issues and strategies.**

***Activities:***

- ❑ Presentations to CRSC on the Provincial Government Human Resource Plan (Treasury Board), the Department of Human Resources and Employment Labour Market Strategy, HRDC directions for human resource development and the Labrador Human Resource Plan
- ❑ Round table discussion between CRSC and provincial representatives on human resource recruitment and retention strategies

***Important because....***

Provincial departments are also developing human resource plans and labour market strategies. We need to ensure that regional efforts are in line with provincial strategies and that provincial strategies take into account regional initiatives.

**Recommendation #3**

**Establish communications between regional representatives and representatives of associations and unions, regarding current issues and potential strategies.**

***Activities:***

- ❑ Round table discussion between CRSC and union representatives.

***Important because....***

Many of the positions with the highest rates of turnover are unionized positions. Both employers and union representatives have perspectives on barriers to recruitment and retention. We need to work together where possible to minimize those barriers.

**Recommendation #4**

**Explore opportunities to improve delivery of professional training and development within the region, and to support networking between professionals. [This is also relevant to the retention category].**

***Activities:***

- ❑ Meeting between MUN, College of the North Atlantic, Public Service Commission and other stakeholders
- ❑ Confirmation of professional development needs and opportunities for Central Region professionals

- ❑ Support to networking for human resource professionals
- ❑ Delivery of workshops on specific topics

***Important because....***

Interest in improving professional development opportunities has been expressed through many venues. There are potential needs related to developing human resource expertise, ‘soft’ skills development and enhancing specific occupational skills. It may be more cost efficient in the long term if professional development is offered within the region and through the improved use of technology.

## **II. Growing our Own professionals with stronger links to the community**

### **Recommendation #5**

**Develop and implement a communications and career exploration strategy, with Central Region high school students and their parents, which increases awareness about career opportunities in the health and education sectors in our region.**

***Activities:***

- ❑ Presentations to guidance counselors and career studies teachers
- ❑ Presentations to Client Service Officers and Career Specialists with Human Resources Development Canada and the Department of Human Resources and Employment
- ❑ Distribution of information to high school students in region
- ❑ Information booths at special events
- ❑ Development of a long-term strategy to promote local career opportunities in regional high schools
- ❑ Documentation of current practices in the region which promote co-op placements and other job shadowing practices in health and education
- ❑ Explore the feasibility of offering Med Quest model programs in the region

***Important because...***

People who are the most likely to come and to stay in positions here are those originally from here or from rural areas. Studies show that:

- there is little awareness on the part of high school students about local employment opportunities
- parents impact high school student career decisions
- hands-on experience helps to encourage student interest in specific occupations
- high school students are starting to plan their post-secondary education and careers
- proactive strategies include long-term activities to engage youth

*Such a strategy may help to keep more youth in the province and region.*

### **Recommendation #6**

**Develop a comprehensive, long-term strategy to increase the number of post-secondary students from Central Region and the province, who come to work in the health and education sectors in our region.**

#### *Activities:*

- ❑ Confirm how information is being tracked on post-secondary students, including information on what programs students pursue and where they are located
- ❑ Develop a regional high school graduate registry for specific post-secondary programs
- ❑ Confirm strategies already in place in Central Region to target post-secondary students
- ❑ Identify ways to formally target students who complete placements and internships here, for future employment *in the Region*
- ❑ Develop targeted promotional packages for post-secondary students from Central Region
- ❑ Collectively review placements and student sponsorships/subsidies, in order to enhance resources and share practices
- ❑ Explore the possibility of offering financial incentives for post-secondary students from Central Region to do their placements/internships here.

#### ***Important because....***

There appears to be a lack of awareness on the part of post-secondary students about Central Region opportunities. There are also indications that students who come from here are more likely to stay if they return. Competition starts early! There are opportunities to promote student placements and internships in the region as well as to target students for future employment, who complete placements and internships here.

### **Recommendation #7**

**Review succession planning within Central Region organizations in order to ensure that every opportunity is taken to train people internally to fill high need positions.**

#### *Activities:*

- ❑ To be determined

#### ***Important because...***

People are already here and committed to the region. We have the ability to build on local skills and interest within organizations.

### **Recommendation #8**

**Explore ways to fast-track individuals to fill high need positions, who may be interested but have credentials and experience in other fields.**

#### *Activities:*

- ❑ To be determined

#### ***Important because...***

In other jurisdictions there has been an increased emphasis on supporting people interested in making a career change. This approach takes advantage of education, skills and experience that people already possess.

### **III. Recruiting** new people to professional positions in our region.

#### **Recommendation #9**

**Support the establishment of Recruitment & Retention Committees, where representatives of organizations or communities express interest.**

*Activities:*

- ❑ Identification of required representatives and resources
- ❑ Follow-up to expressions of interest from the Human Resource Forum
- ❑ Information session(s) for those interested
- ❑ Identification of steps for follow-up and support required.

*Important because....*

Recruitment and Retention Committees involve community representatives as well as organization representatives. Partners bring different resources and perspectives to the table. To date, several community groups have expressed interest in establishing recruitment committees.

#### **Recommendation #10**

**Through Recruitment & Retention Committees and other similar venues, recruitment partners should seek to:**

- **Establish joint orientation practices for new recruits to the place of work, the community and region.**
- **Establish mentoring strategies, to link new recruits with experienced professionals in the region.**
- **Establish support mechanisms for the spouses and families of new recruits, including welcome and orientation activities and job search assistance.**

*Activities:*

- ❑ To be determined

*Important because...*

The establishment of partnerships and committees for the purpose of improving recruitment practices can ensure a holistic approach to welcoming new recruits.

#### **Recommendation #11**

**Central Region organizations should ensure that their marketing strategies and plans promote communities/the region/lifestyle as well as the positions and the organizations for which they are recruiting.**

*Activities:*

- ❑ To be determined

***Important because...***

People interested in coming to the region are interested in community features and want to know about our lifestyle and culture, particularly those from outside of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are also more likely to engage people who are attracted to this lifestyle. Wherever possible, there is a need to promote rural amenities, recreational opportunities and the scenery.

**Recommendation #12**

**Implement a regional promotional strategy and enhance regional promotional tools.**

***Activities:***

- ❑ Finalization of promotional strategy
- ❑ Finalization and distribution of power point presentation
- ❑ Development of additional tools to reach target groups.

***Important because....***

Generic promotional tools that focus on the quality of life and community infrastructure were identified as a gap in the resources needed to improve recruitment practices.

**Recommendation #13**

**Regional organizations should review internal practices in order to identify and reduce competition for professionals, where possible.**

***Activities:***

- ❑ To be determined

***Important because...***

Collaborative practices may become increasingly important in a large geographic area with a declining population, where organizations are experiencing increased difficulty filling certain professional positions.

**IV. Retention** of professionals who are currently working and living in the Central Region

**Recommendation #14**

**Organizations should review exit data for key positions within in their organizations, and implement exit surveys or interviews where not already in place, in order to gather information about barriers to retention of current employees.**

***Activities:***

- ❑ To be determined

***Important because...***

Exit data can help ensure that we are addressing whatever barriers that can be addressed in order to retain people here for longer periods of time. It provides an opportunity for ongoing assessment of who stays and who leaves.

### **Recommendation #15**

**Regional recruitment partners, in consultation with government departments and educational institutions, should research the feasibility of offering additional incentives to attract and keep people in high turnover positions/isolated areas.**

*Activities:*

- To be determined

***Important because....***

Many strategies reviewed include a variety of incentives, including signing bonuses, extended contract bonuses, housing assistance and in-kind assistance. There is evidence that such an approach is having an impact in other jurisdictions (e.g. Labrador).

### **Recommendation #16**

**Develop and implement strategies to formally recognize and reward exemplary employees in high need positions in the Central Region.**

*Activities:*

- Develop criteria and identify people in the region for potential recognition
- Develop recognition strategy and activities
- Introduce awards

***Important because...***

Recognition of exemplary performance should not only be the responsibility of individual health or education boards. There were numerous examples in the literature review of partner agencies and communities developing special recognition strategies for outstanding teachers, doctors, nurses, etc. Regional partners should develop strategies to recognize and reward such professionals in Central Region.

## Conclusion

We are living in a very competitive time. At the same time that Newfoundland and Labrador is experiencing difficulty in addressing general labour market issues and unemployment, we are also faced with difficulty in filling positions that require higher education, training and experience. The situation will continue to worsen. Organizations in rural NL are competing with international, national and other provincial organizations for proficient staff. In some cases, we are often competing with other *regional* organizations for staff. Many of those other organizations (especially on a national/international basis) have greater resources at their disposal. This competition is due in large part to the demographic trends we are experiencing. Based on current data, we will continue to experience out-migration, a high retirement rate and an aging workforce, including in the health and education sectors.

**Regional organizations have devoted considerable effort and resources to the recruitment of people to fill positions. Other organizations, like Zone Boards, have dedicated resources to identifying and promoting the attractions of our region.** However, there are still a great many things that can be done overall to improve our ability to attract and keep people in rural areas. These things require partnerships, commitment and a change in focus as well as funds.

While suggested strategies will not change the issues or eliminate the problem, they should help to improve our regional practices and ensure that we are *proactive* in our approach to recruiting and retaining people through promoting and marketing, compensating, training and supporting, and helping people get engaged at the community level.

Therefore, long-term improvement of our ability to attract and keep people in Central Newfoundland will require a three-pronged approach:

1. Specific actions by individual organizations
2. Collective actions by recruitment and retention partners in the region
3. Long-term planning, negotiation and advocacy with other bodies like provincial and federal departments, professional associations and educational institutions.

**Organizations have adopted *some* of the practices identified in this report, but require additional support and resources to implement broad-based strategies and need to make the commitment to do so.**

It is hoped that this final report for The Joining Forces Project, along with the dedicated resources made possible through the extension of the Joining Forces Project – Phase II, to June of 2004, will lead to concrete actions in Central Newfoundland on this matter. While the focus has been on professions in the health and education sectors, much of the information and many of the recommendations can also be useful for other professions, employers and associations.

# **Outline**

## **Final Report**

### **Joining Forces Project – Phase I**

1. Executive Summary
2. The Central Region Steering Committee
3. Introduction
  - Baby Boom
  - NL Demographic Trends
  - Labour Force Implications
4. History of the Joining Forces Project
  - Rationale for Project
  - Planning and Implementation
  - Working Group/Partners
  - Project Goals & Objectives
  - Intended Outcomes
5. Project Methodology and Results
  - Overview
  - Stakeholder Survey: Implementation & Summary
  - Professionals Survey: Implementation & Summary
  - Literature Review: Implementation & Summary
  - Human Resources Forum: Implementation & Summary
  - Development of Promotional Materials: Current Status
  - Results of Joining Forces Project: Goals, Objectives & Intended Outcomes
6. Recommendations
  - Themes from the Research
  - Community Approach
  - Four Key Focuses:
    - 1) *Increasing Awareness*
    - 2) *Growing our Own*
    - 3) *Recruitment*
    - 4) *Retention*
7. Conclusion