

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Page Reference

Introduction	1
Results of the Priority-Setting Sessions	3
Conclusion	10
Pictures of Forum	12

## INTRODUCTION

### *“Participation and Interest High at “Joining Forces” Human Resource Forum”*

Communities have a vital role to play in helping to attract and keep professionals living and working in rural areas.

That was the theme of Joining Forces, a human resources forum held on June 4th and 5th, 2003 at Hotel Gander. It was organized by The Central Region Steering Committee for the Strategic Social Plan, with support from Human Resources Development Canada.

About 100 participants from across the region left the forum with a new awareness of the issues facing our region with respect to the recruitment and retention of professionals, along with lots of ideas about building a ‘community approach’ to address those issues.

The forum was opened by Sister Elizabeth Davis, of The Royal Commission on Newfoundland and Labrador’s Place in Canada. Sr. Davis was thought provoking in her comments about the society we are currently living in, and the leadership needed to meet the challenges.

Following her comments, Heather Hillier, Regional Planner with the SSP and Susanne Hobbs, Planner/Researcher with the Joining Forces Project, provided an overview of the project activities and findings to date.

In the afternoon, Fran Kirby, Manager of Professional Development with MUN Faculty of Medicine and Scarlett Hann, Provincial Recruitment Coordinator for Physicians, informed participants about the challenges and opportunities for recruitment and retention of doctors for rural areas.

“The personal touch is very important,” says Scarlett. “There are many things, aside from salary, that can make a difference.”

Mike Bruce, Regional Manager of Community Capacity Building for HRDC, also inspired participants. Mike’s dynamic presentation encouraged community leaders to include human resource development in their strategic plans. He also emphasized the importance of working together. “The most important ingredient in community capacity building is people,” Mike reinforced.

The afternoon session ended with small group discussions about what organizations can bring to a regional approach on recruitment and retention, as well as what they need.

An evening banquet was held and the engaging guest speaker, John Fisher, talked about a small business approach to employee retention. John and his wife are the owner/operators of Fisher’s Loft and Fisher Associates in Port Rexton. The evening ended with entertainment by local performers from Twillingate, The Split Peas.

On Friday, Danny Huxter, consultant and community volunteer, received a standing ovation from those in attendance for his passionate comments about life in rural Newfoundland and Labrador,

and ways to keep our young people committed to it.

The rest of the morning was spent in small group discussions about regional strategies to recruit, retain and grow our own people to fill much-needed positions in Central NL.

The Honourable Gerald Smith, Minister of Health and Community Services and Lead Minister for the SSP, 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 NL and talked about the importance of people coming together in such ways as for this regional forum. “The SSP is about bringing people together to talk about local solutions to local issues,” he said.

“The big message from this event is the need to work together,” said Heather Hillier. “The feedback from this event will be included in the final report for the Joining Forces project.”

“There are lots of ideas and recommendations on ways for us to improve recruitment and retention practices, including establishing local area or town recruitment committees, improving career planning in local schools, providing new incentives to people moving here, enhancing access to training and development and many, many more,” added Susanne Hobbs. “While some of those recommendations may need to be reviewed and acted on by larger groups, like The Central Region Steering Committee, there were many practical suggestions made that can be implemented fairly quickly by individual organizations and communities.”

The event was a success in great part, due to the facilitation of Jim Hornell, whose energy, skills and sense of humour kept things hopping and enjoyable. Jim is the Regional Director of Professional Development at Central West Health Corporation and also has his own consulting firm, Jim Hornell Consulting.

## RESULTS OF THE PRIORITY-SETTING SESSIONS

The Joining Forces Human Resources Forum provided stakeholders with an opportunity to learn more about the issues and to share information across organizations and sectors about ways to improve our regional ability to recruit and retain people. Representatives included people from health organizations, school boards and post-secondary institutions, government departments and a wide array of community representatives.

Participants divided into discussion groups on two occasions during the two-day event. The discussions flowed from the presentation topics and were intended to help those participating focus on how stakeholders could support one another.

### **DAY 1**

For the first small group discussion, those in attendance divided into groups according to three sectors. The three sectors were:

1. Health
2. Education
3. Community/Economic Development

The participants in each sector-specific group were requested to respond to three questions:

1. From the perspective of your sector/organization, what do you need from other organizations or sectors to improve your ability to recruit and retain people?
2. What can your sector/organization bring to a regional approach?
3. What can be done to build on strategies in place within organizations in order to attract and retain people?

### **From the perspective of your sector/organization, what do you need from other organizations or sectors to improve your ability to recruit and retain people?**

The discussion in each of the groups ranged widely and many different items were identified as being needed from other sources, in order to support recruitment and retention practices specific to each sector.

However, there were several themes that emerged during reports by small group representatives. The themes were: flexibility, communication, and cooperation. While representatives reported that changes to regulations and legislation are needed, and financial reimbursements are important, there was a strong emphasis on organizations and communities working together to enhance incentives, provide professional development opportunities, share information and strategies, and promote this area.

Some of the captions from the first question reports appear below.

Education	Health	Community/Economic Development
Commitment from all	Cooperation	Common Language
Share Experiences	Market what we have	Collective knowledge
Connect with the Industry	Others to communicate the message	Trust- belief that it can work
Salaries in line with Industry	Student debt reduction	Welcome Wagon
Bursary Program	Equipment to retain specialists	Efficient communication – all in the loop
Professional development opportunities	Flexible collective agreements	Financial and other supports (e.g. Municipalities)
Partnerships/linkages	Spousal retention strategies	Make smaller areas aware of their importance
Changes to Employment Insurance Regulations	Community Support Groups	Commitment
Flexible collective agreements and policies	Staff housing (quarters)	Salary equity
		Pool & share resources

### What can your sector/organization bring to a regional approach?

It was evident that people representing different sectors and organizations who were attending the forum, felt that there were resources and actions that could be ‘put on the table’ by each participant in order to improve our regional approach to recruitment and retention. Resources included practical suggestions like the provision of training, specific infrastructure, expertise, and so on. However, one caption from a small group was a synopsis of the feedback: “Get outside the box and understand why we need to.” Given the challenges we face, organizations need to be more open to working with others and being part of a regional approach.

**Highlights from the discussion with respect to question #2:**

<b>Education</b>	<b>Health</b>	<b>Community/Economic Development</b>
Exposure to career training	Monitor demands on providers	Ambassadors/promoters
Promotion/Quality of Education	LPN Schools	Knowledge & Expertise
Information	Reward cooperation	Funds to increase infrastructure
Capital assets	Involve partners	“Get outside the box” and understand why we need to
Share human resource plans	Sell our province & nation	Reach out to smaller areas
Existing expertise	Inform others: - of the Strategic Social Plan - of the needs of organizations	Value smaller areas
Access to talent pools	Increased cooperation among agencies	Holistic approach
Web activities		Facilitate (all at one table)
Marketing opportunities		Regional approach
Commitment to community		Awareness

**What can be done to build on strategies in place within organizations in order to attract and retain people?**

While sector representatives again identified many different ways to build on strategies already in place, there was a focus on education-training-development, marketing and promotion and involvement of communities. While health and education representatives talked about many practical ways to increase the numbers of professionals and to provide training in different ways, community/economic representatives emphasized that organizations need to “help communities understand strategies” and to be part of active partnerships.

**Highlights from the discussion pertaining to question #3:**

<b>Education</b>	<b>Health</b>	<b>Community/Economic Development</b>
Community supports	Forgive loans	Identify key players
Wellness programs	Reduce competition (e.g. board doctors vs. fee-for-service)	Engage the people
Student shadows/mentoring	MedQuest	Understanding the current situation
Information packages	Online education requirements	Target 'our' students
Co-op placements	Honesty in recruitment	Active partnerships
Advertisements and community testimonials	More university programs	Regional approach
	More nurse practitioners	Help communities understand strategies
	More Licensed Practical Nurses	Sense of belonging
		Marketing ourselves
		Assess/evaluate/promote
		Positive infrastructure
		Positive support/attitude

From the activities in the first day of the Joining Forces Human Resources Forum, there appeared to be recognition that many of the issues affecting this region, with respect to recruitment and retention, are much bigger than one organization or community. There was also an emphasis on communicating better and building stronger partnerships to develop strategies. Community representatives identified a very important role for themselves in a regional approach to recruitment and retention.

## **DAY 2**

On day two of the forum, a slightly different approach was taken with the small group discussions. Participants divided into multi-sector groups, with each group having an equitable number of representatives from health, education and the community/economic development sectors. Participants were then asked to respond to three questions:

1. What can be done to recruit people?
2. What can be done to retain and support people in our communities and organizations?
3. What can be done to 'grow our own'?

Representatives from each of the small groups reported the feedback, which was recorded on a wall chart. Following that, each participant was allocated four votes (one for each topic plus a 'wild card' that could be used for any priority), and was asked to vote for what they considered to be priorities for action.

Again, the general themes that emerged were with respect to promotion (both internally to our region regarding the issues, and externally to people who might come here); community-organization partnerships; and training and development.

**A caption of the results of the priority-setting exercise is as follows:**

<b>Recruit</b>	<b>Votes</b>	<b>Retain</b>	<b>Votes</b>	<b>Grow our Own</b>	<b>Votes</b>
Grow our own opportunities	4	Train for what we need – for the jobs we have	25	Career development	37
Be competitive	3	Succession planning	12	Remove barriers	22
Community alumni inventory	3	Flexibility in collective agreements	5	Follow NL graduates	10
Community education	2	Personal contact recruitment	4	Evaluate training requirements	5
Cultural 'clusters'	1	Mentoring-community support	4	Start with our youth very young	4
		Embrace professionals who move here	3	Honesty (realistic picture when marketing)	3
		Do not forget the employees we have	3	Maintain linkages	3



		Orientation package	2	Information sessions	2
		Networking-professional support	2	Promote a sense of community	2
		Support families so they don't feel isolated	2		

**Other comments – recruitment:**

- Let people know we are here
- Educate community about what we have
- We need money to recruit
- Solve unfair competition between regions
- Needs inventory/community profile
- Ambassadors worldwide
- Recruitment bonus for anyone who recruits
- Target all age groups
- Alternate working arrangement
- One dollar levy for recruitment
- Community promotion: quality of life; attractive package for families/youth; marketing what we have (package/web/follow-up)
- Recruitment committee (partnerships)
- Proper recruitment (right person vs. warm body)

**Other comments – retention:**

- Political will of governments and unions (they must buy in)
- Remove barriers
- Spend, yet examine the use of money on retention
- Infrastructure
- Visibility in professional schools
- School principals accountable for career development
- Information to youth on areas of employment
- Permanent vs. temporary/casual jobs

**Other comments – grow our own:**

- Career development from early stages, broad/integrative approach, promote entrepreneurial experiences
- Timing is crucial re following NL graduates
- Evaluate training requirements and determine what is really necessary, challenge organizations and groups
- When marketing, give picture of realistic lifestyle
- Know your own – what/who you have
- Include civic pride in the curriculum
- Political commitment to rural NL
- Provide a sense of belonging...extend invitations to professionals and new residents
- Give and take a chance with employees
- Planning (short and long-term)
- Need to change post-secondary programs
- Pay for seats in professional schools
- Priority seats in training institutions
- Rural representatives on MUN Medical School selection committee

In terms of individual factors listed, the top three priorities for action that would improve our ability to attract and keep professionals, from the perspective of people in attendance at the HR Forum in our region were:

1. Career development
2. Training for what we need – for the jobs we have
3. Removing barriers

## CONCLUSION

The Joining Forces Human Resources Forum was a two-day event that received overwhelmingly positive feedback from the majority of participants. Evaluation forms were available for completion on both days, and the summaries from both days showed that participants were pleased with the outcome of the activities that took place.

Sixty-five people completed feedback forms on day one, and forty-seven completed forms on day two. Key points from the feedback forms:

- 46% of those attending learned about the forum from the materials that were mailed out
- 37% of participants were from the health sector
- 15% were from the education sector
- 52% were attending because their organizations were experiencing difficulty with recruitment and retention

### **Participants best liked the following about the forum:**

- good exchange of ideas
- terrific speakers, great facilitator
- energy and willingness of groups to work together
- the presentations (informative)
- major concerns of our community were addressed
- amount of involvement by participants
- realizing that other organizations have similar recruitment problems
- urban vs. rural divide
- realization of the importance of the social aspect of recruitment and retention

A number of participants indicated that the forum wasn't long enough and that they would have liked to have more time for group discussions. There was also feedback that it would have been good to have information on other sectors/industry.

### **General comments from the feedback forms:**

- 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 report back
- great starting point to develop a multi-disciplinary team approach for recruitment and retention in our area
- excellent idea in holding a forum. I realize health & education are a priority but are you considering looking at all sectors, specifically the skilled trades industry?

- 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.

On a rating scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent), 74% of those who completed feedback forms rated the agenda and content of the forum at 8.5, and rated the organization and facilitation at 9.

**Need for follow-up:**

66% of those who completed feedback forms saw a need for a follow-up forum. Suggested topics and speakers included:

- 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 information gathered and perspectives put forward during the forum are incorporated in the final report for the “Joining Forces” Project- Phase 1.

**PICTURES OF THE FORUM**



Speaker Danny Huxter and Facilitator Jim Hornell



Participants during small group discussions



Minister Responsible for the Strategic Social plan-  
Gerald Smith and Regional Planner for the Strategic  
Social Plan- Central Region- Heather Hillier



People who assisted with planning the Human  
Resources Forum



Facilitator, Jim Hornell