

**What's Happening with our Labour Market?**  
**Community Consultation – Thursday, November 2, 2006**  
**MINUTES**

**WELCOME**

- Jamie Bramburger of Algonquin College in the Ottawa Valley welcomed everyone to the event. He explained that Algonquin College has partnered with St. Lawrence College to offer the TOP program in the Renfrew and Lanark Counties. One of the mandates set is to establish a community dialogue to discuss labour market issues – which is what this event is about. He introduced the guest speakers and explained that they will be speaking about their businesses but also the sector they belong to as a whole.

**SPEAKER 1 – ATOMIC ENERGY OF CANADA LIMITED (Susan Sweet)**

- Company Overview
  - Canada's nuclear program was conceived at Chalk River Laboratories with the first sustained fission reaction outside USA being achieved September 5, 1945.
  - Atomic Energy of Canada Limited has 4,176 employees and there are 2,159 employees at the Chalk River location.
  - Nuclear Laboratories Business Unit Vision – “World class performance in developing and operating nuclear technologies – no compromise.”
  - Chalk River location – workforce breakdown:
    - 24% Engineers / Scientists
    - 20% Technicians
    - 18% Trades
    - 10% Administrative
    - 8% Nuclear Operators
    - 6% Emergency Support
    - 5% Management
    - 5% Labourers
    - 4% Professionals
- **Labour Market Challenges** – AECL is currently looking to fill up to 260 positions, from engineering to clerical and is using the apprenticeship program to find employees.
  - Rural Location – Having to sell the area & lifestyle to attract employees, currently working on ways to promote the area.
  - Spousal Employment – People relocating to the area need to have jobs for the spouses as well as themselves.
  - Unique Skill Sets – Some highly specialized skills are required. University and college programs aren't as funded and these need to be promoted to provide enough applicants for positions. Also, there are specialized training programs involved in some of the positions that could last up to 4 years.
- **Labour Market Pressures**
  - Age demographics of current work force – 27% can retire over the next 5 years. AECL is finding that there are very few persons with an interest for this field and are currently working on developing relationships to develop programs (University / College) for the skill sets they need.
  - Changing demographics of technical and scientific staff industry-wide.

## **SPEAKER 2 – KI PEMBROKE (Rich Hale)**

- **Company Overview**
  - KI is made up of 9 plants in North America that make non-residential furniture – filing cabinets, etc. – custom solutions to suit storage needs.
  - KI's Pembroke location has 325 full-time permanent employees and during their busy season (summer) there are 500 employees. (predominately students)
  - Desirable employee traits are: post-secondary education for computer assisted design, engineering, and management positions; eager and quick to learn; minimum of a grade 12 education (note some exceptions have been made for grade 10 education and 15 years work experience combination); computer literacy / comfort with since more industry jobs are requiring this; team player; attention to detail and good customer service skills (produce quality products).
  - Hiring of skilled workers – KI has a few strategies for this – find someone who isn't working, possibly bring them in from outside of the County, steal from another company, or grow their own – the concentration is on the latter and KI encourages on-the-job training.
  - KI has employee performance standards that help with the hiring process where employees have different expectations as they go along with their career.
  - Retaining employees – Mr. Hale noted that 1/3 of all candidates fail and the problem probably lies within the launch of the employee into the job. He noted that there are three stages:
    1. Anticipation – The employee is wondering what will happen.
    2. Reality – What has happened with this job / company?
    3. Judgment – The employee makes their decision. They either like the job, don't like their job and leave, or don't like the job and stay which makes for a lose / lose situation for the employee and company.
  - Mr. Hale also noted that the company tries to satisfy the needs of the employees to retain them by giving them more / different responsibilities and keeping them satisfied and happy.
- **Labour Market Challenges**
  - Location – KI finds it hard to get people to Pembroke – they are currently looking at a computer assisted design co-op program that would allow potential employees to try out the area.
  - Finding the right person and making the right decisions.
- **Labour Market Pressures**
  - Rate of Exchange – Products are becoming more expensive.
  - Seasonal Working – Hard to get people back year after year, although thorough training is making this easier.

### **SPEAKER 3 – ON-LINE SUPPORT (Ross Duff)**

- **Company Overview**
  - Canadian outsource call centre – headquartered in PEI, founded in 1996 and is privately owned & operated with 8 call centres with over 2000 employees country-wide.
  - Specialize in providing full technical & customer care contact.
  - Utilizes the latest technology, processes and “The Right People”.
  - Transcends a typical outsourced vendor-client relationship by forming a “true partnership” based on: integrity, trust, passion, and commitment.
- **Service Solutions**
  - Four main areas:
    1. Customer Care – Billing & account inquiries and maintenance, service dispatch, & positive customer relations.
    2. Technical Support – Support for hardware and software, satellite Internet, web hosting & PDA help desk.
    3. Sales – In and outbound, up- and cross-sell, order provisioning and status, & win back programs.
    4. Customer Retention – E-surveys, mail-outs, outbound calling.
- **Pembroke Location**
  - SITE #1 – at the West End Mall
  - SITE #2 – at 100 Crandall Street
  - Currently has over 450 employees and are looking for more (approx. 75).
  - Clients supported & hours of operation:
    - SITE #1: American Express – 24/7, 365 days a year
    - SITE #2: Rogers / Fido – 7 a.m. to 1 a.m., 7 days a week, 365 days a year.
- **Hiring Cycle**
  - There are 5 tiers in the OLS Human Resources Life Cycle:
    1. Resume Collection
    2. Prescreen Interview
    3. Training
    4. Bench Strength
    5. Peak Performance – where OLS gets what they reward.
- **Employee Profile**
  - Today’s call centre employee is: solutions oriented, dependable, relatable, proactive, flexible, marketable, computer literate, reliable, retainable, a global thinker, a multi-tasker, and able to up-sell / cross-sell.
  - Factors that drive job performance:
    1. Ability to learn, solve problems and make decisions.
    2. Specific attitudes, interests, and motivations necessary to do the job.
    3. The ability to get things done through people.
- **Retention Challenges**
  - Salary.
  - To retain them, employees must: have a good relationship with their supervisor, make a difference for the customer, be team players, have opportunities for career development and being coached / developed.

### **SPEAKER 3 – On-Line Support (Ross Duff) - *continued***

- **Industry Pressures**
  - The need for excellent customer service skills.
  - Scheduling and flexibility (shift work).
  - Companies trying to increase revenue – centres must up-sell / cross-sell.

### **SPEAKER 4 – PEMBROKE MALL (Jayne Brophy)**

- Ms. Brophy presented her research from talking to the retailers in her mall to the audience.
- She noted that retail is a very difficult job to do, for instance, imagine what it is like on the other side of the counter.
- Retailers are looking for people with a diverse set of skills including: a positive attitude, people skills, reliable, and flexible.
- **Labour Market Challenges**
  - Employee Attitude – People are taking retail positions to fill a “gap” until they find a “better job” (i.e. call centres, etc.).
  - Hiring – This is a challenge for most retailers since the skill set is so diverse. – Ms. Brophy noted that the manager of *Ricki's* has never advertised a position, rather, she watches the customers and approaches those who she feels would be a good fit.
  - Finding Day Workers – Most positions are predominately filled by students who are only available on nights and weekends.
  - Retention – Often employees are holding down 2 to 3 jobs and are trying to juggle schedules.
  - New / Expanding Businesses – Retailers are having a hard time competing with the salaries these places offer – they are focusing on the lifestyle. *STAPLES* however does offer a partial benefit package to their part-time employees which helps to retain them – however, smaller retailers aren't able to do this.
  - Finding the “Right Fit” – employers needing to look at new ways to attract and retain skilled workers with the money available.

## **SPEAKER 5 – PEMBROKE REGIONAL HOSPITAL (Catherine Junop)**

- **Company Overview**
  - # of Employees: Over 1,000, including staff (756), physicians (177), and volunteers.
  - Average Age: 62% of employees are over 40.
  - Turnover rate is less than 1%.
  - Hospital is unionized (CUPE and ONA).
  - Female to male ratio is 91.4% to 8.6%.
  - Pembroke Regional Hospital is a 203 bed regional hospital which operates 24/7, with a budget of \$63.3M. This is labour intensive with 67% of budget spent on wages.
  - Employs a diverse range of skills:
    - RN, RPN, OT, PT, SW, Lab, CT, Nuc Med, X-Ray
    - Support Skills: Clerical, Dietary, Linen, Cleaners
- **Labour Market Challenges**
  - Location – population and isolation.
  - Need to attract professionals with specialized skills – have flown potential doctor's around the area to help promote coming to the area to practice.
  - Significant amount of retirees.
  - Workload and burnout.
  - Hospital deficits.
  - Project Afghanistan – Staff (members of the Reserves) get deployed, family / friends of employees are being deployed into a dangerous conflict which is emotionally challenging for those left behind. The Hospital is currently working though with the military to allow for the training of military personnel in their facility to fill the gaps.
  - Increased education requirements for position.
  - Generational cohorts – Four generations of workers trying to work together with different attitudes, beliefs, skills, experience, etc.
- **Hiring Strategies:**
  - Personal Leadership – Reinforcing understanding of mission, vision, and values of the Hospital, providing leadership training, creating an “internal talent pool” for succession planning.
  - Employee Branding – Developing a culture of collaboration – “walking the talk”, profile health careers with schools, colleges and community employers, wellness initiatives.
  - Employee Mindshare – Engaging the employee, commitment to learning, access to state-of-the-art technology & equipment, recognition & respect, commitment to the whole organization.
  - Capacity Building – Developing business plans for emergencies, increasing diversity in the workplace, implementing a mentoring program, HRMIS, and HR metrics.

## QUESTION & ANSWERS

- The audience was given the opportunity to ask questions of the panelists:
  - **Question 1: for OLS**  
**What is the bilingual factor for your company? Just French or other languages?**  
They are hoping to be multi-lingual, but right now the focus is on French & English.
  - **Question 2: for OLS**  
**What is the demographics of your company – male to female ratio & age?**  
71% of employees are female and the average age is 31-32 years old.
  - **Question 3: for Pembroke Regional Hospital**  
**Do you see a problem with the need for high-speed Internet in the area regarding health care / tele-health?**  
No – High-speed Internet is available in key areas. There is a problem though when it comes to home-based care, etc. where high-speed is not available.
  - **Question 4: for Panel**  
**Do you have positions available for people with less than a high school, a high school equivalency (GED)?**  
PRH – They have some, mainly housekeeping, laundry, dietary, infection control require a minimum of grade 10, 11.  
Mall – Retail is open to people with less than a high school diploma, etc. although computer skills and critical thinking skills are important.  
OLS – Grade 12 and even post-secondary is important, however, if maturity is exhibited, then an exception may be made.  
KI – Grade 12 is an important criteria, they do look at people who have the equivalency.  
AECL – Minimum is a Grade 12 education, some maintenance / janitorial positions don't require this though.
  - **Question 5: for Panel**  
**How many positions do you currently have available?**  
AECL – 260 vacancies in specialized skills, terms, clerical, janitorial, etc.  
KI – Not presently looking for employees (460 currently working). They do require a design engineer.  
OLS – 75 vacancies plus some at the team leader level (these are mainly filled internally).  
Mall – Retail is always hiring.  
PRH – Some positions available / opening in managerial, nursing, ICU, emergency.  
They are anticipating a large amount of vacancies in the near future as employees begin retiring.

## **QUESTION & ANSWERS - *continued***

### **○ Question 6: for Panel**

#### **How do you advertise for positions?**

PRH – The Hospital is a unionized organization therefore full-time positions must be posted first internally. When positions are not unionized they are advertised in local papers and occasionally in the Ottawa & Toronto papers. They also are posted on their website, passed along by word of mouth, or the Hospital will go directly to colleges for specifically skilled people.

Mall – In the retail sector, ads are placed in papers, signage in the stores, etc.

OLS – Ads are placed in the paper and on the radio, job fairs are held, and they rely on community partnerships with the City and Algonquin College.

KI – Most positions are posted internally first, for temporary positions, resumes can be dropped off, and they do post on the Service Canada Job Bank website.

AECL – AECL is also unionized, but when positions can be external, they advertise on their website, Service Canada, international, newspapers, and within colleges and universities for specific skills.

### **○ Question 7: for Panel**

#### **Does your organization require a criminal records check?**

AECL – Has heavy security and all positions require a different level of security check.

KI – No prohibition – although certain positions (i.e. financial positions) would be considered.

OLS – Employees working with American Express clients do need one, and the ones working with Rodgers / Fido clients do on a case by case basis.

Mall – Retail has a varied requirement.

PRH – There is a growing need for this. All volunteers and staff going into people's homes must have these.

### **○ Question 8: for Panel**

#### **Do you hire those with mental and physical challenges?**

PRH – They are an equal opportunity employer, not discriminatory and has an accessible building. With invisible disabilities people tend to be forthcoming for the right fit.

Mall – Retailers do hire people with mental challenges, physical disabilities not as much although some accommodations are made in certain circumstances.

OLS – They are an equal opportunity employer.

KI – They do hire some people with mental disadvantages, but most of their positions do require physical labour – they do make some accommodations for those employees who get injured though.

AECL – They are equal opportunity employers and they do offer a return-to-work program to help employees.

## QUESTION & ANSWERS - *continued*

### ○ **Question 9: for Panel**

**Some people will not apply for positions if they do not have their grade 12 or higher than a grade 12. They are capable of returning to school but they don't have the money or the time. Do your hiring policies bend?**

AECL – Due to nature of the positions, they do have set guidelines. Some utility workers do not have their grade 12 or other training etc., but upgrading and program training is encouraged.

KI – They do hire some exceptions, based on experience. Although, they do look favorable on those who show initiative and drive to get higher education.

OLS – They do have an education requirement and do look highly on those who have the drive for higher education. They do recognize professional maturing and work experience.

Mall – Unable to respond.

PRH – Some positions do not require a grade 12 education. For instance only grade 10 is needed for some support and clerical services. Non-skilled workers do have a 3 to 6 month familiarity period to meet the skill set and demonstrate how well they relate to patients and family (personality & relationship skills).

### ○ **Question 10: for Panel**

**Do you reimburse your employee for tuition costs for employment-related training?**

PRH – They do have a bursary program and education dollars to keep their employees trained, upgraded, etc.

Mall – Retail does offer some training on customer service.

OLS – This issue is on a case by case basis right now. The company is looking into it, and identifying the benefits of the employees taking courses and the possibility of reimbursing tuition costs. They do send employees for web-based training and have self-built curriculum for customer relations.

KI – They do reimburse for tuition and offer flexible hours for training.

AECL – Training is a shared responsibility to upgrade etc. They do reimburse for employees to advance their skills.

## **ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS & SHARING OF “BRIGHT IDEAS”**

- The audience broke off into small groups to discuss what strategies could help address labour market issues and identify potential partners / organizations for these strategies.
- Please see Appendix A for the results of these working groups.

## **WRAP-UP**

- Notes from the consultation, as well as the presentation will be posted on the website at: [www.algonquincollege.com/renfrewlanarkworkforce](http://www.algonquincollege.com/renfrewlanarkworkforce)