

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. BACKGROUND**

Community Futures Development Corporation of Stuart Nechako (CFDC-SN) in Vanderhoof, British Columbia, Canada, strives to help develop local businesses and community economic development, skill development, and employment in the Stuart Nechako region of British Columbia.

During the past few years, many employers in the Vanderhoof area have stated they are having difficulty hiring skilled labour and that they expect it to become a greater problem in the future. Attempts to harness labour market information to address this concern found that the existing labour research generally consisted of broad overviews of large regions, such as all of northern British Columbia. Research that is specific to Vanderhoof and area, that provides employers, employees, and other stakeholders in the community with the required information and analysis of employer needs and employee skills, was missing.

CFDC-SN and its community partners believe that a skilled labour force is the key to keeping local business, industry, and services viable. The College of New Caledonia and community members developed the concept of a labour market partnership and a CFDC-SN proposal was accepted by Service Canada, who agreed to fund the Vanderhoof Community Labour Market Partnership (VCLMP) project. The objective of the partnership was to help the community identify feasible labour market strategies to assist businesses to meet their labour needs, which in turn assist the economy of the community. Labour Market Partnerships (LMPs) are funded to assist with initiatives such as identifying skilled labour shortages and developing human resource strategies to improve the labour market for employers and employees in the community.

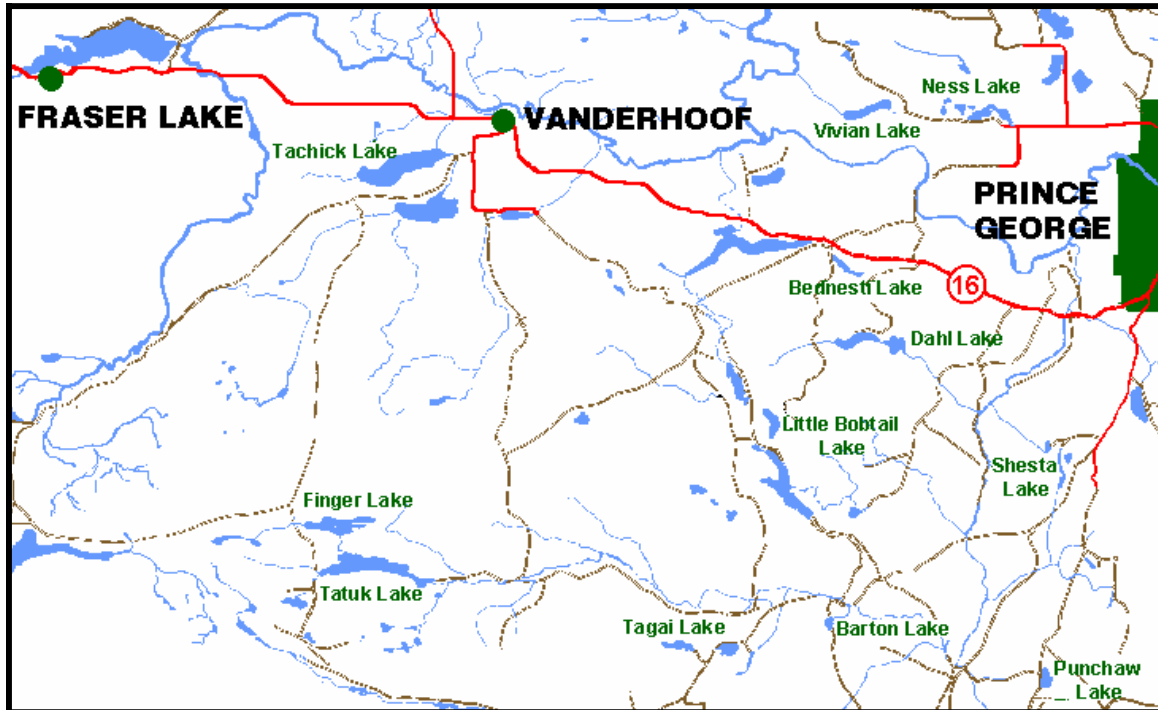
As a result of this application, resources were secured to formalize the Vanderhoof Community Labour Market Partnership (VCLMP), a partnership between a number of employers and community organizations and to conduct the research, compile the results, complete the analysis and prepare labour market strategies for the region. The VCLMP is being guided by a Steering Committee made up of the following representatives:

- College of New Caledonia
- Vanderhoof Chamber of Commerce
- School District 91
- Economic development organizations
- Vanderhoof Municipal Council
- BC Ministry of Forests and Range
- Service Providers
- Individuals from agriculture, forestry, construction, and service sector businesses.

Service Canada provided the major funding while CFDC-SN provided additional funding and managing the project, along with hundreds of hours being contributed by volunteers serving on the Steering Committee and participating in community consultation meetings.

Vanderhoof is located in Northern British Columbia, Canada, 98 kilometres from Prince George, B.C. See Map 1.

Map 1 – Nechako Map



## 1.2. RATIONALE /PURPOSE

The Vanderhoof Community Labour Market Partnership (VCLMP), managed by CFDC-SN, aims to help the community of Vanderhoof increase its capacity to address the community's needs for skilled labour and to proactively address skilled labour shortages in the near and distant future. Discussions in the community have revealed the following assumptions:

1. Employers have difficulties recruiting and retaining adequately trained and experienced workers.
2. There is increasing concern that the perceived shortage may increase over time.

To help employers, CFDC-SN decided to define the specific problems and measure the magnitude of each in the community to obtain the following:

- Information about industry sectors that are experiencing difficulties recruiting or retaining employees, and why the difficulties exist.
- Information about the types of job vacancies employers forecast for the future.
- Measures of the types of skills that are available from local employees.
- Measures of the types of job skills and training the local labour market would like to pursue.
- Compare perceptions of employers and community members on issues of skill adequacy, barriers, and reasons they leave their jobs.

### **1.3. PROJECT SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES**

The VCLMP conducted a 12-month research project, funded by Service Canada, to profile the labour market and to increase Vanderhoof's capacity to address the local labour situation. The study was designed to identify labour-related circumstances and barriers for both employers and community members. Results of the research are expected to help community leaders make informed decisions, guide employer hiring and training, and help ensure an adequate balance between the demand and availability of skilled labour. This is particularly important as Vanderhoof adjusts to a post-mountain pine beetle (MPB) economy.

The main objectives of this project are to:

- collect data and provide analysis to quantify and characterize the extent of the labour shortage;
- provide a consultative process for community members to contribute to the identification of strategies to address labour market needs; and to
- identify resources to help develop and implement strategies.

The project sub-objectives are to:

- produce an analysis of the employment needs of the community of Vanderhoof
- obtain community participation in the development of the Vanderhoof human resource plan
- obtain industry participation in the development of Vanderhoof human resource planning.
- complete an action plan for implementation of strategies developed to address the skilled labour shortage.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The research began with a literature review and trend analysis relating to the labour market in Vanderhoof, followed by a comprehensive employer survey conducted in Spring 2006 and analyzed in Summer 2006. A survey of community members was designed in June and July, and administered from mid-August to mid-September 2006.

The research team hired the assistance of Westcoast CED Consulting Ltd. (Westcoast CED), a Vernon-based community economic development consulting firm, to provide survey and statistical design expertise and analysis and reporting.

The employer survey attempted to:

- define the key employment sectors in Vanderhoof
- identify current and projected labour situation of employers in Vanderhoof
- pinpoint perceived barriers to recruiting and retaining skilled workers
- describe the methods employers use to recruit and retain employees.

Appendix A contains a copy of the cover letter sent out to employers asking for their participation in the survey.

To conduct the employer survey, the CFDC-SN team delivered written questionnaires to Vanderhoof area employers in person during May and June 2006. CFDC-SN staff hand delivered 288 questionnaires, and over nine weeks picked up 220 completed questionnaires. A copy of this survey is contained in Appendix B. This resulted in a useable response rate of 76%. The research team conducted a brief telephone survey with 60 of the 68 non-respondent employers to ask demographic questions which would enable an assessment of the level of bias in the results due to non-response. A copy of the survey of non-respondents is contained in Appendix C. Only eight employers declined to complete a questionnaire or participate in a non-response survey.

The results of the employer survey are written in four sections:

- Profile of employers surveyed
- Current labour situation in the Vanderhoof area
- The nature of the perceived labour issues
- The employer response to labour issues

The community member survey identified:

- Potential skilled workforce
- Underutilized workforce: individuals requiring training or education
- Underemployed workforce: such as skilled individuals working in unskilled positions

- Education and training needs and barriers, and how residents feel about living and working in the Vanderhoof area

The results of the community member survey are written in three sections:

- Profile of community respondents
- Employment situation
- Perceived employment issues

The VCLMP expects to use the employer and community member survey results to help the community develop an action plan that will address labour market needs, including identifying roles and responsibilities, timelines, and evaluation criteria. Community Futures Development Corporation of Stuart Nechako (CFDC-SN) staff will share the project findings with community members in follow-up meetings. The community members will decide on a course of action, implementing strategies and the format of the activities. CFDC-SN will assist with organizing the stakeholders and developing the steering committee for the community.

### **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

Vanderhoof area employers have stated that there is a skilled labour shortage in the area and that the shortages are likely to continue. Statistics on population trends in Canada report that a labour shortage in Canada is developing. The largest segments of the working population are older and workers are starting to leave the labour force faster than younger workers can fill the gap.

As the first stage of the Vanderhoof Community Labour Market Partnership (VCLMP) research project, a literature review was conducted to:

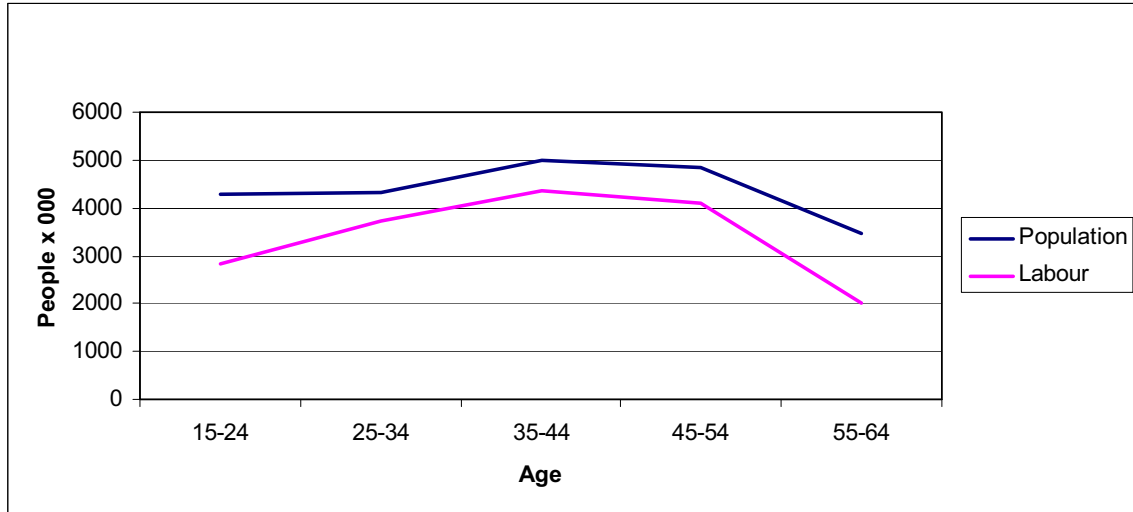
- collect baseline qualitative data about the skilled labour shortage in the Vanderhoof area;
- provide an overview of the current and past labour market and research what would be relevant for developing an employer labour skills survey and a community labour skills survey; and
- review and provide broad economic and demographic information about labour market trends in Canada, BC, and specifically, the community of Vanderhoof.

The literature review discusses the aging population, labour growth and employment indicators, labour market surveys, labour sectors and future labour trends with emphasis on how the labour market may be affecting the Vanderhoof area. Results showed:

#### **Aging Population**

There is a large population group in Canadian society that is approaching the end of their working years. Figure 1 shows the 2005 population age groups and the labour force with 2005 labour participation rates for each age group. The group of people aged 45 to 54, who are reaching retirement years form the second largest 10-year population segment in the country. This labour force group is starting to reduce the amount they participate in the workforce. Those aged 35 to 44 are a slightly larger segment but this group is currently highly employed and over the next 10–25 years people in this age group are likely to remain employed and then leave the labour force.

**Figure 1: Canadian population and labour trend, 2005.**

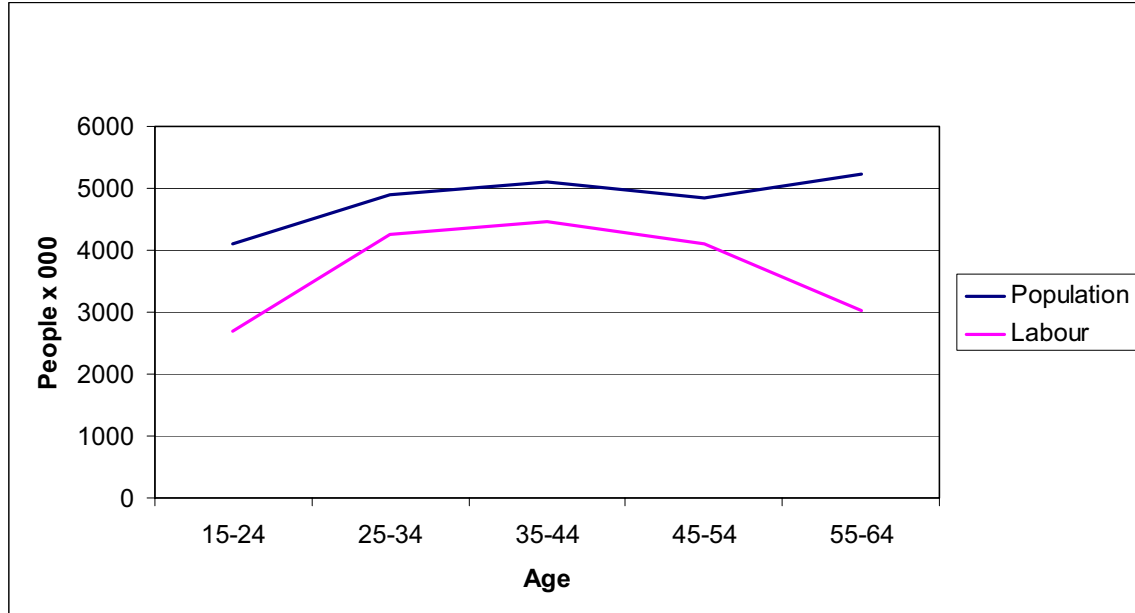


Source: Statistics Canada

The group of people aged 15–24 years who traditionally fill new job demands as the older workers move out of the workforce, is one of the smallest segments of the working age population. The segment of the working population, ages 25–34, is also smaller than the two 10–year segments of workers aged 35–54. The predicted result is that labour shortage will be influenced through the next 25 years by fewer young people available to enter the labour force.

For comparison, Figure 2 shows the predicted 2021 population and the estimated labour based on 2005 participation rates. This illustrates that the labour shortage can be expected to continue well into the future. In 2021, the projected Canadian population shows that the segments of the working population from 25 to 54 years will be close in strength, but there will be more people over 55 years than 15–24 years. If the labour force participation rate is the same for workers aged 25–54 years and continues to drop rapidly in the segment aged 55–64 years, then in 2021, it is predicted that over 50,000 more workers (shown in Figure 3) will be leaving the workforce due to their age than workers entering the workforce as first-time workers. The lowest population segment with members in the labour force is projected to be the 15–24 years. This projection supports the notion that the labour shortage will remain for the next 15–25 years, provided the participation rates remain the same.

**Figure 2: Canadian population and labour projection trend, 2021.**



Source: Statistics Canada

In addition to the labour shortages projected in the future, there may be an increased shortage of skilled labour due to the older working population having a general skill set that the upcoming younger workers may not adequately fill.<sup>1</sup> This trend emphasizes the importance of labour skill development in the younger segment of the workforce. Younger workers who are well trained will be better able to fill vacancies left by the older, skilled and more experienced workers. A key objective of training programs will be to develop younger workers with the types of skills that are demanded in the workplace as experienced and skilled workers leave.

### **Labour Market Indicators**

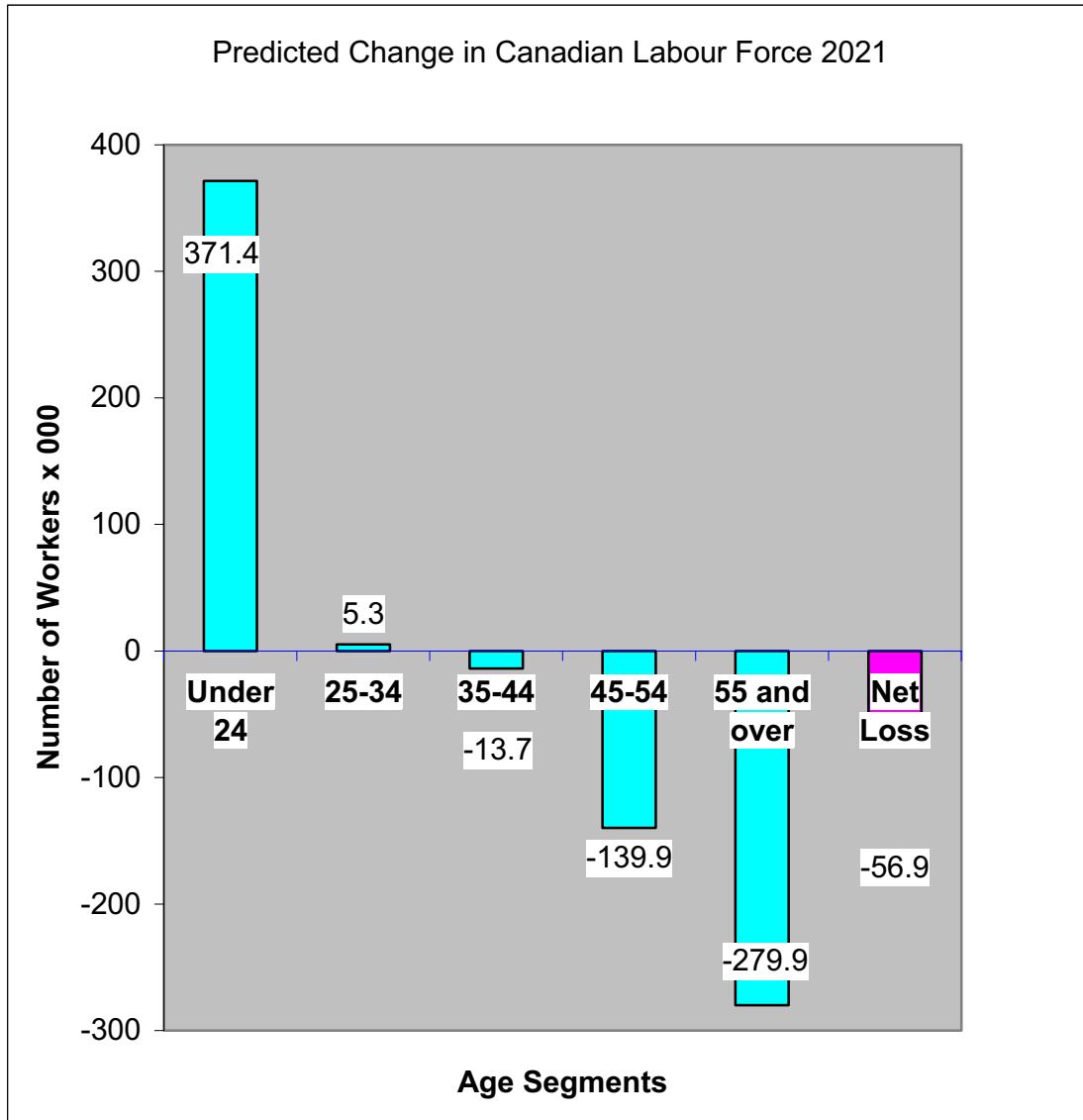
Labour supply has shown to be pressured by economic forces in Canada and especially in BC and Alberta in recent years where the employment level has risen for youth and in the trade sectors.<sup>2</sup> The strong economy has forced unemployment rates down nationally and provincially. The local unemployment trend in the Nechako-Coast region (from Vanderhoof to Prince Rupert) and Caribou region (including Prince George) has shown a decrease only recently, but unemployment rates have been rapidly dropping from above 11% to well below 8% in two years.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Overview of Aging Workforce Challenges: Analysis Government of Canada June 2001, Gov. of Canada HRSDC website.

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey February 2006 website; page 2.

<sup>3</sup> Overview of Aging Workforce Challenges: Analysis Government of Canada June 2001, Gov. of Canada HRSDC website.

**Figure 3: Projected change in the Canadian labour force, 2021.**



Source: Statistics Canada

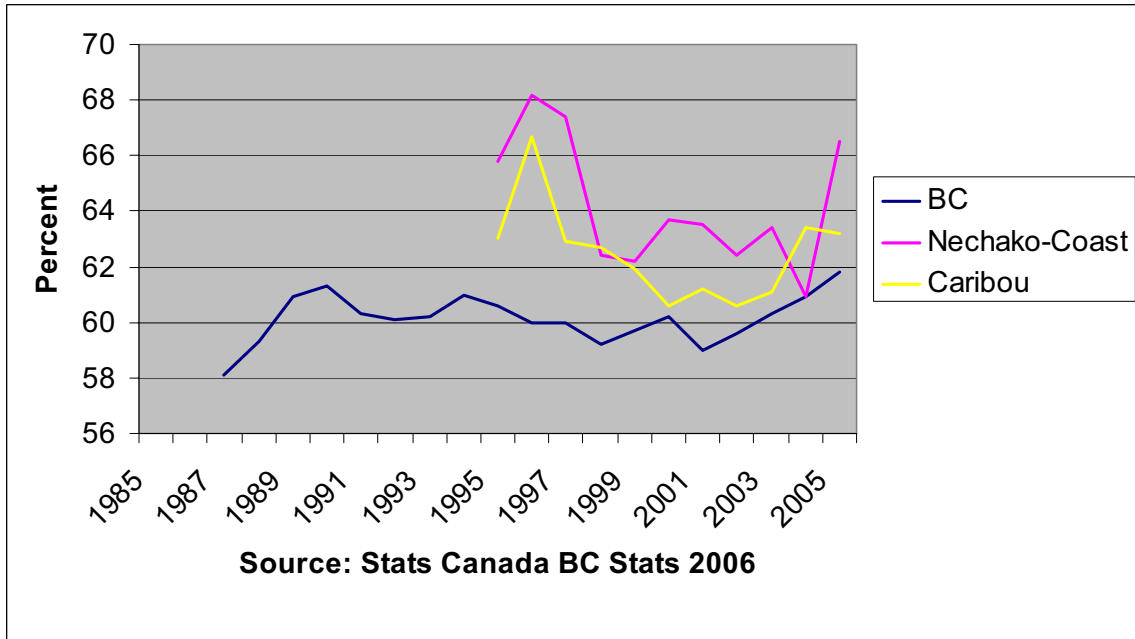
Figure 4 shows a trend toward increased employment in the Vanderhoof area and in the province. BC's employment is forecast to hit 2.14 million jobs by the year 2008.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Statistics Canada predicts the following:

- Over 2.13 million workers were employed in 2005 in BC, which is only 0.05% below the 2008 projected employment level of 2.14 million workers.
- In BC, employment grew by 2.4% in 2004 and last year employment growth was 3.3%, the largest growth since 1994.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> An Overview of Labour Market and Skill Shortages Issues in BC and Canada, BC Ministry of Advanced Education, June 2001, page 17.

<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada website. "<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/lss/lfs/bccanlfs.pdf>" page 1.

**Figure 4: Labour employment trends.**



As shown in Figure 5, the three-year trend from 2003 through 2005 is similar to the employment growth period shown in the last years of the 1980s—the last time employment growth exceeded growth in the labour force for several years.

**Figure 5: Growth in BC employment versus growth in labour force.**



Labour force growth was exceeded by employment growth due to strong economic growth in the late 1980s. The labour supply of the 1980s was not influenced by the population demographics of today where many jobs will become available due to retirement and an aging workforce. New labour demand is exceeding the new labour entering the labour force due to a shortage of young workers. It is expected that by the year 2008 over half of all jobs in BC will be obtained as replacement jobs created from workers retiring and leaving the workforce.<sup>6</sup> In addition, skills shortages are likely to occur as a replacing an older workforce which has valuable job knowledge and experience important in the efficient running of both private and public sectors.<sup>7</sup>

Several options are available to fill the predicted shortage of labour and the possible skills shortages in the labour force. Apart from ongoing training of a younger workforce, importing workers from the rest of Canada or abroad is a possibility. In a recent comment, BC Economic Development Minister Colin Hanson said:

*“One million jobs will be created in the next 12 years and only 650,000 will graduate from BC high schools, so we will not be able to fill the jobs of the future by simply training BC born kids and we have to look at immigration in order to grow the economy in the future and to meet skills shortages”.*<sup>8</sup>

The BC Progress Board, a panel of business and academic leaders tasked with finding ways to improve economic and social performance, has shown similar support for immigration and training and other strategies such as:

- Skills education and research
- Encourage integrating immigration through assisting employers to assess immigrant skills and training
- Bridge training to “top up” immigrant skill levels
- Promoting the incentive and bonus systems to keep workers in the workforce
- Utilize immigration and trades training to fill the shortages in trade occupations
- Use pension adjustments to keep workers in the workforce
- Use flexible work arrangements.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> An Overview of Labour Market and Skill Shortages Issues in BC and Canada, BC Ministry of Advanced Education, June 2001; page 18.

<sup>7</sup> Building Bridges across Generations in the Workplace, A Response to the Aging Workforce, Sylvain Schetagne, Canadian Council on Social Development, page 17 website: <http://www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2001/bridges/bbeng.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Source: Vancouver Sun newspaper, 17 Mar 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Boosting Incomes, Confronting Demographic Change: BC's Productivity Imperative, A Companion Discussion Paper to the Fifth Annual Report December 2005, BC Progress Board, April 2006 website- [http://www.bcprogressboard.com/2006Report/ProductivityReport/Productivity\\_Final.pdf](http://www.bcprogressboard.com/2006Report/ProductivityReport/Productivity_Final.pdf)

There is a key problem that exists with respect to immigration as a source of labour in the Vanderhoof area. At the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, over 60% of people born outside of Canada were living in the three largest cities in Canada.<sup>10</sup> This is disproportionate when compared to the 30% of the total population living in the largest Canadian cities.<sup>11</sup>

A factor that may cushion the impact of the labour-skills shortage is the view that people are living longer so they may retire later. However, recent Canadian information has shown the opposite to be the case as early retirement rates have increased from 29% in 1990 to 43% in 2000.<sup>12</sup>

There is no doubt that the workforce is getting older. From February 2005 to February 2006, the number of people who participated in the Canadian workforce grew by 109,700 in the 25–54 age group compared to a growth of 110,000 workers in the 55-year plus age group.<sup>13</sup> These older workers may have pressure to remain in the workforce longer to fill predicted labour shortages.

### **Labour Market Survey**

There are two common methods of measuring labour market and skills shortage: economic or market indicators and employer-based surveys or interviews.

The economic indicator approach measures the labour shortages and pressures on wages, employment growth, and unemployment. These indicators are easy to measure, interpret, and track over time. The weakness in these indicators is that they do not show trends in specific labour sectors and they are not tracked in small regions such as Vanderhoof. Further, there is a tendency to overlook regulated labour market sectors such as professions (medical, nursing and teaching) that may have high vacancies in times of overall high employment.<sup>14</sup>

The employment survey has the benefit of providing labour shortage information in regulated labour markets like nursing, and direct employer based information on skills and experience required from labour. Employer surveys may be influenced by the recruitment and retention difficulty in the study region that is not apparent provincially or nationally. This information can be used to identify regional or community labour market weakness so that human resource strategies can be established.

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<sup>10</sup> John Deutch Institute, Queens University, Canadian Immigration policy for the 21 Century, Charles M. Beach, Alan G. Green and Jeffrey G. Reitz 2003  
<http://jdi.econ.queensu.ca/Publications/Immigration.html>

<sup>11</sup> Stats Canada website: <http://www40.statcan.ca/I01/cst01/>

<sup>12</sup> Overview of Aging Workforce Challenges: Analysis Government of Canada, June 2001 Gov. of Canada HRSDC website.

<sup>13</sup> Latest Release from the Labour Force Survey, Statistics Canada, March 2006, website.

<sup>14</sup> An Overview of Labour Market & Skills Shortage Issues in BC and Canada, Youth and Labour Market Services Branch BC Ministry of Advanced Education June 2001; pgs 7–13.

Interpreting results, even quantitative results, in an employer survey can be difficult due to the fact that work, conditions, wages and environment can mask real labour shortage. The survey analysis should identify the less obvious labour market challenges so that strategies can focus on all problem areas.<sup>15</sup>

A survey is a measure of current conditions only. To overcome this limitation, a systematic quantitative approach where surveys are conducted at regular intervals with similar questions would provide the best analysis of regional or community labour markets change. Quantitative information could be tracked over time to see if community human resource management initiatives are changing the labour market.

In reviewing labour market research it is evident that a comprehensive community specific labour market survey is a rare entity. Some labour market surveys look at businesses in communities but they fail to look at community employers as a whole and are not inclusive of all types of employers such as government, for profit business and not for profit agencies together. In order to obtain a representation measure of labour market skill requirements and human resource issues an inclusive study of all community employers would be the most relevant. However, there are projects that can be used as a framework for developing a survey for a specific community such as Vanderhoof.

Another challenge in labour market study is to quantify that there is or will be a labour market shortage and quantify the specific skills shortages that may exist in community labour. Labour market surveys generally start with a qualitative analysis of the region of interest by using focus groups and steering committees to bring forward labour issues backed up by regional and national statistics to show that labour is in demand and that improving human resource planning is relevant to the economic and demographic conditions.

Once the demand and relevance have been determined, surveys quantify the needs and opinions of employers and community members so that stakeholders in the community can take action to improve the labour market.

### **Labour Sectors**

The employer labour market survey provides quantitative results showing the types of employer sectors and the occupation types that are employed so that trends for specific types of employers and community members can be found. Certain types of employers may have experienced challenges or have advantages that other employer groups do not; similarly, community members can be broken into groups that have different needs and opinions.

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<sup>15</sup> An Overview of Labour Market & Skills Shortage Issues in BC and Canada, Youth and Labour Market Services Branch BC Ministry of Advanced Education June 2001; pgs 7–13.

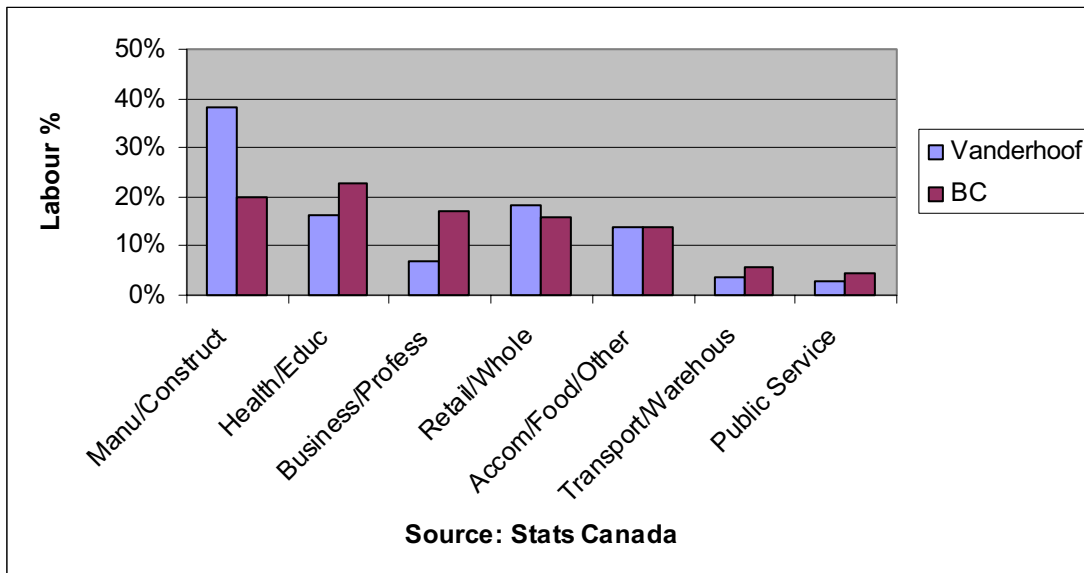
Quantitative results give sector information and specific job information that:

- Can be compared with other regions and comparative surveys done in the future in the same region;
- Allows for sector specific stakeholders in the community and outside the region to measure and compare the specific labour market issues;
- Defines the skills and the occupations that exist in the study area; and
- Provides a measure of the human resource issues in the region at the time the survey is conducted.

The results will be that human resources strategies for the different groups of employers and community members can then be put in place to provide the most impact for improving specific labour market challenges within each group.

In the 2001 Canadian census, the community of Vanderhoof relied heavily on the forest related manufacturing and logging, and construction sectors to derive employment. This was in contrast to BC sectors as a whole, which rely more on the business, professional, health and education sector for employment. The retail and food and accommodation sectors were similar in Vanderhoof to the rest of the province. The sectors in Figure 6 have been consolidated for simplicity. Surveys have sectorised jobs into as few as 6 sectors and as many as 20 sectors, depending on the type of analysis required. Sector analysis is also important when identifying survey bias and ensuring survey response rates are adequate in each employer sector.

**Figure 6: 2001 sector employment.**



Source: BC Statistics

Labour market surveys, for continuity, should identify the industrial sectors and use a guide such as the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) to define each employer sector. Occupation information can be classified using a system such as the Canadian National Occupational Code (NOC). These classifications will give the analysis meaning for stakeholders and provide comparison for future survey analysis in the region or comparisons outside the region.

### **Future Skills Trends**

Assuming the objective is to have a skilled workforce, the question must be posed: What types of skills are in demand and is labour meeting these demands? Elaine O'Reilly, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of *Making Career Sense of Labour Market Information*, outlines the following key skill demands for workers to have in the new economy:

- Worker self responsibility for career and positive attitude toward change
- Workers must take responsibility as consumers of their own education and training and evaluate the merits of the training they receive
- Workers must provide generic (transferable) skills in math, computer, communications, team work and decision making
- Entrepreneurial skills to market themselves and to innovate in the workplace
- Career choice skills to deal with the frequent job changes that are part of the new economy.<sup>16</sup>

Employers could use labour market survey information to find out where the people with the skills they need are located so they can develop a human resource strategy to fill vacancies. To meet the need of both employers and employees, and to know the types of skills that are demanded but in short supply, labour surveys need to be more comprehensive in nature and provide better and faster information.<sup>17</sup>

Employers are looking for more classification of skills, more managerial skills that demonstrate multi-tasking, entrepreneurship and problem solving.<sup>18</sup> Workers need to know the skills they should identify and promote to meet employer job criteria. Labour market survey information is important for workers and employers. The information can help them both identify and build the skill sets to meet labour requirements in the survey region.

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<sup>16</sup> 2nd Edition of *Making Career Sense of Labour Market Information*, BC Ministry of Advanced Education 2006.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

## **4. TREND ANALYSES SUMMARY**

### **4.1. EMPLOYER TRENDS**

Qualitative information about the challenges and needs of employers was gathered in March and April of 2006 from the Vanderhoof Labour Market Partnership Steering Committee and employer sector representatives. The information was gathered from emails and faxes from the Steering Committee, and from a meeting of sector employer representatives and Steering Committee members. Additional information was gathered from telephone conversations of sector representatives who could not attend the meeting.

To determine the trends in qualitative information gathered from the Steering Committee and sector representatives, the information was summarized into the following categories.

#### **Attitudes:**

- Young workers need better work ethics (motivation, appearance, honesty, pride, responsibility).
- Workers need better attitudes towards work especially when serving customers (respect, people skill).
- Young workers need better life skills and role models.
- Expectations for pay from entry-level workers or low-skilled workers are too high for the work experience and skills they bring to the jobs.
- Younger people do not understand the value of work and the effort required to do a good job, younger workers want easy jobs.
- Entry-level workers need to know how to qualify (train for the first job by taking extra courses outside of high school).
- It is a priority, perhaps the number one priority, for employers to hire based on the attitudes of recruits.
- Workers know that there is a labour shortage so they know they can get away with doing less because there is limited labour to replace poor employees; there is a lack of incentive for labour to become more highly skilled.
- Workers may be looking for work elsewhere because they are concerned about the viability of Vanderhoof “after forestry dies” (beetle-kill issue).

#### **Employer Needs:**

- More workers are needed (vacancies), in low-wage and less-skilled jobs as well as more skilled workers locally and from outside.
- More trades people are needed and trades training should be encouraged.
- More unskilled people (with good work ethic) are needed to fill lower-wage, entry-level jobs
- Unfavourable shifts and part-time and seasonal positions are difficult to fill.

- Employers need to train from within and hire locally when they can so people will stay.
- Vanderhoof and BC Skills information indicated that employers have lowered work standards to retain staff.
- More mentoring programs like Project Agriculture are needed.
- People with training in the job sectors that are strong in Vanderhoof, such as agriculture, and equipment and truck operation are needed.

**Skills and Education:**

- Schools do not produce skills for business and employers in smaller towns (multi-task, handyman, entrepreneurial, vocations, practical work skills); employers feel schools are too geared toward computers and academics, lots of jobs in a rural town that require a skill set different from what is taught in schools.
- There is a need to promote skills required in agriculture sector jobs.
- Employers want to know completion-rate and dropout rate information in educational programs to anticipate shortages.

**Human Resource Practices and Strategies:**

- Small business employers need to find a way to compete with larger industries paying high wages to low-skilled workers
- Competition for trained and skilled workers is costly for some employers, especially when workers move to rural communities and then leave because of the attraction of higher wages, or better amenities in larger communities
- Need to provide training, flexible hours, incentives to get more from the workforce.
- Low pay is a problem in some sectors (retail and agriculture) when competition from higher-paying, lower-skilled jobs comes from other sectors.
- Immigration is a viable option but areas outside Vanderhoof, such as the Lower Mainland agricultural sector are able to take better advantage of immigrant workers; Vanderhoof employers need to know more about immigrant workers.
- Employers need to know how, and where, to find suitable labour outside the area and promote working in Vanderhoof.
- Labour shortage could worsen if new industries such as Oriented Strand Board (OSB) plants or pellet operation move to the area.
- Employers need to know more about the labour market to better manage the labour shortage.

**Community and Infrastructure Needs:**

- More affordable housing and lack of builders needed to improve situation
- Lack of facilities and recreation activities compared to Prince George
- Limited opportunities for career advancement in Vanderhoof

- Amenities need to be developed to attract and keep skilled workers
- Community amenities should help break down barriers for workers to be trained (public transportation, taxi, and training facilities)

**Succession:**

- Employers need to know the sustainability of jobs (how long before jobs are obsolete) to plan for emerging jobs
- Employers need to plan for retirement

See Appendix D for comments from participants of meeting.

In the qualitative meetings, employers and Steering Committee members have stated that there are human resource problems in Vanderhoof. The meeting information has verified many of the same concerns that were expressed by community leaders in the past when the Labour Management Partnership was first initiated. It has been determined that others in the community feel there is a labour shortage problem of both skilled and unskilled Workers.

The information also revealed that there are problems with the attitudes and ethics with the labour force and that it is community problem that stakeholders such as educators, parents, and employers should try to improve. Employers indicated there are improvements that could be made to education systems to develop more skills suited to Vanderhoof employer's demands. The qualitative data shows that employers are looking for information on how to compete for the labour and to fill the shortages that exist. Employers want to know how to compete with other communities, to obtain immigrant labour and skilled labour, and how to keep the labour they currently have employed. Employers indicate that they are competing within the community, in the region and outside the region for labour; employers also want to find out how to attract labour outside of Vanderhoof. The competition is mostly due to higher wages offered by some sectors for low skills, high wages offered outside the community, and better amenities available outside of Vanderhoof. Employers did indicate that more training, incentives, and flexibility would have to be offered to employees to improve the human resource problems and address shortages. Employers want to find out more about labour skills and how to exchange skills information with labour so that workers will come to, and stay, in Vanderhoof.

The small group of employers and Steering Committee members have provided the baseline trends in the labour market that show that there are opportunities to improve the labour market in Vanderhoof. The next step is to verify that the labour climate is problematic by conducting surveys of employers and community members to verify and quantify the information gathered anecdotally. The surveys will help prove or disprove the opinions of a few by accurately measuring the labour market concerns of the majority of Vanderhoof employers and residents.

## **4.2. COMMUNITY TRENDS**

Qualitative information about the challenges and needs of community members was gathered in June 2006 from the Vanderhoof Labour Market Partnership Steering Committee, and employer sector representatives. Participants in the meeting were asked to contribute their opinions about how the community survey information should be communicated to the public and the type of information the community survey should provide. The meeting participants concluded that the survey should determine community member opinions, plans and needs about their education and skills training, career and work, and the community.

To determine the information trends gathered in the meeting, notes are summarized into the following qualitative-trend categories.

### **Communication:**

- Community members need to provide input for potential communication methods for the project results.
- There should be a short summary of results for stakeholders such as local and regional politicians in the final presentation of results.
- Results should be available for other users to help with projects such as a layered mapping of land use in the Vanderhoof area.

### **Basic Information:**

- To ensure that there was representation among a broad cross-section of the community members in the survey, the following basic demographic information was requested:
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Birth location and immigration history
  - Employment status
  - Marital status
  - Income
  - Number of dependants
  - Aboriginal ancestry
- The future plans of where community members intend to live, work and upgrade their education, and why, were found to be important.

### **Skills and Education:**

- Community skill and education, training and professional development levels in potential employees and current employees must be assessed.
- Awareness of the availability of local programs and funding opportunities for education, training and professional development needs to be determined.
- The survey requires open-ended questions about education, training, and professional development needs including the types of programs and employment services required by community members.

- The commitment that employees show, in terms of job satisfaction resulting from employers providing on the job training, mentoring, and professional development are factors that need to be measured.
- Employers and stakeholders need to know if employees commit to a job because employers provide on-the-job training and mentoring.
- The community needs to know if employees and potential employees are aware of funding programs for training and if these programs are sufficient.
- There is a need to find out the types of programs that are offered to help students make career choices and prepare for leaving high school.
- A measure of the adequacy of local training and education and where community members expect to receive further education and training was brought forward.

**Employment and Career:**

- The survey should measure barriers that prevent community members from working or working more hours such as:
  - Child or other dependant care
  - Education, training, or certification
  - Transportation
  - Age
  - Medical or health condition
  - Disability
  - Work hours
- Information on how long community members will remain in the local labour market and the occupations they hold now and expect to obtain in the future is needed.
- There is a need to know job satisfaction levels in the following areas:
  - Advancement opportunities
  - Management and supervision
  - Wages
  - Benefits
  - Work environment or conditions
  - Training or development opportunities
  - Bonuses or Incentives
- The survey needs to quantify the availability of casual/contract/seasonal workers and the number of workers that work full-time or part-time.
- Answers to why community members change jobs or careers, and if they change industry sectors are required
- Quantifying future employee career plans, goals and movement, including the reasons workers change jobs and the type of industry sectors workers tend to pursue in Vanderhoof was an objective of meeting participants.
- Identify and profile those willing to start a new business, those currently self-employed and the reasons that the self-employed do not employ others in their business were recognized as survey goals.

**Community:**

- How long have people lived in the Vanderhoof area?
- There is a need to know if community members are considering leaving and how satisfied they are in areas such as:
  - Business Services and Shopping
  - Career and Job Opportunities
  - Recreation, Social and Cultural Activities and Facilities
  - Health and Education Services
  - Climate
  - Housing and Infrastructure
  - Seniors, Child, Special Needs Services
  - Family

**Comments provided about the Labour Market:**

- There is a need for entrepreneurs, who develop business and become employers, to be better skilled at managing and supervising the business.
- Students coming out of school have low math and basic skills for certain jobs like reading a tape measure in construction or dealing with people performing a cashier job.
- More students should be offered training in the form of programs such as co-ops, project agriculture, project heavy duty and pre-apprentice where learning is practical and “hands on.”
- Soften age requirements for people to work in the service industry (Food and Accommodation).
- Examine the youth (perhaps aged 15–18 in a separate survey)
- Examine self-employed workers as a separate study (find out why they are not expanding their business)
- What role does government have (private sector with government funding) in helping with these issues (labour market concerns)?

In the qualitative information-gathering meetings Steering Committee members and employers have described human resource concerns and the types of labour market information that should be gathered in a survey of community members to verify and define the problems.

The information showed that there is a need to measure basic information about people in the community and to find out more in-depth information about career plans, educational goals, and if those plans involve living in the Vanderhoof area. There is also a requirement for more information about the barriers people have to working more or entering the workforce and to obtaining further training and education. Meeting participants stated that they want to find out satisfaction levels among community members in living, working, and advancing their education and careers locally. The participants also requested that information be provided about the intentions of people in terms of where they will live and work and when they will stop or change the amount they work. In addition, it was

requested that information be obtained about the factors that draw residents to the community and motivate other residents to relocate elsewhere.

The input from this small group meeting and the April 5, 2006 meeting and the survey of employers completed earlier was used to form the basis for the survey of community members and to complete the next step in the Vanderhoof Labour Market Partnership. This step is intended to verify labour market problems and needs of community members.

See Appendix E for comments from participants.