



solving the oceanside labour crisis: A WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

June 2008



The Government of Canada has contributed funding to this initiative. 

solving the oceanside labour crisis

CONTENTS

Executive Summary	ii
1. Introduction and Background	1
2. The Bigger Context	3
3. The Oceanside Labour Market	4
3.1 Labour Market Profile	4
3.2 Employer Survey	12
3.3 Review of Best Practices	13
3.4 Community Consultation	15
3.5 Strategic Challenges	18
4. Workforce Development Vision, Values and Long-Term Goals	20
5. Workforce Development Strategies and Tactics	21
6. Workforce Development Implementation Strategy	29
Appendices	31
Appendix 1 – Steering Committee Membership List	32
Appendix 2 – Employer Interview Findings	33
Appendix 3 – February 4, 2008 Stakeholder Planning Session	44
Appendix 4 – June 3, 2008 Stakeholder Workforce Development Strategy Session	56
Appendix 5 – Workforce Development Strategy Survey Responses	62
Appendix 6 – Affordable Housing Recommendations	67

solving the oceanside labour crisis

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

The Oceanside region is experiencing a labour crisis. Businesses are turning away customers, reducing hours of operation or even closing. Without the community infrastructure and a concerted strategy, employers are losing out in the war for talent to attract workers to the region. The combination of an aging population, inadequate housing and transportation, few practical tools and resources for small businesses, and the lack of a coordinated strategy for the region are threatening the economic and social well-being of Oceanside.

Without pre-emptive local action, Oceanside's labour crisis will only get worse and will constrain businesses' abilities to sustain themselves or grow. Action is needed now.

Therefore, the City of Parksville and other key stakeholders in the Oceanside¹ region, with financial support from Service Canada, have come together to obtain information on current and future skills shortages and opportunities, and to implement effective strategies for assisting local employers to plan for these changes in order to:

- Improve recognized labour market issues;
- Have a positive impact on the labour market;
- Assist employers locally find and retain skilled labour;
- Increase the community's economic development; and,
- Increase regional income.

The objective of this work has been to develop an Oceanside Workforce Development Strategy to support local employers in addressing short and longer-term human resource challenges and requirements.

The Oceanside and British Columbia labour markets can be summed up as follows:

- There is a "war for talent."
- Skill shortages are no longer "looming."
- This will not change in the near future.
- Employers and industries must brand themselves to stand out as "employers of choice" to attract, train and retain needed employees.
- Employers must embrace a diverse workforce – it will be critical to consider all potential talent pools and adopt a multi-generational approach.

"Help! It's going to get worse and it's harder on small businesses."

An Oceanside employer

"The lack of affordable housing and the perception of the community as a 'retirement community' contribute hugely to the labour shortage."

An Oceanside employer

¹ "Oceanside" includes the region of the Vancouver Island coast from Nanoose Bay to Bowser.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

The project research involved an analysis of available labour market data, review of “best practice” communities, and interviewing 19 local employers from various industries.

A key overall conclusion of the researchers was that Oceanside’s combination of high population growth, high elderly dependency and low labour market participation rate, low proportion of youth, aboriginal, visible minorities and immigrants, are the predominant new sources of labour market participants in Canada, resulting in a more serious impending labour shortage for the area than for many other parts of the province.

The research and a stakeholder planning session identified the most important workforce challenges facing Oceanside employers and the economy over the next few years. These can be summarized as follows:

- **Affordable Housing and Transportation:** a tight housing market and decreased affordability; and lack of transportation to move workers from/to communities
- **Aging Demographics:** an aging population and workforce and too few young entrants
- **Relevant Education and Training:** not enough trained trades, health professions, and engineers to match employer needs; education to match local needs
- **Responsive Employers:** insufficient employer readiness to respond to changing labour market conditions including employee expectations, flexibility, training, and competitive wages etc.
- **Underutilized Labour:** inadequate utilization of potential high growth sources of labour – immigrants, persons with disabilities (PWD) and Aboriginal people
- **Worker Attraction and Retention:** meeting the needs of high growth sectors –tourism, resorts, construction, health care, high tech business; attracting and retaining “working age families”, accommodating “new” millennial worker with different work ethics

“The lack of affordable housing for workers of low income in Parksville is a top challenge.”

An Oceanside job-seeker

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

This project involved input from approximately 100 individuals, mostly from within the Oceanside area, through four means:

- Steering Committee meetings;
- A February 4, 2008 stakeholder planning session;
- A June 3, 2008 stakeholder feedback session on a draft version of this Strategy; and,
- Respondents to a web-based survey about the draft Strategy.

The Steering Committee input is reflected in the final version of this Strategy. The feedback from the February and June consultation meetings are summarized in Appendices 3 and 4, respectively; survey responses are summarized in Appendix 5.

Generally, throughout these forms of community input, there is strong agreement for the need of an Oceanside Workforce Development Strategy. The February meeting led to the creation of the Workforce

solving the oceanside labour crisis

Development Strategy, and there continues to be strong agreement with the vision, goals and strategies contained in this Strategy. For instance, 50% of respondents strongly agreed with the WDS; 47% agreed somewhat with it; and 91% of respondents agreed with the WDS Vision/Values/Goals; 9% did not agree with them.

VISION AND GOALS

The Oceanside Workforce Development Strategy **vision** is:

An Oceanside region that boasts a diverse, adaptable and engaged workforce that supports a sustainable economy and social environment.

In order for this Workforce Development Strategy to succeed, the following factors need to be present:

- Supportive affordable housing and transportation policies and programs;
- Supportive provincial and federal government policies and programs (e.g., streamlined procedures and reasonable requirements for recruitment of temporary foreign workers);
- The full, active engagement and involvement of employers and other stakeholders;
- Building on the strengths of the many existing employment service providers and education and training agencies;
- Actions that will achieve positive workforce results in the short-term; and,
- A strong, recognized Strategy leadership structure.

The **long-term goals** for addressing the strategic challenges and the region's employer human resource requirements are to:

1. Brand and market Oceanside and its employers as a location and worksite of choice.
2. Make tools and supports available to small and medium-sized business to facilitate effective human resource practices.
3. Attract and recruit from all available sources of under-utilized human resources for the workforce.
4. Ensure education and training programs needed by Oceanside employers and employees are available, accessible and flexible.

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

While it is not a workforce development goal in this strategy, working to increase the availability and access to affordable housing and other infrastructure for the workforce will be an essential success factor for this strategy. It is recognized that much work has been directed at this challenge through the community's Affordable Housing Committee.

An immediate action should be to advocate for access to funding from the Provincial Transit Plan to develop a commuter bus service between Nanaimo and Oceanside communities, much like the \$4.3 million recently approved for a Victoria-Cowichan Valley ("Malahat") commuter service.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

GOAL 1: Brand and market Oceanside and its employers as a location and worksite of choice.

Branding and marketing the region as an “employer (region) of choice” for workers and professionals is a major priority of this Workforce Development Strategy. This will build heavily on the work of tourism branding in the region, and highlight such attractions as nature, beach, quality of life, affordability, central hub.

Many Oceanside companies are very successful at product branding. This strategy will build on this to establish employment branding among the region’s employers and industries.

The main strategy will be to develop and implement a Workforce branding strategy through a partnership between Oceanside Tourism Association, Chambers of Commerce, government agencies, municipal governments, Vancouver Island University, School District 69, service providers, and employers and unions. It will be important that a Strategy leadership body and appropriate funding are confirmed before beginning aggressive employment branding and marketing.

Developing a Workforce Branding Strategy will involve:

1. Defining and marketing the general Oceanside brand in terms of quality of life, etc. mentioned above.
2. Identifying the potential workers that Oceanside employers want to attract to the region (see Goal 4).
3. Defining and marketing the Oceanside employment brand, promoting employers and industries (e.g., Oceanside “STAR” employers) through training and certification.

Implementation of this goal will also include linking with regional groups such as the Vancouver Island Economic Alliance and LINX BC.

Oceanside will develop its own “employer of choice” brand for the region, and provide training programs for owners, executive, managers and supervisors to acquire innovative people practice competencies. Individuals and companies who meet certification requirements will receive a highly visible credential, a “good housekeeping” stamp of approval.

The Oceanside region will also increase its participation in and profile at regional, provincial, national and international recruiting, career and hiring fairs and missions. There are opportunities to pool resources and leverage provincial and federal government and industry association missions to recruit beyond the Oceanside community.

GOAL 2: Make tools and supports available to small and medium-sized business to facilitate innovative people practices.

Small and many medium-sized enterprises in the region do not have HR departments or the knowledge/time/resources to plan and execute strategies and programs for recruiting, retaining and training needed for workers in the region.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

A key critical success factor for achieving this goal will be using existing agencies to engage employers; and to differentiate between short-term and long-term strategies and results.

Strategies to build Oceanside small business capacity to innovatively manage HR strategies will include the following:

1. Employer education, awareness-building and information dissemination
2. Providing a “virtual HR Department” for Oceanside small businesses
3. Developing and administering a central information and “matching” resource
4. Developing and administering an employer of choice training and certification program:

“The prices of everything are going up but wages are not or only slightly.”

An Oceanside job-seeker

An immediate action will be to create an online resume-posting service/databank for employers to source workers.

GOAL 3: Attract and recruit all available sources of under-utilized human resources

Thousands of British Columbians are unemployed or underemployed. Many of these labour force participants are motivated, have formal education and training, and possess core skills and other talents. However, members of many labour force groups are under-represented in several industries, professions and communities throughout BC.

This Workforce Development Strategy will prioritize and target the following labour force groups according to four categories:

1. Individuals from the general labour force in Oceanside or within reasonable commuting distance from Oceanside.
2. Target specific demographic groups with tailored messaging in Oceanside or within reasonable commuting distance – particularly mature workers (45+), seniors (65+), immigrants (existing and new), persons with disabilities, women (i.e., those with school-age children or re-entering the workforce), and international students.
3. Recruit workers from other parts of BC and Canada, leveraging government and industry association missions.
4. Recruit from other groups such as Aboriginal people, temporary foreign workers, etc.

The top three strategies or actions will be to:

1. Conduct research and a public forum targeting the needs and wants of local workers. This action should target not only the under-utilized workers identified in the strategy, but also the general public – especially those who commute from this region to Nanaimo, Port Alberni, and the Comox Valley.
2. Address overall transportation issues and ensure that the strategy includes solutions for those with accessibility and financial challenges.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

3. Express local issues pertaining to the “prevailing wage rate” aspect of the temporary foreign worker program.

Other actions will include:

- To deliver educational workshops for employers, older workers and seniors on how to retain and recruit this part of the workforce; and to increase and expand hiring fairs in Oceanside.
- To work with local employers and go2 (a tourism HR agency) to develop a tool for helping Oceanside companies recruit temporary foreign workers and students (i.e., Working Holiday Program), immigrants and international students.
- To form a partnership with the City of Parksville, the Career Centre and immigrant service organizations to promote Oceanside as a regional destination for immigrants already in Canada.

Goal 4: Ensure education and training programs needed by Oceanside employers and employees are available, accessible and flexible.

The region’s employers and new and existing employees need easy access to flexible and relevant education and training programs. The competitive advantage of businesses is crucially dependent upon the relevance of training and jurisdictions with rich employer-education linkages often excel in the domestic and international markets.

This strategy will promote education-employer partnerships and will advocate for the establishment of an Education Advisory Council of employers to advise Vancouver Island University, School District 69, and private trainers on curriculum and program delivery. It could also include sector advisory committees in the areas of current shortages and projected high growth occupations such as construction trades, transport and equipment operators, hospitality and recreational workers and health professions.

An immediate action will be for Vancouver Island University, School District 69 and the Career Centre to partner on a workshop to promote awareness of employment-related training and education programs in the region for employers.

Other shorter term actions will include:

- Surveying employers and employees on their specific education and training needs that are not being met;
- Researching education and training that can be delivered on-line and via distance education;
- Developing an inventory or calendar of small business-related education and training courses, where and when they are offered, etc.;
- Providing education opportunities for employers on how to be an “employer of choice.”

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

A successful Workforce Development Strategy requires a well thought out feasible and sustainable plan that addresses the following implementation issues.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

A regional Workforce Development Strategy needs to be led and championed by an appropriate local organization. It could be an individual organization, a partnership of more than one, or a task force or council. The first step will be to form an Implementation Task Force of community leaders who have expressed an interest in being involved in the implementation.

MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION

Whether part of the leadership entity or not, one or more people need to be assigned the primary responsibility for managing this strategy and coordinating the various parts of it with others. Before this Strategy is implemented, the Steering Committee's and Task Force's first priority will be to secure resources to support a half or full-time Strategy Manager/Coordinator.

RESOURCES

Various government programs provide resources for specific tactics of this strategy. Initially, seed funding will be sought in order to establish a leadership organization and a staff resource. Once in place, these entities will pursue funding for specific components of the strategy. Employers and agencies will be encouraged to contribute in-kind and cash to specific projects/programs that benefit them/their workers.

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships will be a key part of the leadership of this strategy, as well as of coordinating and resourcing it. Partnerships will be pursued between the leadership organization and local governments, provincial and federal governments, educators, trainers, other service providers, industry and business associations, Chambers of Commerce, local businesses and other major employers, and community groups.

TIMELINES

Once an Implementation Task Force is formed and meets, the first priority will be to establish a leadership organization and funding for a staff person to manage this strategy. It is anticipated this will be done during the summer. During this period a detailed implementation plan will be prepared. By fall 2008, it is anticipated that parts of the strategy will start to be implemented as project and program-based funding is secured.

PRIORITIES

In addition to getting a leadership organization and a manager in place, the top priorities will be to develop the Oceanside employment branding and marketing strategy, to pursue strategies to retain existing workers, to start recruiting key target markets, and to start helping small businesses with their HR challenges.

LINKAGES

There are a number of other regional workforce development initiatives (i.e., Vancouver Island Economic Alliance, Regional Skills Councils, etc.), and it will be important for this strategy to be linked with these other activities in order to minimize duplication and leverage resources and synergies. For example, important linkages will include working with VIEA on its immigrant integration strategy.

Oceanside needs its own targeted workforce development strategy – the first priority will be to get this in place, establish momentum, and reach out to other regions and structures as this is happening.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

John Winter, President and Chief Executive Officer of the BC Chamber of Commerce, recently stated, "We don't believe a government cookie-cutter solution, a one size fits all approach is going to help here." Mr. Winter said further, "These are local issues and they are different in Sechelt from Dawson Creek. We are coming to the conclusion that the solutions have to be found locally."

The Oceanside region is experiencing a labour crisis. Businesses are turning away customers, reducing hours of operation or even closing. Without the community infrastructure and a concerted strategy, employers are losing out in the war for talent to attract workers to the region. The combination of an aging population, inadequate housing and transportation, few practical tools and resources for small businesses, and the lack of a coordinated strategy for the region are threatening the economic and social well-being of Oceanside.

Without pre-emptive local action, Oceanside's labour crisis will only get worse and will constrain businesses' abilities to sustain themselves or grow. Action is needed now.

Therefore, the City of Parksville and other key stakeholders in the Oceanside² region, with financial support from Service Canada, have come together to obtain information on the current and future skills shortages and opportunities, and to implement effective strategies for assisting local employers to plan for these changes in order to:

- Improve recognized labour market issues;
- Have a positive impact on the labour market;
- Assist employers locally find and retain skilled labour;
- Increase the community's economic development; and,
- Increase regional income.

"Help! It's going to get worse and it's harder on small businesses."

An Oceanside employer

The objective of this work is to develop an Oceanside Workforce Development Strategy to support local employers in addressing short and longer-term human resource challenges and requirements.

The first phase of the strategy development was designed to obtain a better understanding of employer and community human resource issues and needs through the following research and analysis:

² "Oceanside" includes the region of the Vancouver Island coast from Nanoose Bay to Bowser.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

- Interviewing major employers in Oceanside which require workers and identify current and upcoming employment shortages;
- Identifying upcoming growth areas that will be experiencing labour demand;
- Identifying communities that are working towards addressing their labour shortages and identify their best practices; and,
- Examining data from service providers to confirm findings in job posting trends.

The second phase has been to draft an Oceanside Workforce Development Strategy and to consult with key stakeholders in the community on their feedback on the Strategy and potential involvement in its implementation.

"We are cycling through the same skilled trades people who are moving from job to job according to the pay and nature of the work as employers outbid one another for their skills."

An Oceanside employer

The Strategy outlines recommended activities to be undertaken by various organizations throughout Oceanside so as to increase the short-term and long-term availability of skilled workers in the region. The Strategy will include measures to address the following types of tactics for matching labour demand and supply:

- Potential community partnerships and/or initiatives that can be made to address these issues;
- Local and/or foreign (if unavailable locally) labour pools to tap into for skilled worker recruitment for identified needed skill sets;
- Tools to help potential employees and potential employers;
- Recommendations to School District 69 and Malaspina University-College on developing or building on their current educational bridging program and foreign student programs;
- Recommendations for developing a mature worker re-integration program (if needed) in collaboration with local employment agencies.

The following organizations have partnered with the City of Parksville Economic Development Office to develop an Oceanside Workforce Development Strategy:

- Malaspina University-College;
- Parksville & District Chamber of Commerce;
- Oceanside Tourism Association;
- Tigh-Na-Mara Resort and Conference Centre;
- Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance;
- Central Vancouver Island Job Opportunities Building Society operators of the Career Centre; and,
- School District 69.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

Many of these groups have been active on the Project Steering Committee, and they and many other stakeholder organizations participated in a half-day workforce planning forum in February 2008 that provided the basis for this Oceanside Workforce Development Strategy.

"I am looking for a strong company with lots of potential for growth."

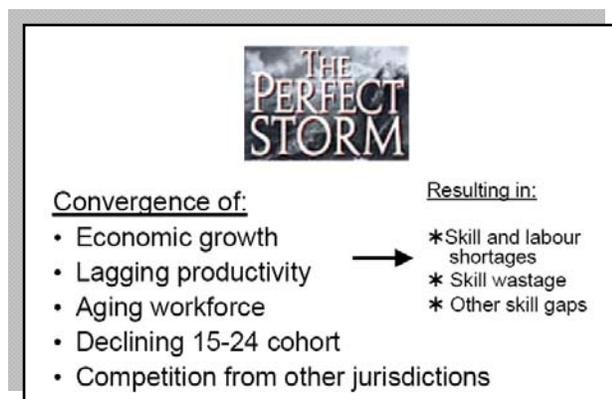
An Oceanside job-seeker

The City of Parksville retained Human Capital Strategies of Victoria, a labour market consulting company, to undertake the necessary labour market research for this project and to assist the Project Steering Committee to draft a Workforce Development Strategy.

2. THE BIGGER CONTEXT

The Oceanside and British Columbia labour markets can be summed up as follows:

- There is a "war for talent."
- Skill shortages are no longer "looming."
- This will not change in the near future.
- Employers and industries must make themselves stand out (branding "employer of choice") to attract, train and retain needed employees.
- Employers must embrace a diverse workforce – it will be critical to consider all potential talent pools and adopt a multi-generational approach.



The BC Government expects over 1 million new job openings to occur during 2005-2105, driven by strong economic growth, lagging productivity, and declining birthrates and a smaller youth cohort.

Almost every industry in BC is experiencing some degree of labour shortage, and most do not expect this to change in the coming years. BC companies in many industries have to compete aggressively with

companies in other industries, other regions and provinces, and other countries.

Many competing regions and industries need the same skills, skill sets, and education and training that others in BC are looking for, including qualified people in managerial and supervisory, technical and trades, sales and service, health care, and other categories.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

The high growth rate of Aboriginal youth, the under-utilization of women and persons with disabilities in the workforce, and the fact that immigrants to BC will constitute 100% of the net new labour supply in the coming decades mean employers and industries must do things differently to attract and retain these potential talent pools.

Employers also have to be increasingly sensitive to the needs and motivations of their multi-generational workforces in this job-seekers' market. "Employer of choice" is the new slogan; and those who ignore this, do so at their own risk.

As the Canadian Federation of Business found in a 2006 survey of member companies, skill shortages are having very real impacts:

- Having to hire under-qualified workers (65%);
- Having to improve salary/benefits (45%);
- Having to pass responsibilities to other employees (41%);
- Having to function with fewer employees (40%);
- Having to hire temporary help (35%); and,
- Having to use overtime/longer shifts (35%).

"The lack of affordable housing for workers of low income in Parksville is a top challenge."

An Oceanside job-seeker

Of course, the ultimate impact of staff shortages which some businesses face a reduction of their business volume or even closure.

3. THE OCEANSIDE LABOUR MARKET

3.1 LABOUR MARKET PROFILE

Population and Labour Market Supply

The Oceanside community faces a number of serious labour supply constraints. The Oceanside region's population has been growing much faster than the overall province: 2.7% per annum, two and half times that of the provincial growth rate. Table 1 shows the region has outgrown the province as a whole in population growth rates over the last 10 years.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

Table 1
Parksville (CA)³ Population, 2001 & 2006

Census Period	Parksville (CA)		British Columbia	
	Total Population	Increase Over Previous Period	Total Population	Increase Over Previous Period
2006	26,518	9.2%	4,113,487	5.3%
2001	24,285	7.3%	3,907,738	4.9%
1996	22,629	n/a	3,724,500	n/a

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Censuses.

The Qualicum School District (69) has the second highest elderly dependency ratio (the ratio of 65+ population divided by 15-64 working age population) among the 59 school districts in the province. This is reinforced in Table 2 that shows the Oceanside region's median age is significantly higher than the provincial median (56.4 years versus 40.8 in 2006).

Table 2
Parksville (CA) Median age of population, 2001 and 2006

Census Period	Parksville (CA)	British Columbia
2006 median age	56.4	40.8
2001 median age	52.2	38.4

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Censuses.

Table 3 shows the region's population by age group for 2001 and 2006. It indicates that the 55+ population has grown from 47% of the total area population in 2001 to over 52% in 2006. The younger cohorts (0-14 and 15-24) have declined in overall significance during this period.

Table 3
Parksville (CA) Population by Age, 2001 and 2006

Census Period	Total Population	Age Cohort				
		0-14	15-24	25-54	55-64	65 plus
2006 population	26,515	2,960	2,240	7,470	4,880	8,965
2006 % of total	100%	11.2%	8.4%	28.2%	18.4%	33.8%
2001 population	24,285	3,380	2,025	7,650	3,695	7,535
2001 % of total	100%	13.9%	8.3%	31.5%	15.2%	31%
2001-2006 difference	2,230	-420	215	-180	1,185	1,430

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Censuses.

The proportion of Aboriginal ancestry in the Oceanside population is 2.6%, considerably smaller than that for the province (4.8%); however it is up from 1.7% of the total area population in 2001.

³ Census Agglomeration

solving the oceanside labour crisis

Table 4
Parksville (CA) Aboriginal Population, 2001 and 2006

Census Period	Parksville (CA)		British Columbia	
	Aboriginal Population	Proportion of Total Population	Aboriginal Population	Proportion of Total Population
2006	685	2.6%	196,070	4.8%
2001	410	1.7%	170,025	4.4%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Censuses.

As Table 5 shows, visible minorities are 3.0% of total population in 2006, up from 2.2% in 2001. This compares with 24.8% in BC in 2006.

Table 5
Parksville (CA) Visible Minority Status, 2001 and 2006

Census Period	Parksville (CA)		British Columbia	
	Visible Minority Population	Proportion of Total Population	Visible Minority Population	Proportion of Total Population
2006	785	3.0%	1,008,855	24.8%
2001	530	2.2%	836,445	21.6%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Censuses.

As per Table 6, while still below the provincial average of 27.5% in 2006, the proportion of the Oceanside population that are immigrants is 20.5% in 2006, up from 19.7% in 2001.

Table 6
Parksville (CA) Immigrant Population, 2001 and 2006

Census Period	Parksville (CA)		British Columbia	
	Immigrant Population	Proportion of Total Population	Immigrant Population	Proportion of Total Population
2006	5,375	20.5%	1,119,215	27.5%
2001	4,745	19.7%	1,009,815	26.1%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Censuses.

While the Parksville (CA) population growth between 2001 and 2006 included a low proportion of international migrants (2.0% versus provincial average of 5.3%), it proportionately led the province in attracting people from other parts of BC (23.9% versus 13.6%) and from other provinces (9.6% versus 4.3%) (BC Stats, Infoline Report, April 18, 2008). Almost one-quarter or 6,105 of the region's population came moved from other parts of BC during 2001-2006.

Another factor in the Oceanside labour supply is the level of employable income assistance recipients. Table 7 shows that of 847 income assistance recipients, 22% or 186 are expected to work, and 70% or 597

solving the oceanside labour crisis

are persons with disabilities, many of which – while not “expected to work” by government – are interested and capable of working in certain types of jobs with minimal workplace accommodation and costs involved. This will be discussed further in the Strategies and Tactics section.

The top challenges to working in Oceanside are affordable housing, transportation, wages and the seasonality of work.

Oceanside job-seekers

Table 7
Numbers of Income Assistance Clients in Oceanside

Oceanside Community	Expected to Work	Expected to Work with Medical Condition	Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers	Persons with Disabilities	Total
Bowser	5	5	2	28	40
Coombs/Errington	30	16	18	93	157
Nanoose Bay	6	8	4	37	55
Parksville	46	17	24	266	353
Qualicum Beach	34	19	16	173	242
Total	121	65	64	597	847

Source: Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance, May 8, 2008

The general level of education in Oceanside is similar to that of the province with a somewhat smaller proportion of university graduates (13.0 versus 17.6% for BC) and a higher proportion of post-secondary diploma holders (36.7% versus 32.8%).

The labour market participation rate (proportion of 15-64 working full or part-time or looking for work) is approximately 46%, substantially below the provincial average of 57%.

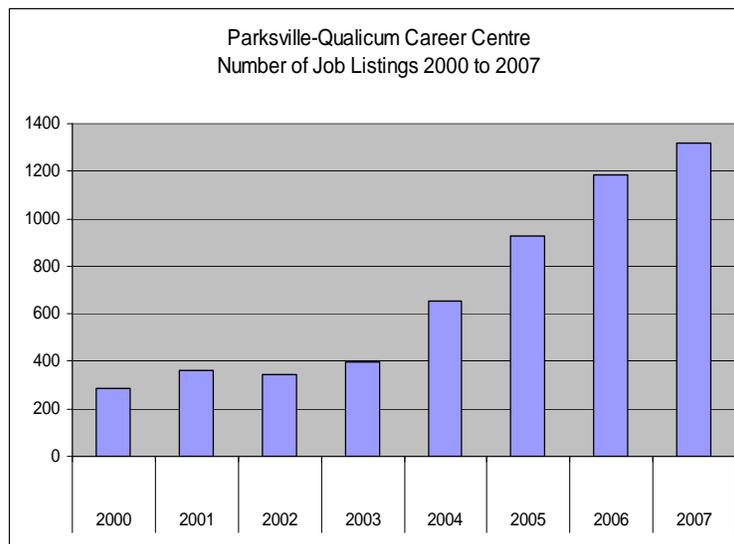
Overall, the combination of a high population growth, high elderly dependency and low labour market participation rate, low proportion of youth, aboriginal, visible minorities and immigrants, that are the predominant new sources of labour market participants in Canada, resulting in a more serious impending labour shortage for the Oceanside area than for many other parts of the province.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

LABOUR MARKET DEMAND

The Oceanside economy is growing much faster than the provincial and Canadian economy resulting in strong labour demand. A strong local economy is reflected in the number of job listings at the Career Centre (Parksville-Qualicum) which increased from 250 in 2000 to 1316 in 2007, a more than five-fold increase over seven years (see Chart 1).

Chart 1
Oceanside Career Centre Job Listings, 2000-2007



The Oceanside area is dominated by services including retail, wholesale trade, finance and real estate and many health and education sectors, computer services, and recreation and accommodation and account for almost three-quarters of employment.

The largest goods-producing industry is construction employing 10.5% of the labour force, substantially higher than the province (5.9%). Primary industries such as forestry, agriculture and fishing are also relatively more important for the area, accounting for 6.7% of labour demand compared to 4.6% for BC.

"When asked about traditionally underutilized segments of the labour market, most employers admitted that they haven't specifically targeted these groups. Employers indicated that they would welcome information about how to recruit from these groups effectively; communicating about services already in place may be what's required."

Oceanside employers

BC Stats inventory contains two major projects in each Parksville and Qualicum with a total value of approximately \$90 million and \$65 million respectively.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

Table 8 shows the industrial structure of the Oceanside region and the province in 2001 and 2006. It shows that employment in agriculture and other resource industries decreased by over 23%, and wholesale and retail trade declined by over 5% in the region. Finance and real estate (34%), business services (32.7%) and construction and manufacturing (10.5%) were the employment growth sectors over the five-year period. It is interesting that both finance/real estate and business services were much more prominent in terms of employment growth rates in Oceanside during this five-year period compared to overall in the province. This reflects the activity in new housing and in tourism and hospitality, the latter of which are part of the definition of “business services” in the Census data.

Table 8
Parksville (CA) Experienced Labour Force by Industry, 2001 and 2006

Industry	Parksville (CA)			British Columbia		
	2001	2006 (% of Total)	Change	2001	2006 (% of Total)	Change
Agriculture and other resource-based industries	550	420 (4.2%)	-23.6%	104,335	107,760 (4.9%)	3.3%
Construction and manufacturing industries	1,480	1,635 (16.3%)	10.5%	313,065	355,220 (16.2%)	13.5%
Wholesale and retail trade	1,575	1,490 (14.8%)	-5.4%	315,425	340,970 (15.6%)	8.1%
Finance and real estate	515	690 (6.9%)	34%	122,165	134,940 (6.2%)	10.5%
Health, social services and education	1,675	1,820 (18.1%)	8.7%	339,730	365,650 (16.7%)	7.6%
Business services	1,300	1,725 (17.2%)	32.7%	395,530	436,665 (19.9%)	10.4%
Other services	2,240	2,255 (22.5%)	0.7%	424,360	451,905 (20.6%)	6.5%
Total experienced labour force	9,340	10,020 (100%)	7.3%	2,014,600	2,193,115 (100%)	8.9%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Censuses.

INDUSTRY GROWTH PROJECTIONS

The projections for the Malaspina University-College region⁴ call for goods-producing industries to grow employment at an average compound annual rate of 1.7%. The strongest goods industries are construction with an expected increase in employment of approximately 1,420 followed by agriculture and

“The mature demographics of the region is a hurdle to filling vacant positions and that the lack of youth in the labour market poses a significant challenge.”

An Oceanside employer

⁴ This is a much broader geographic region than the Parksville Census Agglomeration, and includes Duncan, Nanaimo, North and Lake Cowichan, Lantzville, Powell River, as well as Parksville and Qualicum).

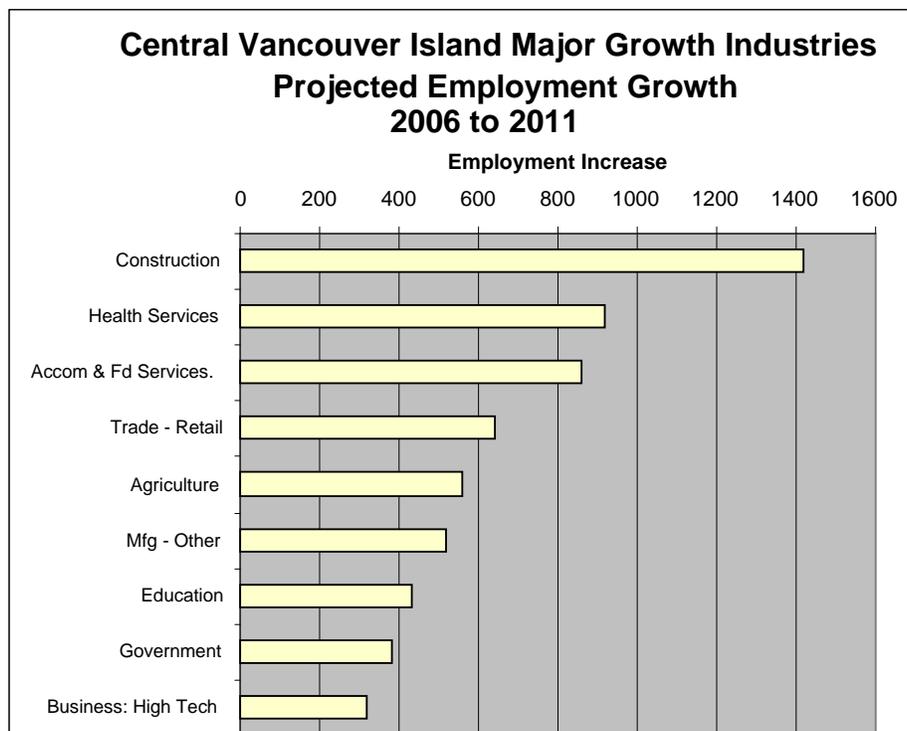
solving the oceanside labour crisis

manufacturing with each gaining more than 500 employees from 2006 to 2011 (see Chart 2 on the next page).

While the rate of service sectors employment growth is expected to be somewhat slower than that for the goods-producing industries, the aggregate employment growth is almost 4,600, nearly double the employment growth in the goods-producing industries (2,390).

The strongest service industries are projected to be in Health Services (gaining 920 employees over 2006 to 2011), Accommodation and Food services (860) and Retail Trade (640). Education, Government and Business high technology and low technology services are other important contributors to employment growth in the region.

Chart 2
Oceanside Vicinity, Projected Labour Demand, 2006-2011



OCCUPATIONAL PROJECTIONS

Top percent growth is projected to be in construction trades including masonry and carpenters, farmers and agricultural workers, machine operators in food processing, and heavy equipment operators, machinists and welders.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

"I need in an employer someone I can get along with and learn from; a place that will/can lead me to higher things."

An Oceanside job-seeker

Occupational growth rates have to be viewed in the context of the size of an occupational category. For example, large, slow-moderate growth occupations including Sales and Service and Trades/Transport/ Equipment Operator can represent many openings.

It is very difficult to find up-to-date Oceanside-specific labour market data. In March 2008, Statistics Canada released its Census 2006 labour market data. This provides more up-to-date data at the community level as per the table below.

Table 9 shows Oceanside employment changes between 2001 and 2006 by occupational category. The largest occupational categories in the region in terms of employment are sales and service, followed by trades and transport, business/finance, and management occupations.

Table 9
Parksville (CA) Experienced Labour Force by Occupation, 2001 and 2006

Occupational Category	Parksville (CA)			British Columbia		
	2001	2006 (% of Total)	Change	2001	2006 (% of Total)	Change
Management	1,150	1,170 (11.7%)	1.7%	218,445	229,945 (10.5%)	5.3%
Business, finance and administrative	1,415	1,685 (16.8%)	19.1%	353,710	375,975 (17.1%)	6.3%
Natural and applied sciences and related	305	570 (5.7%)	86.9%	123,755	138,955 (6.3%)	12.3%
Health	585	695 (6.9%)	18.8%	105,690	120,360 (5.5%)	13.9%
Social science, education, government and religion	715	710 (7.1%)	-0.7%	160,650	178,040 (8.1%)	10.8%
Art, culture, recreation and sport	255	305 (3%)	19.6%	67,325	76,460 (3.5%)	13.6%
Sales and service	2,645	2,535 (25.3%)	-4.2%	514,985	555,880 (25.3%)	7.9%
Trades, transport and equipment operators and related	1,415	1,640 (16.4%)	15.9%	288,940	339,500 (15.5%)	17.5%
Occupations unique to primary industry	520	470 (4.7%)	-9.6%	84,525	86,460 (3.9%)	2.3%
Occupations unique to processing, manufacturing & utilities	330	230 (2.3%)	-30.3%	96,585	91,545 (4.2%)	-5.2%
Total experienced labour force	9,335	10,020 (100%)	7.3%	2,014,600	2,193,115 (100%)	8.9%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 and 2006 Censuses.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

The biggest percentage increase (86.9%) was in natural and applied science employment, while business/finance, health, art/ culture/recreation, and trades/transport jobs saw increases over the period in the high teens. Occupations unique to primary industry and processing/manufacturing saw the biggest drop in employment.

3.2 EMPLOYER SURVEY

The experience of Oceanside employers reinforces the picture of labour market pressures reflected in the above statistical profile.

During October 2007, HCS conducted interviews with 19 key Oceanside employers from over 10 industry sectors identified by the Steering Committee. Interviews focused on current and future labour market needs, explored sources of labour; and discussed the support systems required to assist employers in meeting labour requirements. See Appendix 2 for a detailed summary of the interview findings.

The employers interviewed represent a broad cross-section of industries including Accommodation and Food Services, Construction, Education, Finance and Insurance, Health Care and Social Assistance, Professional, Scientific and Technical Services, Public Administration, Real Estate, Retail Trade and Transportation.

Indicative of the labour crisis, 60% of employers interviewed had vacant positions they are finding difficulty filling.

Other key findings from the employer interviews generally support and expand upon the findings of the statistical profile in the previous section:

- The older demographics of the region is perceived as a challenge for employers
- Sales and service occupations present the largest quantifiable shortage
- Affordable housing is an increasing concern because it limits employers' ability to attract people from outside the region and from outside BC
- Perceived reasons for skills shortage are:
 - The size of the labour pool
 - Competition for skilled workers

"The international recruitment experiences are onerous with too many hurdles and an unrealistic burden for employers; the hourly rate set by government for the region is too high (higher than other areas in BC)."

An Oceanside employer

solving the oceanside labour crisis

- The increased challenge to fill “less desirable” occupations when so many alternate employment options exist
- Real or perceived shortcomings of the community identity or infrastructure
- Half of employers are experiencing retention challenges
- One-third of employers have difficulties meeting their employee education or training needs
- Three-quarters of employers anticipate an increasing labour demand with 10% of those interviewed expecting an increase of more than 50%
- Most employers have tried recruiting outside the Vancouver Island labour pool with little or no success
- Employers would like to see:
 - Young families attracted to live and work in the area
 - Affordable housing in the area for lower income employees
 - educators and employers establish stronger ties
- Regarding sources of labour employers need to tap, employers suggested:
 - Seniors market (but difficult for physically demanding jobs)
 - Utilizing headhunters
 - Job-banks, advertising on the internet
 - Under-utilized segments of the labour force
 - Encourage mature workers and young people to establish on the Island
 - International migrants and immigration of younger working families
 - College students and graduates
 - Co-operative education programs
 - Target those right out of high school and mid-30s career-changers
 - Retired and semi-retired individuals
 - Provide incentives for support staff to stay on past retirement age
 - Community career fairs
 - Improved linkages with college

Education and training institutions need to establish stronger links with employers:

- *Assess requirements for training in partnership with employers to ensure employer training needs are incorporated into programs*
- *Let employers know when courses are finishing*
- *Provide practicum opportunities for students within programs, promote co-op programs*
- *Take initiative to approach and link with businesses*
- *Partner with employers during the first few months of employment*

Suggested by Oceanside employers

3.3 REVIEW OF BEST PRACTICES

As part of the study, information was compiled from the following communities that have undertaken, or are undertaking community-based labour market planning and development initiatives:

solving the oceanside labour crisis

- Comox
- Fort St. John/North East BC
- Kamloops
- Kelowna
- Lethbridge, Alberta, and
- Niagara, Ontario

Communities such as Kamloops (Venture Kamloops), Lethbridge (chooselethbridge), Kelowna (Investkelowna), and others reviewed provided several “lessons learned” and examples to tangible tools and information sources (e.g., tool kits, websites, etc.) for employers to utilize to address HR challenges.

In addition to regional human resource planning and strategies, there are several national, provincial and regional industry sector strategies which include specific strategies and tools that may be useful in an Oceanside workforce strategy to the extent it includes such sectors or are transferable to sectors prioritized in such a strategy. For example:

- The Construction Sector Council’s reference materials for construction companies regarding apprenticeship, foreign credential recognition, etc.
- The Canadian Trucking Human Resource Council’s HR Guide for trucking carriers.
- The Petroleum Human Resource Council of Canada’s guidebook for employers who want to hire temporary foreign workers
- go2 – Tourism Human Resource’s HR tools and information resources (e.g., how to apply for federal and provincial training tax credits) for BC tourism operators.

“I need security, a chance to grow and to develop my skills, and benefits.”

An Oceanside job-seeker

These and other resources will be reviewed during the development of the Parksville-Qualicum workforce strategy drawing upon some of the lessons learned/critical success factors:

- Community stakeholder inclusiveness
- Creating partnerships (e.g., business-education, voluntary-private sectors, with First Nations and Aboriginal groups, with immigration/multicultural groups, etc., with governments, with women’s groups, with persons with disabilities, etc.)
- Using and building on existing strengths and resources
- Learning from others – avoiding pitfalls, employing critical success factors
- Special supports for micro- and small businesses
- Creating awareness of and tools for employers to use government programs and services

solving the oceanside labour crisis

- Raising awareness among employers and other stakeholders on the challenges, trends and possible solutions
- Keeping strategies tied to economic development and employment demand
- Ensuring inclusion of intelligence on major projects in planning
- Building in and ensuring employer participation and buy-in from the start: answering, “What is in it for me?”
- Focusing plan on a smaller number of do-able, priority areas and avoiding a “shot-gun” approach of including numerous strategies and actions including many lower priority, longer-term, impractical ones
- Finding “champions” with “can-do” attitudes to lead the planning and (more importantly) implementation phases
- Using local human resource resources like the “Employer Toolkit: Find and Keep the Right Employees to Grow Your Business” published by Global Vocational Services, Parksville & District Chamber of Commerce and The Career Centre or expanding upon these as part of the regional workforce strategy.

3.4 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

This project has involved input from approximately 100 individuals, mostly from within the Oceanside area, through four means:

- Steering Committee meetings;
- A February 4, 2008 stakeholder planning session;
- A June 3, 2008 stakeholder feedback session on a draft version of this Strategy; and,
- Respondents to a web-based survey about the draft Strategy.

The Steering Committee input is reflected in the final version of this Strategy. The feedback from the February and June consultation meetings are summarized in Appendices 3 and 4, respectively. The survey responses are summarized in Appendix 5.

Generally, throughout these forms of community input, there is strong agreement in the need for an Oceanside Workforce Development Strategy. The February meeting led to the creation of the Workforce Development Strategy, and there continues to be strong agreement with the vision, goals and strategies contained in this Strategy. For instance, 50% of respondents strongly agreed with the WDS; 47% agreed somewhat with it; and 91% of respondents agreed with the WDS Vision/Values/Goals; 9% did not agree with them.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

The top challenges identified by survey respondents were as per the following table:

1st most important challenge	
Affordable Housing	45.5%
Insufficient employer readiness for responding to changing labour market conditions	60.0%
Worker Attraction and Retention	46.7%
2nd most important challenge	
Transportation	50.0%
Not enough relevant education and training	60.0%
3rd most important challenge	
Inadequate use of certain sources of labour (e.g. immigrants, aboriginals, women and persons with disabilities)	55.6%

Top actions for addressing Oceanside workforce challenges identified by survey respondents were:

- Rebranding Oceanside as a community for a diverse age range to work, live and play;
- Reminding employers in various ways of (existing) training agency resources that are available to assist to identify work-ready employees;
- Encouraging and supporting employers to invest in their employees and business, other retention strategies, and raising wage levels;
- Ensuring more affordable housing, including adequate rental housing, particularly for young families;
- Pursuing opportunities for mature or retired people willing to stay in workforce to be retrained for part-time work; and,
- Improving public transportation

The top critical success factors for implementing a workforce development strategy identified by respondents were:

Supportive affordable housing and transportation policies and programs	63.6%
Active engagement and involvement of employers and other stakeholders	84.8%

Survey respondents thought employers and governments should be most responsible for funding the Strategy:

solving the oceanside labour crisis

Employers	78.1%
BC government	78.1%
Local governments	78.1%
Federal government	59.4%
Unions	50.0%

There was active interest in contributing resources for the Strategy and/or participating in some way in its implementation. Twenty-three percent of respondents indicated “yes”, and 60% (18) indicated “maybe.”

Feedback on the draft Strategy from the 35 community stakeholders at the June 2008 session included the following key themes:

- Need **federal and provincial government attention** to this issue as a priority for the region;
- The key is **implementation** – need to dedicate someone to implement the strategy in a connected way; who will be responsible for implementation; don't implement in isolation – learn from other communities (e.g., Nanaimo “Challenge of Change” meeting); Importance of lessons learned (e.g., look at Alberta);
- **Affordable housing, transportation, livable wage are all key;**
- **What do the prospective employees want** – ask them;
- Need to shift from supply side orientation to support **demand side needs**; someone needs to take this forward and engage employers; the challenge of getting employers to contribute financially to the strategy;
- Importance of **attracting families** to the area and **retaining young people**; attraction and retention of young employees – there is nothing for them to do, no “fun places to be”; there is competition for workers all over the Island; need to engage all communities of interest; employers need to collectively focus on working together on common needs regarding attraction and recruitment;
- Instead of spending money on HR, training and recruiting programs, if this money was spent on **higher wages**, there would be less of a recruitment and training problem; higher salaries (than in Victoria/Vancouver) are needed, especially in technical and professional jobs; however, a challenge for some businesses to pay a “livable wage” – to do so, they have to increase product/service price to the extent customers are unhappy and walk;
- We need to move forward – we need an Oceanside-specific strategy; we need to look after ourselves first; **take action, no more talk/study** – some group needs to take responsibility to move ahead and work as a community;
- **Focus more on retention and infrastructure** before considering spending money on promotion and recruitment (outside of the area);

solving the oceanside labour crisis

- We need a better understanding of what all the **groups that serve employers and employees** in the area are doing – a database, website, etc.

The small group work at the June session also yielded some concrete ideas for strategies, tactics and implementation considerations; and these are reflected in later sections of this document.

All input from Oceanside stakeholders during the last 8 months has been carefully considered by the Steering Committee and project consultant, and is reflected to the extent possible in this final version of the Oceanside Workforce Development Strategy.

3.5 STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

A planning session involving selected business and labour market service providers was conducted in early February 2008 to brainstorm and discuss a framework and preliminary elements of an Oceanside Workforce Strategy.

As shown in Chart 3, the participants identified strong community leadership, strong economic and employment growth and attractive community quality of life as principal strengths of Oceanside. Weaknesses facing the community are the low proportion of the potential sources of labour supply - youth, immigrants and Aboriginal people, limited small business human resource capacity, affordable housing and transportation.

Chart 3
Oceanside Labour Market Strengths and Weaknesses

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community leadership• Attractive community/quality of life with which to draw people from outside• Knowledge-based companies• Growth in new construction• Growing much faster than overall province (2 ½ X)• Strong employment demand• Build on best practices and resources in other regions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Few visible minorities, immigrants and Aboriginal people, and lack of track record of recruiting from these pools• Small businesses with little HR capacity• Second highest elderly dependence ration among all school districts in BC• Labour force participation rate is substantially lower than rest of province• Relatively low proportion of young people• Lack of affordable housing• Inadequate transportation

solving the oceanside labour crisis

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Teachable moment” – businesses are ready to listen, need help on labour issues• Partnerships within the region• Partnerships with other communities• Provincial sector strategies• Incentives (e.g., training tax credits)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Competition from other regions• If tourism declines• If interprovincial and/or intraprovincial in-migration decline• If the energy sector and related mega projects in Western Canada accelerate• If the US economy slows down or enters recession

The Oceanside businesses are keen to learn and partner in addressing labour market challenges. Other opportunities include the potential to develop partnerships within the region as well as with other communities and the provincial and federal governments are receptive to assist with solutions. At the same time, Oceanside faces a number of potential threats – competition for labour from other regions and from possible acceleration of energy mega projects, and from the potential slow down of the US economy, potential decline of tourism and inter-provincial migration.

WORKFORCE STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

The project research and planning session identified the most important workforce challenges facing Oceanside employers and the economy over the next few years. These can be summarized as follows:

- **Affordable Housing and Transportation:** tight housing market and decreased affordability; lack of transportation to move workers from/to communities
- **Aging Demographics:** aging population and workforce and too few young entrants
- **Relevant Education and Training:** not enough trained trades, health professions, engineers to match employer needs; education to match local needs
- **Responsive Employers:** insufficient employer readiness for responding to changing labour market conditions including employee expectations, flexibility, training, competitive wages etc.
- **Underutilized Labour:** inadequate utilization of potential high-growth sources of labour – immigrants, persons with disabilities (PWD) and Aboriginal people
- **Workers Attraction and Retention:** meeting the needs of high-growth sectors –tourism, resorts, construction, health care, high tech business; attract and retain “working age families”, accommodating “new” millennial worker with different work ethics

4. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT VISION, VALUES AND GOALS

This section outlines the Vision, Values and Long-Term Goals for a three-year Oceanside Regional Workforce Strategy.

VISION

The Oceanside Workforce Development Strategy vision is an Oceanside region that boasts a diverse, adaptable and engaged workforce that supports a sustainable economy and social environment.

VALUES

The values that will be reflected in how the Workforce Development Strategy is implemented are:

- Workforce and community diversity;
- Balancing economic growth, social responsibility and sustainability;
- Work/life balance;
- Creative people practices; and,
- Community collaboration and partnerships.

REQUIREMENTS FOR SUCCESS

In order for this Workforce Development Strategy to be effective, critical success factors will be:

- Affordable housing and transportation policies and programs;
- Supportive provincial and federal government policies and programs (e.g., streamlined procedures and reasonable requirements for recruitment of temporary foreign workers);
- The full, active engagement and involvement of employers and other stakeholders;
- Building on the strengths of the many existing employment service providers and education and training agencies;
- Actions that will achieve positive workforce results in the short-term; and,
- A strong, recognized Strategy leadership structure.

This strategy will not succeed without progress on these factors.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

LONG-TERM GOALS

The long-term goals for addressing the strategic challenges and the region's employer human resource requirements are to:

1. Brand and market Oceanside and its employers as a location and worksite of choice.
2. Make available tools and supports to small and medium-sized business to facilitate effective human resource practices.
3. Attract and recruit from all available sources of under-utilized human resources for the workforce.
4. Ensure education and training programs needed by Oceanside employers and employees are available, accessible and flexible.

It is also important to note that in order for workforce initiatives to be successful, this Workforce Development Strategy needs to increase the availability and access to affordable housing (and other infrastructure such as transportation, daycare and other community and social services) for the workforce.

The visual on the next page depicts the framework for this Workforce Development Strategy. It reflects the need to tap various sources of human resources through education, training, recruitment and retention strategies. This framework also reinforces the importance of the Oceanside region's infrastructure that needs to underpin and support such a strategy.

5. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

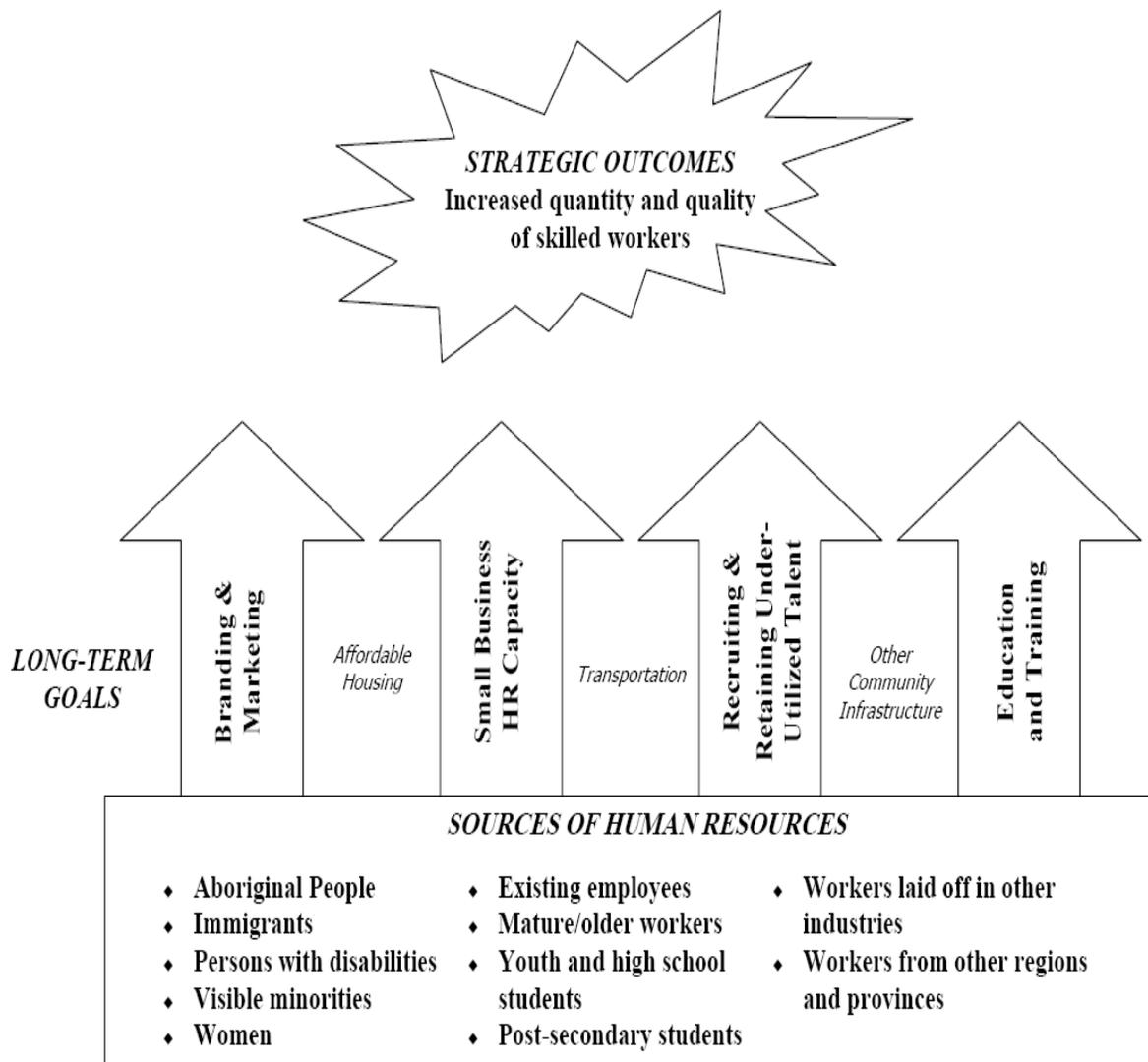
The section identifies specific strategies and actions/tactics and timelines, etc., for each long-term goal.

While it is not a workforce development goal in this strategy, working to increase the availability and access to affordable housing and other infrastructure for the workforce will be an important success factor for this strategy.

While affordable housing and transportation for the region's workforce is a top priority for the Workforce Strategy, it is recognized that much work has been directed at this challenge through the community's Affordable Housing Committee.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

OCEANSIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



solving the oceanside labour crisis

"We need affordable housing and proper training by employers to help grow in the community."

An Oceanside job-seeker

The key tactic for achieving this goal is to influence the Affordable Housing Committee and broader community, including government agencies to address this problem in an effective and timely manner. The Workforce Strategy Steering Committee provides its recommendations in Appendix 6 of this report, including tactics for improving transportation, pursuing higher density housing, encouraging non-market co-operative housing, innovative staff housing policies, etc.

An immediate action will be to advocate for access to funding from the Provincial Transit Plan to develop a commuter bus service between Nanaimo and Oceanside communities, much like the \$4.3 million recently approved for a Victoria-Cowichan Valley ("Malahat") commuter service. Developing this strategy will include learning how other communities (e.g. Squamish-Whistler-Pemberton) have tackled this issue.

The other tactic for this goal is to ensure housing strategies are strategically connected to human resource strategies in this Workforce Development Strategy.

Other non-HR infrastructure and social capacities also need to be improved in the region, including transportation (especially in outlying areas), daycare and immigrant settlement.

GOAL 1: BRAND AND MARKET OCEANSIDE AND ITS EMPLOYERS AS A LOCATION AND WORKSITE OF CHOICE.

Branding and marketing the region as an "employer (region) of choice" for workers and professionals is a major priority of this Workforce Development Strategy. This will build heavily on the work of tourism branding in the region, and highlight such attractions as nature, beach, quality of life, affordability, central hub.

Many Oceanside companies are very successful at product branding. This strategy will build on this to establish employment branding among the region's employers and industries.

The main strategy will be to develop and implement a Workforce branding strategy through a partnership between Oceanside Tourism Association, Chambers of Commerce, government agencies, Vancouver Island University, School District 69, service providers, and employers and unions.

It will be important that a Strategy leadership body and appropriate funding are confirmed before beginning aggressive employment branding and marketing.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

Developing a Workforce Branding Strategy will involve:

1. Defining and marketing the general Oceanside brand in terms of quality of life, etc., mentioned above.
2. Identifying the potential workers that Oceanside employers want to attract to the region (see Goal 4).
3. Defining and marketing the Oceanside employment brand, promoting employers and industries (e.g., Oceanside “STAR” employers) through training and certification.

Implementation of this goal will involve existing agencies such as LINX BC, Chambers of Commerce, Oceanside Tourism Association, Parksville and Qualicum local governments, as well as cooperation with other communities on Vancouver Island and province-wide.

Oceanside will develop its own “employer of choice” brand for the region, and provide training programs for owners, executive, managers and supervisors to acquire innovative people practice competencies. Individuals and companies who meet certification requirements will receive a highly visible credential, a “good housekeeping” stamp of approval.

Simultaneous to developing the branding strategy, funding sources will be explored (e.g., governments, Island Coastal Economic Trust, corporations, etc.) to resource the implementation of the strategy.

The Oceanside region will also increase its participation in and profile at regional, provincial, national and international recruiting, career and hiring fairs and missions. There are opportunities to pool resources and leverage provincial and federal government and industry association missions to recruit beyond the Oceanside community.

GOAL 2: MAKE TOOLS AND SUPPORTS AVAILABLE TO SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED BUSINESS TO FACILITATE INNOVATIVE PEOPLE PRACTICES.

Small and many medium-sized enterprises in the region do not have HR departments or the knowledge/time/resources to plan and execute strategies and programs for recruiting, retaining and training needed for workers in the region.

A key critical success factor for achieving this goal will be using existing agencies to engage employers; and to differentiate between short-term and long-term strategies and results.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

Strategies to build Oceanside small business capacity to innovatively manage HR strategies will include the following:

1. Employer education, awareness-building and information dissemination:

- HR practices
- Websites
- Free distribution of materials
- HR toolkits
- Information on mentors, job coaches and other professionals
- Exploit web-based services and information provision

2. Providing a “virtual HR Department” for Oceanside small businesses:

- Developing and making available small business HR tools
- Literature review of existing HR tool kits, other tools and resources, etc.
- Solicit mentors/job coaches
- Compile listing of community resources
- Engage employers
- Application/screening/interviewing services for employers

“The prices of everything are going up but wages are not or only slightly.”

An Oceanside job-seeker

3. Developing and administering a central information and “matching” resource:

- Develop resource for matching employers and job-seekers
- One-stop online information source
- Link employers to other resources and websites

4. Developing and administering an employer of choice training and certification program:

- Development of training curriculum (build on existing resources)
- Market and promote the program
- Flexible delivery of training modules
- Simple certification process
- Highly visible certification brand

An immediate action will be to create an online resume-posting service/databank for employers to source workers.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

GOAL 3: ATTRACT AND RECRUIT ALL AVAILABLE SOURCES OF UNDER-UTILIZED HUMAN RESOURCES

Tens of thousands of British Columbians are unemployed or underemployed. Many of these labour force participants are motivated, have formal education and training, and possess core skills and other talents. However, members of many labour force groups are under-represented in several industries, professions and communities throughout BC.

This Workforce Development Strategy will prioritize and target the following labour force groups according to four categories:

1. Individuals from the general labour force in Oceanside or within reasonable commuting distance from Oceanside.
2. Target specific demographic groups with tailored messaging in Oceanside or within reasonable commuting distance – particularly mature workers (45+), seniors (65+), immigrants (existing and new), persons with disabilities, women (i.e., those with school-age children or re-entering the workforce), and international students.
3. Recruit workers from other parts of BC and Canada, leveraging government and industry association missions.
4. Recruit from other groups such as Aboriginal people, temporary foreign workers, etc.

The top three strategies or actions will be to:

1. Conduct research and a public forum targeting the needs and wants of local workers. This action should target not only the under-utilized workers identified in the strategy, but also the general public – especially those who commute from this region to Nanaimo, Port Alberni, and the Comox Valley.
2. Address overall transportation issues and ensure that the strategy includes solutions for those with accessibility and financial challenges.
3. Express local issues pertaining to the “prevailing wage rate” aspect of the temporary foreign worker program.

The key critical success factors in implementing these strategies will be:

1. Engagement and coordination of local employment services;
2. Provide research/forum results in an easy to understand format so employers can make the most of its findings;

solving the oceanside labour crisis

3. Active engagement with other Vancouver Island communities to develop regional ties and economies of scale; and,
4. Redirect employment services and labour market funds from the current supply focus (unemployed people) to the demand side (employers).

Other actions will include:

- To deliver educational workshops for employers, older workers and seniors on how to retain and recruit this part of the workforce; and to increase and expand hiring fairs in Oceanside.
- To work with local employers and go2 (a tourism HR agency) to develop a tool for helping Oceanside companies recruit temporary foreign workers and students (i.e., Working Holiday Program), immigrants and international students.
- To form a partnership with the City of Parksville, the Career Centre and immigrant service organizations to promote Oceanside as a regional destination for immigrants already in Canada.

A Comprehensive Immigrant Approach

- Recruiting permanent immigrants:
 - Skilled Worker category
 - Provincial Nominee Program
 - Recruitment missions
 - Recruiting temporary foreign workers:
 - Foreign Worker Program
 - Working Holiday Program
 - Student Working Holiday Program
 - Better utilization of existing immigrants:
 - Foreign credential recognition
 - Mentoring and work experience
 - ESL and Bridging programs
- Government programs
•Industry associations
•Immigrant groups

Attraction, recruitment and retention strategies will be developed to tap all possible labour pools. Strategies and tactics will include:

- ❖ Building relationships with groups and supporting agencies:
 - Economic Development Partnership
 - Co-ordinate relationship building
 - Develop regular stakeholder meetings with the object of workforce development
 - Meeting space – monthly
 - Mandate through terms of reference
 - Promote the region at Career Fairs and Hiring Fairs
 - Encourage development of support organizations and networks for persons with disabilities, aboriginals, ethnic cultures and immigration settlement
- ❖ Educate employers via, for example:
 - Employer forums
 - Existing resource materials

solving the oceanside labour crisis

- Newspaper articles
- Showcasing success stories
- Reverse trade shows
- Partnership with local media
- Workshops on Labour Market Opinion development for recruiting temporary foreign workers

GOAL 4: ENSURE EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS NEEDED BY OCEANSIDE EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES ARE AVAILABLE, ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE AND FLEXIBLE.

The region's employers and new and existing employees need easy access to flexible and relevant education and training programs. The competitive advantage of businesses is crucially dependent upon the relevance of training and jurisdictions with rich employer-education linkages often excel in the domestic and international markets.

This strategy will promote education-employer partnerships and will advocate for the establishment of an Education Advisory Council of employers to advise Malaspina University_College, School District 69, and private trainers on curriculum and program delivery. It could also include sector advisory committees in the areas of current shortages and projected high-growth occupations such as construction trades, transport and equipment operators, hospitality and recreational workers and health professions.

An immediate action will be for Vancouver Island University, School District 69 and the Career Centre to partner on a workshop to promote awareness of employment-related training and education programs in the region for employers.

Other shorter-term actions will include:

- Surveying employers and employees on their specific education and training needs that are not being met;
- Researching education and training that can be delivered on-line and via distance education;
- Developing an inventory or calendar of small business-related education and training courses, where and when they are offered, etc.;
- Providing education opportunities for employers on how to be an "employer of choice."

"Having to fork out money for various certificates (e.g., Food Safe, WHMIS, etc.) before you even start making money is a challenge."

An Oceanside job-seeker

Also, as part of Goal 3, the tool kit, virtual HR Department and other resources will help small businesses develop their workplace-based training capacity, and therefore contribute to this long-term goal.

6. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

A successful Workforce Development Strategy requires a well thought out feasible and sustainable plan that addresses the following implementation issues:

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

A regional Workforce Development Strategy needs to be led and championed by an appropriate local organization. It could be an individual organization, a partnership of more than one, or a task force or council. The Steering Committee that oversaw the development of this strategy will make recommendations to the sponsor of this project, the City of Parksville. Many stakeholders have identified the Career Centre and – to a lesser extent – the City of Parksville as candidates for leading the implementation of this Strategy.

The first step will be to form an Implementation Task Force composed of Steering Committee members and other community leaders who have expressed an interest in being involved in the implementation.

MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION

Whether part of the leadership entity or not, one or more people need to be assigned the primary responsibility for managing this strategy and coordinating the various parts of it with others. Before this Strategy is implemented the Steering Committee's and Task Force's first priority will be to secure resources to support a half or full-time Strategy Manager/Coordinator.

RESOURCES

Various federal and provincial government programs provide resources for specific tactics of this strategy. Initially, seed funding will be sought in order to establish a leadership organization and a staff resource. Once in place, these entities will pursue funding for specific components of the strategy. As part of the roll out of the strategy, employers and agencies will be expected to contribute in-kind and cash to specific projects and programs that benefit them and their workers.

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships will be a key part of the leadership of this strategy, as well as of coordinating and resourcing it. Partnerships will be pursued between the leadership organization and local governments, provincial and federal governments, educators, trainers, other service providers, industry and business associations, Chambers of Commerce, local businesses and other major employers, and community groups.

Partnership opportunities that will be pursued are identified within the previous section associated with each goal of this Strategy.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

TIMELINES

Once an Implementation Task Force is formed and meets, the first priority will be to establish a leadership organization and funding for a staff person to manage this strategy. It is anticipated this will be done during the summer. During this period a detailed implementation plan will be prepared. By fall 2008, it is anticipated that parts of the strategy will start to be implemented as project and program-based funding is secured. This does not mean opportunities to pursue any of the goals or implement any of the strategies will be ignored in the meantime – the Steering Committee, project sponsors and the new Implementation Task Force will take action of specific elements of this Strategy before if necessary and appropriate.

PRIORITIES

In addition to getting a leadership organization and a manager in place, the top priorities will be to develop the Oceanside employment branding and marketing strategy, to pursue strategies to retain existing workers, to start recruiting key target markets, and to start helping small businesses with their HR challenges.

The initial implementation priority tasks – the leadership entity and timelines with a more detailed implementation plan will be completed as resources are secured.

LINKAGES

There are a number of other regional workforce development initiatives (i.e. Vancouver Island Economic Alliance, Regional Skills Councils, etc.), and it will be important for this strategy to be linked with these other activities in order to minimize duplication and leverage resources and synergies. For example, important linkages will include working with VIEA on its immigrant integration strategy.

Oceanside needs its own targeted workforce development strategy – the first priority will be to get this in place, establish momentum, and reach out to other regions and structures as this is happening.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Steering Committee Membership List

Appendix 2 – Employer Interview Findings

Appendix 3 – February 4, 2008 Stakeholder Planning Session

Appendix 4 – June 3, 2008 Stakeholder Workforce Development Strategy Session

Appendix 5 – Workforce Development Strategy Survey Responses

Appendix 6 – Affordable Housing Recommendations

solving the oceanside labour crisis

APPENDIX 1 – STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP LIST

Cyndy Ireland Bresden, Career Centre

Debbie Fehr, Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance

Anita LaHue, Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance

Sean Mckierahan, School District 69

Laurie Sagle, Tigh-Na-Mara

Blain Sepos, Oceanside Tourism

Dennis Silvestrone, Malaspina University College

Douglas Smith, City of Parksville

APPENDIX 2 – EMPLOYER INTERVIEW FINDINGS

BACKGROUND

Human Capital Strategies conducted interviews with 19 key employers identified in Parksville and the surrounding area. Each half hour interview focused on current and future labour market needs; explored sources of labour; and discussed the support systems required to assist employers in meeting labour requirements. Key findings are presented here along with a summary of significant details.

KEY FINDINGS

- 60% of employers have open positions they are finding difficulty filling
- The older demographic of the region is perceived as a challenge for employers
- Sales and service occupations present the largest quantifiable shortage
- Perceived reasons for skills shortage:
 - the size of the labour pool
 - competition for skilled workers
 - the increased challenge to fill “less desirable” occupations when so many alternate employment options exist
 - real or perceived shortcomings of the community identity or infrastructure
- Half of employers are experiencing retention challenges
- One-third of employers have difficulties meeting education or training needs
- Three-quarters of employers anticipate an increasing labour demand with 10% of those interviewed expecting an increase of more than 50%
- Most employers have tried recruiting outside the Vancouver Island labour pool with little or no success
- Employers would like to see:
 - Young families attracted to live and work in the area
 - Affordable housing in the area for lower income employees
 - educators and employers establish stronger ties

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Basic Information

A list of interview subjects appears in Appendix 2. The employers we interviewed represent a broad cross-section of industries. Employers in the following industry categories were interviewed:

- Accommodation and Food Services
- Administrative and Support, Waste Management and Remediation Services
- Construction
- Educational Services

solving the oceanside labour crisis

- Finance and Insurance
- Health Care and Social Assistance
- Information and Cultural Industries
- Management of Companies and Enterprises
- Professional, Scientific and Technical Services
- Public Administration
- Real Estate and Rental and Leasing
- Retail Trade
- Transportation and Warehousing

Most industries are represented by an interview with a single employer. Employers were open to sharing their information and almost all expressed concern about the current and developing labour market shortage during the interview. Collectively, the employers that were interviewed employ⁵ 1569 full time staff, 803 part time staff, 321 contract, casual and temporary workers and 78 seasonal hires. Two-thirds of the employers we interviewed had a moderate to small staffing compliment of less than 40 employees. It is also noteworthy that a couple of the larger employers considered the Parksville region as a very small subset of their operation. In one extreme example of this, the employer viewed the 8 full-time staff in the region as representing less than one percent of its staffing complement on Vancouver Island.

Current Needs - Vacancies

Employers collectively indicated an immediate need to fill 125 full time and 15 part time positions in the Parksville-Qualicum region. Roughly 45% (9) of the employers interviewed indicated that they have no open positions at present but it is important to note that of these, several employers indicated that while they had no current vacancies, they had recently addressed a long standing labour shortage by adjusting their entry level wage or utilizing more aggressive recruiting techniques. One employer found offering a \$100 bonus to employees who found someone to hire much more effective than other recruiting techniques.

The current vacancies identified by employers cross a wide range of occupational categories, but two aspects of these positions stand out. Most were either entry level positions, or occupations requiring specialized experience or skills. With the exception of one employer intending to bring in expertise from international sources to acquire employees with specialized skills as structural steel detailers, most vacancies (roughly 25%) are in sales and service occupations. There is only one vacancy indicated as an assistant management position. The occupation categories of these open positions are listed here in order of reducing magnitude.

⁵ Information from VIHA is not region specific enough to include. More detailed information is being sought.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

1. Natural And Applied Sciences And Related Occupations
2. Sales And Service Occupations
3. Health Occupations
4. Occupations In Social Science, Education, Government Service And Religion
5. Trades, Transport And Equipment Operators And Related Occupations
6. Business, Finance And Administration Occupations
7. Management Occupations

Many ideas were put forth by interviewees as reasons these vacancies have been challenging to fill. The observations fall into four main groupings: the size of the labour pool; competition for skilled workers; the increased challenge to fill "less desirable" occupations when so many alternate employment options exist; and, real or perceived shortcomings of the community identity or infrastructure. The reasons offered are paraphrased here and grouped into these four categories:

Small Labour Pool with Skewed Demographics

- Inadequate labour pool
- Limited pool of young people to draw from
- Low experience among applicants or lack of qualified applicants
- Youth don't have the skills, mature people not interested the work
- Labour shortage, too much work, labour pool too small
- Not enough specialized skills in the labour pool (i.e. education assistants, meat-cutters, carpenters, truck drivers)

Competition for Skilled Individuals

- Large projects in the Lower Mainland and Alberta are competing for skilled labour
- Employers can't compete with remuneration offered in Vancouver or Toronto

Challenging Positions to Fill in an Environment of Choice for Prospective Employees

- Low paying positions
- Physical work
- Too many more attractive job choices for candidates
- Casual work is less attractive when full-time work is available elsewhere
- Prospective employees won't chose to train as a drywall installer or roofer when they can find an electrician or carpenter apprenticeship

Community Identity and Infrastructure

- Lack of affordable housing in the region

solving the oceanside labour crisis

- Poor public transportation
- Not attracting young families (i.e., cancellation of annual bonfire and fireworks display)

One employer indicated the demographic of the region presented an opportunity to draw from a mature, skilled workforce interested in casual or part-time positions which had helped address the shortage. This was not an opinion expressed by employers in other industries commenting on the demographics of the region. Overwhelmingly, employers indicated that the mature demographics of the region is a hurdle to filling open positions and that the lack of youth in the labour market posed a significant challenge. Several employers mentioned that a lack of affordable housing and perception of the community as a 'retirement community' was a factor contributing to the labour shortage.

Current Needs - Retention

Issues similar to those identified as reasons that it was difficult to fill open positions were flagged when exploring employee retention. This retention issue was highlighted by the same groups of employers needing entry level and specialized skill workers. Slightly more than half (10 of 19) of the employers indicated that they faced retention challenges.

Retention difficulties were attributed to:

- The mobility of contractors moving from job to job according to the pay and nature of the work
- Individuals able to be selective when seeking employment
- Employers facing salary competition from one another
- Younger employees easily attracted away
- Employees commuting from Nanaimo find employment closer to home

One employer observed that employers are cycling through the same skilled trades people who are moving from job to job according to the pay and nature of the work as employers outbid one another for their skills. Another employer expressed frustration that within the first three months of employment, employees can easily be attracted by more money elsewhere. This presents a considerable drain on the employer who must repeatedly invest in training for new hires.

Current Needs - Education

Roughly one-third (6 of 19) of the employers interviewed indicated that they had education or training needs that are difficult to meet. The challenges were associated with new hires and often these were smaller businesses. The expense and time commitment was stressed as a burden as well. Several employers identified retail skills including basic computer, interpersonal and food handling as training needs. A couple of employers identified shortcomings with apprenticeship as their primary concern. One employer suggested that he hadn't taken on an apprentice for quite some time because they often leave

solving the oceanside labour crisis

after receiving their training. There were also specific comments from individual employers that there aren't enough Registered Nurses, Meat-cutters or Bakers being trained or that training in high-level programming or graphic design is needed.

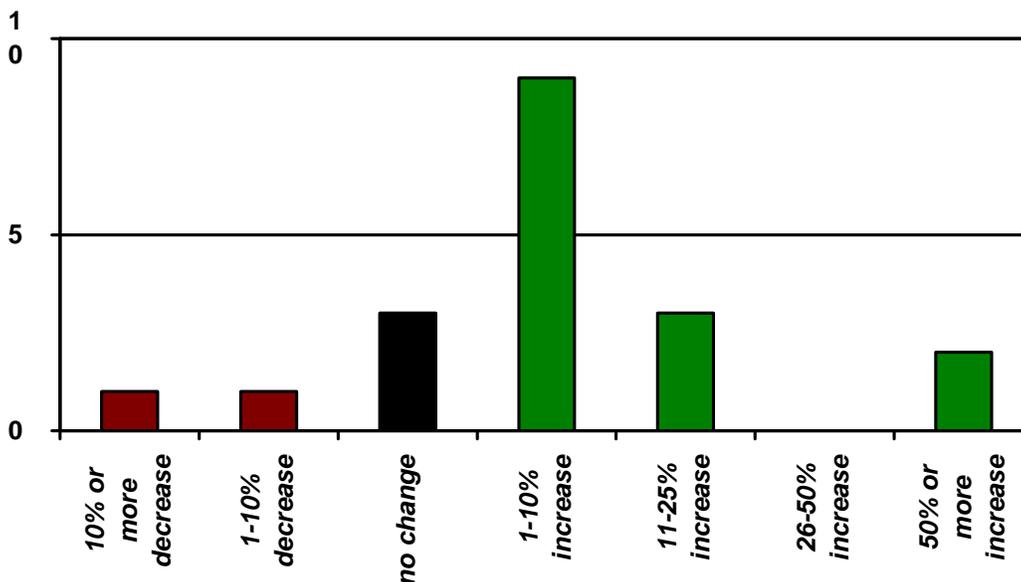
Of the two-thirds of employers indicating that training and education wasn't a concern, almost half of those are larger businesses and indicated that training needs were met internally.

Fifteen of the employers interviewed make training funds available for employees. In most cases 100% of training costs related to the position is covered. Supplementary training was reimbursed in different ways by employers. Eight employers indicated only paying for training related directly to the position. Seven employers offer access to training funds on an individual basis and up to a maximum amount which ranged from \$500 to \$1000.

Future Needs

Employers were asked to estimate what trend in labour requirements they would expect in the next 3 to 5 years. Only two employers projected a decrease. Most projected an increase with two employers projecting an increase of 50% or more.

Employer Labour Market Demand Projections



The projected growth is attributed to growth in the industry and not currently operating fully staffed. It is anticipated to impact all of an employer's occupational categories. In education, significant roll-over is

solving the oceanside labour crisis

expected due to retirements. Specific occupations mentioned include: health-care providers, housekeepers, engineers, draftsmen, technicians, front-line storefront services.

The employer who projected a decrease of more than 10% attributed this to the business being tied to the forestry industry. This particular employer has already seen a 25% reduction in work over the past six years. Others projecting a decrease or stability suggest that it must level off since people can't pay the high prices which are being driven by the problem and market forces may equalize the situation.

The two employers projecting an increase of more than 50% in labour requirements offered specific details about their projection. One employer is planning to hire between 30 and 40 foreign workers with specialist qualifications as structural steel detailers and has been pre-approved by HRSDC to do so. The other represents only a small number of hires and attributes the projection to an evolution of the business model which will require an increase in the number of administrative assistants.

Sources of Labour

When asked about sources of labour employers need to tap, interviewees suggested:

- Seniors market (but difficult for physically demanding jobs)
- Utilizing headhunters
- Job-bank, advertising on the internet
- Under utilized segments of the labour force
- Mature workers / encourage more young people to establish on the island
- International migrants
- Immigration of younger working families
- Become more attractive as employers
- College students
- College graduates
- Co-op programs
- Target those right out of high school and mid 30s career change people
- Young people needed
- Retired and semi-retired individuals
- Provide incentives for support staff to stay on past retirement age
- Community career fairs
- Improved linkage with college

Fourteen employers have undertaken domestic recruiting outside of Vancouver Island including BC, Alberta, Manitoba and Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton and Toronto. Several of these found the experience futile, never successful and a "waste of money".

solving the oceanside labour crisis

Six employers have recruited internationally and two more would consider it in the future. The international recruitment experiences are described as onerous with too many hurdles and an unrealistic burden for employers. One employer commented that the hourly rate set by government for the region is too high (higher than other areas in BC). Only one employer indicated that the process is finally working well and now describes it as “an effective way to hire qualified senior staff”. This particular employer has invested two full time staff in the process over a number of years and is just now reaping the benefits as an employer pre-approved by HRSDC for hiring internationally.

Employers identify several things that they felt would help with recruiting:

- Affordable housing
- Establish networks
- Consider using headhunter services
- Provide easy access to posting job sites like career centre in Parksville and tap into these sites provincially and inter-provincially
- Make it easier to recruit qualified workers from Europe
- Speed up HRSDC process for hiring internationally
- Help bringing in immigrants
- Wage subsidies to hire apprentices and simpler process for employer
- Attract more and younger people to the area
- More seats in college programs
- Figure out what entry-level candidates want and improve communication about opportunities
- Try to bring more people through the Career Centre by going out to connect with prospective employees from EI, high schools and the college

When asked about traditionally underutilized segments of the labour market (Aboriginal people, Women, Persons with disabilities, Immigrants, Youth, Mature Workers) most employers admitted that they haven't specifically targeted these groups. Some employers had targeted mature workers or aboriginal groups with positive results. All employers indicated that they would welcome information about how to recruit from these groups effectively. Communicating services already in place may be what's required. A couple of employers suggested wage subsidies would help.

Government and Other Supports

Employers identified several things that governments could do to help employers meet labour requirements

- Continue to simplify immigration and streamline the HRSDC process for hiring internationally
- Allow international students to stay longer
- Provide assistance for lower income housing and create affordable housing
- Put more money into training and offer incentives for candidates to take training employers require

solving the oceanside labour crisis

- Get the word out that the area is a good place to raise a family and combat the perception of non-permanence that employees may have about working in the region
- Introduce non-bureaucratic funding supports and simplify existing support systems (i.e., Maternity leave)
- Lower tax burden
- Improve and simplify apprenticeship program. Consider a declining scale wage subsidy (i.e., 50% yr1, 35%yr2, 25% yr3)
- Establish a long-term population mix plan to avoid an older population demographic
- Make BC more attractive than Alberta (taxation)
- Introduce flexibility around retirement, pensions, and provide incentives to remain in the workforce
- Provide bridging programs to support p/t to f/t transition as most employees are looking for f/t employment
- Communicate funding opportunities

Employers identified several things that educators and trainers could do to help employers meet labour requirements:

- Establish a stronger link with employers
 - Assess requirements for training in partnership with employers to ensure employer training needs are incorporated into programs
 - Let employers know when courses are finishing
 - Provide practicum opportunities for students within programs, promote co-op programs
 - Take initiative to approach and link with businesses
 - Partner with employers during the first 2 months of employment (hire, train, work)
- Identify most critical skills and find ways to offer business programs in a format palatable to small business operator
- Bring skills training to the workplace with e-learning
- Work with government to find innovative ways to get skills programs into workplace
- Develop programs that are more responsive to industry rather than a "jack of all trades" approach
- Provide training for customer service skills, aesthetics, meat cutter, baker, basic retail skills, grocery specific skills
- Bring pride to entry-level jobs and career paths, change perceptions and extend awareness to service roles
- Malaspina great, perhaps re-tool programs to employer targeted areas
- Re-introduce high school work experience programs (i.e., Computer drafting)
- At school level (gr. 10,11,12) stream to physical careers or not

solving the oceanside labour crisis

Employers identified several things that business associations and community groups could do to help employers meet labour requirements:

- Market Parksville-Qualicum as a place to live and work
- Work cooperatively and focus on the big issues (housing)
- Networking with technical associations in the Lower Mainland
- Open communication
- Be active in offering scholarships and encourage young people to get into trades
- Not poaching employees from each other, have respect for one another's employees
- Encourage employee friendly work environments (job sharing, etc.) to attract people from other areas
- Support and participate in co-op programs
- Collaborate to market opportunities and identify considerations specific to the community and specific to the Island
- Improve coordination across communities (Labour Market Survey)
- Support career fairs

Other Comments

"Help! It's going to get worse and it's harder on small businesses."

"It will get worse before it gets better so do something now. What is challenging now may become critical."

"Construction is far more complex than it ever was and we need qualified people to do the work (i.e., Rainscreen construction)"

"It's good that the region is doing this."

"Ladies at the Career Centre are extremely helpful."

"The best workers are the ones with young children."

"A missing link is to find ways to bring more job seekers through the Career Centre."

"Health and Construction LM needs are promoted broadly – what about other occupations!?"

IMPLICATIONS FOR A WORKFORCE STRATEGY

A workforce strategy for the Parksville-Qualicum region would benefit from an understanding of the demographic profile of the region and the associated implications for employers. Exerting an influence over the demographics of the region by encouraging young families to settle in the area may be helpful. It would also be valuable to support affordable living for potential employees of lower wage positions who require access to affordable accommodations and transportation services. Finding ways to introduce or encourage the development of low cost housing options and ensure an effective public transportation network could remove barriers to their presence in the region.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

Building capacity locally and drawing from the Vancouver Island labour pool is a primary interest of employers facing significant shortages.

Forging stronger partnerships between employers and educational service providers in the region at both high school and post-secondary institutions could help address the labour challenge in two ways: by linking entry level prospective employees with employers, and by ensuring that training programs are refined to develop skills which address the training needs of the region's employers.

The findings of these interviews of area employers clearly identify the workforce challenges facing businesses and their skill requirements. They also provide evidence of the types of assistance, supports, tools, information, training and employment programs and services needed to address business needs to survive, expand and prosper. These will be used and explored further during the development of an area workforce strategy.

More specific implications from the interview findings will be confirmed during the actual building and drafting of the workforce strategy.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

Interview Questions

A. BASIC INFORMATION

1. Confirm employer and contact name, title, contact information, etc.
2. Confirm employer industry sector and main business activity(ies)
3. How many employees do you currently have?
Full time ____ Part time ____ Seasonal ____
4. Do you have any contract workers? If so, how many ____
Are these contract workers included in the above employee numbers?

B. CURRENT NEEDS

1. Do you currently have any vacancies that you cannot fill or are very difficult to fill? If so:
How many ____
What occupational categories?
What is/are the reason(s) for these hard to fill vacancies?
2. Do you have difficulty in retaining any types of workers? If so:
What occupational categories
What is/are the reason(s) for these retention difficulties
3. Do you have education or training needs that are difficult to meet? If so:
What occupational categories
Are these difficulties in training existing employees, new ones, or both?
What is/are the reason(s) for the difficulty in meeting training needs
4. Do you provide training or make funds available to employees for training?
What type of training is provided / funded?

C. FUTURE NEEDS

1. What trend in labour requirements do you expect in the next 3 to 5 years?
To increase over your current level by more than 50%
To increase by 26-50%
To increase by 11-25%
To increase by 1-10%
To stay the same
To decrease by 1-10%
To decrease by more than 10%
2. What are the reasons for this anticipated change or no change in labour requirements?
3. In what occupations or skill sets do you expect great or less demand?

D. SOURCES OF LABOUR

1. What sources of labour do you think you and other employers need to tap?
2. Have you done or will you undertake:
Domestic recruiting outside of Vancouver Island (where)
International recruiting
3. What assistance would help with recruiting in general?
4. What assistance would help you recruit labour among:
Aboriginal people Women Persons with disabilities Immigrants
Youth Mature Workers Others (specify)

E. GOVERNMENT AND OTHER SUPPORTS

1. What do governments need to do to help you and other employers with meeting labour requirements?
2. What should educators and trainers do to help you?
3. What should business associations and community groups do?

solving the oceanside labour crisis

APPENDIX 3 – FEBRUARY 4, 2008 STAKEHOLDER PLANNING SESSION

Oceanside Workforce Strategy Planning Session

**9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., February 4, 2008
Parksville, BC**

PLANNING SESSION SUMMARY

PARTICIPANTS

Present

Sue Abermann, Stanford Place
Norman Atwell, Triumph
Jackqueline Behrens, Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance (*Committee Member*)
Tony Bellavia, Malaspina University College (alternate for Dennis)
Cori Lynn Carlson, Vancouver Island Economic Alliance
Peter Doukakis, Parksville Chamber of Commerce
Bruno Dragani, Coastal Community Credit Union
Lee Grannon, Detailed Design Drafting Services
Cyndy Ireland Bresden, Career Centre (*Committee Member*)
Michelle Jones, Oceanside Development and Construction Association
Mike Klassen, The Whole Show Restorations
Anita laHue, Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance (*Committee Alternate*)
Nanette Longo, Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society
Ellen Mahoney, Vancouver Island Health Authority
Lilian Mayne, Tim Horton's
Sean Mckierahan, School District 69 (*Committee Member*)
Ann Norris, Global Vocational Services
Blain Sepos, Oceanside Tourism (*Committee Member*)
Dennis Silvestrone, Malaspina University College (a.m. only) (*Committee Member*)
Carol Strynadka, Parksville & District Association for Community Living
Laurie Taylor, City of Parksville (*Project Sponsor*)
Sherree Walter, Community Futures of Central Island

Consultants

Kerry Jothen, Human Capital Strategies (Facilitator)
Dr. Har Singh, Spark Group

Regrets

Kate Ferland, Nanaimo Economic Development Office

solving the oceanside labour crisis

1. INTRODUCTIONS AND WELCOME

Cyndy Ireland Bresden, Executive Director of the Career Centre and Chair of the Parksville Labour Market Project, welcomed and thanked participants for attending

Laurie Taylor, Director of Administrative Services, City of Parksville, welcomed participants on behalf of the City, the project sponsor.

2. PLANNING SESSION PURPOSE

- To brainstorm, discuss and agree on the start of a framework and key strategies for an Oceanside Workforce Strategy.
- To discuss how to engage the broader community in the next steps towards completing the development of the Workforce Strategy.

3. INTENDED PLANNING SESSION OUTCOMES

- A clear sense of key workforce issues facing the Oceanside economy and employers
- Draft Vision, Values and Strategic Goals
- General stakeholder alignment on a Strategic Direction
- Start to define needed workforce strategies
- A clear sense of next steps to completing a Workforce Strategy

4. PARTICIPANT EXPECTATIONS

Participants were asked, “What is the most important thing for you to leave today’s session with?” Responses were:

- Fully understand the needs so that we can see what we can contribute
- Initiatives for foreign workers (local and beyond) what can be done
- Initiatives for attraction of skilled workers
- Increase aligning post-secondary education and training with HR needs in region
- Light at the end of the tunnel for tourism and hospitality
- Better understanding of needs of employers too target wage subsidies
- Increased inclusion of persons with disabilities
- What’s happening in our labour force in Oceanside? (project our K-12 enrolment)
- A business perspective on our needs
- Insight for future forecast of the labour market so we can align ourselves to it
- Answers for employers on our plan
- Strategic direction and next steps
- Confidence that the strategy will meet our needs
- Identify champions for certain parts of it
- Identify Oceanside's needs and identify partnerships with other parts of the island
- Opportunities for bridge and open doors for immigrants
- Look from perspective of all 4 generations’ expectations

solving the oceanside labour crisis

- What can we do that is innovative and differentiate us from others?
- Working collaboratively with other regions/communities, partnerships?
- What is the economic strategy? City of Parksville's is the only one.

5. PARKING LOT

Throughout the planning session, the following topics were added to the Parking Lot flipchart page:

- Branding
- Live-work balance
- Parksville Economic Plan – send out with planning session summary
- Promote year-around opportunities
- Collaboration as a recruitment tool
- Flexibility – how employers can be appropriately flexible
- “Oceanside Works” as a motto or brand slogan

5. KEY WORKFORCE ISSUES – AFFINITY DIAGRAM EXERCISE

Participants were asked, “What are the most important workforce challenges facing Oceanside employers and the economy over the next few years?” Their responses revolved around the following themes

- Un/undertapped labour
- Employer responsiveness
- Transportation
- Aging demographics
- Attraction
- Retention
- Employer competitiveness
- Affordable worker housing
- Relevant skills and education

The participants also considered and discussed Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats summarized by the consultants:

<i>STRENGTHS</i>	<i>WEAKNESSES</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community leadership• Attractive community/quality of life with which to draw people from outside• Knowledge-based companies• Growth in new construction• Growing much faster than overall province (by two-and-a-half times)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Few visible minorities, immigrants and Aboriginal people, and lack of track record of recruiting from these pools• Small businesses with little HR capacity• Second highest elderly dependence ration among all school districts in

solving the oceanside labour crisis

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong employment demand Build on best practices and resources in other regions Other? 	<p style="text-align: center;">BC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labour force participation rate is substantially lower than rest of province Relatively low proportion of young people Affordable housing Adequate transportation Other?
<p><i>OPPORTUNITIES</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Teachable moment” – businesses are ready to listen, need help on labour issues Partnerships within the region Partnerships with other communities Provincial sector strategies Incentives (e.g. training tax credits) Other? 	<p><i>THREATS</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competition from other regions If tourism declines If interprovincial and/or intraprovincial in-migration decline If the energy sector and related mega projects in Western Canada accelerate If the US economy slows down or enters recession Other?

6. A STRATEGIC DIRECTION: VISION, VALUES AND STRATEGIC GOALS

Participants were assigned to four small groups and asked to discuss, agree and report on a Vision, Values and Strategic (Long-Term) Goals for an Oceanside Workforce Strategy.

The four groups’ reports follow.

Group 1

Vision

An innovative, diverse and flexible labour market strategy that meets the needs of employers and employees in Oceanside.

Values

- Inclusive
- Innovative
- Balanced
- Collaborative
- Healthy work environment
- Honours diversity

Goals

- Identify affordable housing strategies (and transportation)
- Address needs of youth in relation to employment opportunities (incentives)
- Develop marketing strategy for Oceanside as a place to live and work

solving the oceanside labour crisis

- Assist employers to develop effective recruitment strategies
- Have “buy in” and implement HR practices for small/medium businesses

Group 2

OCEANSIDE WORKS!!!

Vision

The Oceanside area boasts a strong, diverse, sustainable workforce!

Values

- Inclusiveness
- Collaboration
- Partnerships
- Respect
- Support
- Trust
- Growth

Goals

- Community readiness for workforce attraction and retention
 - Affordable housing
 - Transportation
 - Health care
 - Immigrant support services
 - Understanding First Nations culture
 - Understanding disabled workers
 - Mature work force
 - Family attraction strategy
 - Childcare
 - Flexible hours
- Brand the region as a location of choice for workers
 - Innovation
 - Welcoming
 - Partnerships with other regions
 - Finding ways to leverage existing resources
- Education and training of employers and employees
 - Partnerships with SD #69 secondary and post-secondary
 - Incentives for training and re-training for SMEs (small and medium size enterprises)
 - Outreach to businesses “go to business”

Group 3

Vision

We are a community that proactively attracts a diverse, adaptable and flexible workforce which will innovatively create a sustainable economy and social environment.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

Values

- Diversity
- Proactivity
- Adaptability
- Innovative
- Sustainable
- Economic environment
- Social environment
- Openness to change
- Open communication
- Creativity
- Ethical
- Engagement
- Learning culture
- Work/life balance

Goals

- Understanding the “current” state – where are we?
- Understanding the gaps between the current state and the vision
- Community based economic strategy
- Match between employer skill needs and workforce skills
- The Oceanside region will be the region of choice for employers and employees, all year round

Group 4

Vision

Oceanside is:

- A Vibrant, diverse, multi-generational community that is responsive to the region’s economy.
- A Community that offers all the elements of a healthy, prospering lifestyle.
- Has a skilled/passionate workforce that meets the needs of the region's economic growth.

Values

- Vibrant
- Supply = demand
- Future
- Destination/community of choice
- Multi-generational
- Strategic
- Responsive
- Proactive
- Diverse
- Creative
- Appropriate

solving the oceanside labour crisis

- Innovative
- Mutual benefit
- Collaboration
- Healthy work/life balance

Goals

- Workforce strategy that is embraced by employers/government/community
- Settlement support will make community more attractive to immigrants and persons with disabilities
- Local government policy and industry cooperation supports affordable housing
- Transportation options to allow workers to live and work in the communities they choose
- Employers that offer competitive remuneration, healthy workplaces
- Develop employer resources that will support innovation

7. PRIORITIZING THE STRATEGIC GOALS

Participants assigned priority to what they thought were the most important long-term goals by placing “dots” beside four of the goals identified by the four groups.

The top “goal” statements based on this prioritization were (# of DOTS):

- Brand the region as a location of choice for workers (FOURTEEN)
- Assist employers to develop effective recruitment strategies (NINE)
- Local government policy and industry cooperation supports affordable housing (NINE)
- Have “buy in” and implement HR practices for small/medium businesses (EIGHT)
- Community readiness for workforce attraction and retention (EIGHT)
- The Oceanside region will be the region of choice for employers and employees, all year round (SEVEN)
- Develop marketing strategy for Oceanside as a place to live and work (SEVEN)
- Identify affordable housing strategies (and transportation) (FIVE)
- Community based economic strategy (FOUR)
- Education and training of employers and employees (THREE)
- Understanding the “current” state – where are we? (ONE)
- Workforce strategy that is embraced by employers/government/community (ONE)
- Employers that offer competitive remuneration, healthy workplaces (ONE)

Once the overlaps in the above rating of priorities were removed and further discussion ensued, participants ended up with these top four goals:

1. Affordable workforce housing (and other infrastructure if there is time to address)
2. Branding Oceanside and its employers as location/worksites of choice
3. Tools to support small and medium-sized enterprise HR innovation
4. Tapping under-utilized talent pools

8. STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

Each of the four small groups selected one of the four priority goals and were asked to identify specific strategies and actions/tactics for addressing the goal, including timelines, resources and roles if possible.

Group 1 – Affordable Workforce Housing (and Other Infrastructure)

Improve Transportation

- *Tactics*
 - Research commuter strategies for similar size community
 - Car pooling/shuttles (shiftmatching)
 - Bike coop
 - More frequency
 - Improve public transit
 - Utilize E&N
- *Who*
 - Government, employers, public
- *Resources*
 - Marketing expertise, \$, and research

High Density

- *Tactics*
 - More multifamily/townhome
 - Secondary suites
 - Relaxing rural dwelling limit of Agricultural Land Reserve?
 - P3 projects
 - Tax incentives
 - DCC reduction
- *Who*
 - Government, developers, banking
- *Resources*
 - Land, \$, will

Non-market/Coops

- *Tactics*
 - Start society
 - Policy
 - Marketing strategy/info
 - Incentives (tax, DCC, streamline process)
 - ALR
- *Who*

solving the oceanside labour crisis

- Society, government, developers, employers
- *Resources*
 - Land, \$, will, research/best practices

Staff Housing Policy

- Tactics
 - Provision for staff housing in all new resort developments (single, family)
 - Incentives (tax (tiered), DCC, streamline)
 - Rezoning
- Who
 - Resorts, government, developers
- Resources
 - Land, \$, will

Group 2 – Tapping Under-Utilized Talent Pools

1. Recognize/research individual employment needs/interests
 2. Assessment of who and where these people are
 3. Build relationships with representatives of groups and supporting agencies
 4. Educate employers
1. Research/Recognize individual employment needs/interests
 - Older workers
 - Statistics Canada/BC Stats
 - School District
 - Non-Governmental Organizations
 - Focus groups
 - Profile of each group – demographics & where to find
 - 3-5 months – contract Labour Market Partnership (Service Canada)
 2. Assessment of who and where there people are:
 - Immigrants
 - Seniors
 - Persons with disabilities
 - Aboriginal
 - Mature workers
 - Inter-provincial migrants
 - Foreign workers
 - Youth
 3. Build relationships with groups and supporting agencies
 - Economic Development Partnership
 - Co-ordinate relationship building
 - Develop regular stakeholder meetings with the object of workforce development
 - Meeting space – monthly
 - Mandate through terms of reference

solving the oceanside labour crisis

4. Educate employers
 - Employer forums
 - Existing resource materials
 - Newspaper articles
 - Showcasing success stories
 - Reverse trade shows
 - Partnership with local media
 - Career Centre organize trade shows
 - Coordinated and running by September 2008

Group 3 – Branding Oceanside (and employers) as a location of choice

Goal

Brand Oceanside as location of choice for workers year round!

Branding Strategy

- Research
 - What's been done?
 - Where are we at?
 - What do we want to be known for?
 - Who is our audience?
- Identify partnerships
- Develop brand identity

Resources/Involvement

- Oceanside Tourism Association, Chambers of Commerces, Government, Malaspina University College/School District, unions, employers
- Funding sources?
- Government/ICET/Private

Group 4 – SME HR Tools and HR Innovation

Goals

- How do you “educate” employers?
 - HR practices
 - Websites
 - Free distribution of materials
 - HR toolkit
 - Triumph
 - Mentors/job coaches
- Relationships/Resources
 - Increase associations

solving the oceanside labour crisis

- Employers' hot line (pilot)
- Employer network
- Comprehensive information dissemination
 - Identifying their gaps/shortcomings
 - Dispelling myths re: employees

HR Practices

- Literature review of existing HR manuals etc
 - 3 months
- Solicit mentors/job coaches
 - 3-6 months
- Compile listing of resources (Community Futures, Triumph, et al.)
 - 3 months
- Engage employers
 - 3 months

Relationships/Resources

- Identify key contact (e.g. Economic Development Organizations)
 - 2 months

Company Information Distribution

- Workshop on dispelling myths
 - 3-6 months
- Evaluation tool/mentors
 - 3-6 months

9. IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

The facilitator indicated that part of the next steps would be to given consideration to key implementation issues regarding the implementation of an Oceanside Workforce Strategy. There was not enough time at the session to discuss these, for example:

- Governance and leadership
- Management/coordination (on the ground)
- Resources (types of resources needed and sources of resources)
- Partnerships
- Timelines
- Priorities
- Early “wins”
- Roles and responsibilities

solving the oceanside labour crisis

10. NEXT STEPS

Cyndy thanked participants very much for their time and full participation in today's planning session. She thanked Kerry and indicated he would distribute a session summary to all participants. The Steering Committee will meet in the near future to reflect on the outcomes of this session and to meet with the consultants to discuss next steps on developing and consulting on an Oceanside Workforce Strategy.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

APPENDIX 4 – JUNE 3, 2008 WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY SESSION

Solving the Oceanside Labour Crisis: A Workforce Development Strategy

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION MEETING

**8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m., Tuesday, June 3, 2008
Tigh-Na-Mara Seaside Spa Resort and Conference Centre**

- *The Oceanside region is experiencing a labour crisis.*
- *The combination of an aging population, inadequate housing and transportation, few practical tools and resources for small businesses, and the lack of a coordinated strategy for the region are threatening the economic and social well-being of Oceanside.*
- *Without pre-emptive local action, Oceanside's labour crisis will only get worse and will constrain businesses' abilities to sustain themselves or grow. Action is needed now.*

MEETING NOTES:

Thirty-five stakeholder representatives attended this meeting. See appended Participant List (Attachment 1).

1. Opening remarks, Introductions and Purpose

Douglas Smith, Economic Development Officer with the City of Parksville, welcomed participants to the meeting and explained the purpose was to obtain feedback and concrete suggestions for action in the implementation of an Oceanside Workforce Development Strategy.

2. Summary of Workforce Development Strategy

Kerry Jothen, CEO of Human Capital Strategies and consultant on this project provided a Power Point summary of the draft Workforce Development Strategy. His slides are available upon request and the full draft Strategy is available at www.careercentre.org. A revised summary will be provided to participants in the near future.

This presentation included a summary of responses to a web-based questionnaire survey. See Attachment 2 for an updated version of a summary of responses.

Kerry also acknowledged and thanked the project Steering Committee for their work on this initiative:

solving the oceanside labour crisis

- Cyndy Ireland Bresden, Career Centre
- Debbie Fehr, Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance
- Anita LaHue, Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance
- Sean Mckierahan, School District 69
- Laurie Sagle, Tigh-Na-Mara
- Blain Sepos, Oceanside Tourism Association
- Dennis Silvestrone, Vancouver Island University
- Douglas Smith, City of Parksville

3. Brief Round-the-table Reaction to the Strategy

Participants were each asked to provide a brief reaction to the Workforce Development Strategy. The comments are summarized below:

- Need federal and provincial government attention to this issue as a priority for the region
- The key is implementation – need to dedicate someone to implement the strategy in a connected way
- School system – this is the starting point for making students aware of careers
- Who will be responsible for implementation
- Affordable housing, transportation, livable wage are all key
- There will be a half-time settlement worker in the region shortly – need to connect with them on immigrant recruiting
- What do the prospective employees want – ask them
- Which goal should be pursued first, and need to coordinate between the 4 goals and housing
- Linking school leavers with appropriate training and employment, and support/monitor them once they are in the workplace
- Importance of attracting families to the area; retain young people
- Don't implement in isolation – learn from other communities (e.g. Nanaimo "Challenge of Change" meeting)
- Economic drivers and economic supporters – need both
- Use different strategies for attracting different groups of workers from outside the area (each group has different challenges)
- Importance of lessons learned (e.g. look at Alberta)
- The challenge of getting employers to contribute financially to the strategy
- Need to shift from supply side orientation to support demand side needs
- Attraction and retention of young employees – there is nothing for them to do, no "fun places to be"
- Someone needs to take this forward and engage employers
- There is competition for workers all over the Island; need to engage all communities of interest
- Need to keep in mind that 35% of people in the region have less literacy than needed to do daily living tasks
- We are not unique; what makes Oceanside unique – go out and ask (e.g. Meyers, Norris and Penney survey) (note – subsequent speakers disagreed about the lack

solving the oceanside labour crisis

- of uniqueness)
- Employers need to collectively focus on working together on common needs regarding attraction and recruitment
- United we stand – Vancouver Island first – work together on the whole Island (e.g. VIEA), then focus on smaller regions of it
- This strategy needs to be part of a Vancouver Island-wide strategy – pull all resources together
- Higher salaries (than in Victoria/Vancouver) are needed, especially in technical and professional jobs
- Take action, no more talk/study – some group needs to take responsibility to move ahead and work as a community
- Need to balance recruitment of youth, middle aged and seniors – 58% of home owners in the area are over 65, 33% of population is 65+
- Who will provide services (e.g. health care) for the aging population
- Instead of spending money on HR, training and recruiting programs, if this money was spent on higher wages, there would be less of a recruitment and training problem
- Focus more on retention and infrastructure before considering spending money on promotion and recruitment (outside of the area)
- We need a better understanding of what all the groups that serve employers and employees in the area are doing – a database, website, etc.
- Need to focus on retention – you live/work where you have fun
- A challenge for some businesses to pay a “livable wage” – to do so they have to increase product/service price to the extent customers are unhappy and walk
- We need to move forward – we need an Oceanside-specific strategy; we need to look after ourselves first

4. Small Group Discussion: Strategies and Actions to Address the Oceanside Labour Crisis

Participants were organized into 4 pre-assigned groups. Each group was assigned one of the four WDS goals, and were asked to respond to the following questions:

1. Identify the top 3 strategies or actions you think should be taken to address the goal.
2. Identify critical success factors that will contribute to successful implementation of these strategies/actions toward this goal.
3. Provide your recommendations on who should lead the implementation of the Strategy and from where should resources for this be sought.

5. Small Group Reports & Recommendations

Goal 1: Brand and market Oceanside and its employers as a location and worksite of choice.

- Delay implementation and forming of a committee until infrastructure (i.e. housing, transportation, day care) is well in place.
- Form committee/task force

solving the oceanside labour crisis

- Product development – Identify product for 20, 30 and 40 year age groups – what attracts them; rely on surveys in and outside of the community.
- Identify sources of funding.
- Request for proposal.
- Implementation – Existing agencies rather than new ones – LinkBC, chambers, Oceanside Tourism Association, City, as well as cooperation with other communities, Island, province-wide.
- Who – Coordinated effort needed – use Economic Development Office (City).
- Side note – Are we/could we be branded as a training/experience location?

Goal 2: Make available tools and supports to small and medium-sized business to facilitate innovative people practices.

Critical success factor is using existing agencies to engage employers.
Step 1 should be to put in place the foundation.

Implement the following with a short-term/long-term approach:

- An immediate action of the Workforce Development Strategy will be to create an online resume-posting service/ databank for employers to source workers.
- Employer education, awareness-building and information dissemination
- Providing a “virtual HR Department” for Oceanside small businesses
- Developing and administering a central information and “matching” resource
- Developing and administering an employer of choice training and certification program

Goal 3: Attract and recruit all available sources of under-utilized human resources

Top Three Strategies or Actions

1. Conduct research and a public forum targeting the needs and wants of local workers. This action should target not only the under-utilized workers identified in the strategy, but also the general public – especially those who commute from our region to Nanaimo, Port Alberni, and the Comox Valley.
2. Address overall transportation issues and ensure that the strategy includes solutions for those with accessibility and financial challenges.
3. Express local issues pertaining to the “prevailing wage rate” aspect of the temporary foreign worker program.

Critical Success Factors

1. Engagement and coordination of local employment services.
2. Provide research/forum results in an easy to understand format so employers can make the most of its findings.
3. Active engagement with other Vancouver Island communities to develop regional ties and economies of scale.
4. Redirect employment services and labour market funds from the current supply focus (unemployed people) to the demand side (employers).

solving the oceanside labour crisis

Who should implement these strategies?

The Career Centre and ongoing support from the LMP steering committee/other project representation to ensure the strategy remains on track.

Goal 4: Ensure education and training programs needed by Oceanside employers and employees are available, accessible and flexible.

- Career Centre does free services for employers – Expand this; frequency and type of classes; should they be industry-specific?
- Survey – Ask employers what is not being met? Scheduling of seminars.
- Vancouver Island University – attend employer meetings to identify the needs of the local community.
- Research what is on-line (Open Learning).
- Sheet of what educational services are available – where to find training; help with how to obtain grants.
- Gathering of information of what services are available.
- Information for employees as well as employers (Career Centre takes care of employees/job-seekers).
- There is enough education out there but the know-how of how to access needs improving.
- What courses exist in our community – like a phone book (e.g. First Aid, Computer, SuperHost).
- Develop a community calendar for 2009 that will identify training per month on specific dates.
- Time to allow for education and training not always an option for small employers.
- The employer needs to make training a benefit to attract employees.
- Educate employers on how to be an employer of choice.

7. Next Steps and Closing Remarks

Cyndy Ireland Bresden, Executive Director of the Career Centre and chair of the Steering Committee, thanked all participants for their valuable contribution. Cyndy indicated that after today, the Workforce Development Strategy will be updated to reflect the survey feedback and input from today's session, including the small group recommendations. This will be distributed to all participants and other stakeholders. The Steering Committee will also follow up with stakeholders who are interested in participating in/contributing to the implementation of the Strategy, including attempting to address immediate priorities.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

ATTACHMENT 1

Oceanside Workforce Development Strategy Consultation Meeting

June 3, 8:00 – 11:00 a.m.

**Tigh-Na-Mara Seaside Spa Resort and Conference Centre
1155 Resort Drive, Parksville**

Participant List

(in alphabetical order of participant name)

1. Mike Bourcier, Business Coach, Mike Bourcier
2. Cori Lynn Carlson, Vancouver Island Economic Association
3. Gary Child, Pacific Brimm Coffee & Tea Co. and Parksville & District Chamber of Commerce
4. Peter Doukakis, Parksville Chamber of Commerce
5. Janet Dunnett, Community Literacy Facilitator
6. Sharon Erickson, Employment Navigators
7. Debbie Fehr, Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance
8. Ines Gillam, Service Canada, Nanaimo
9. Bernice Hannam, School District #69
10. Marilyn Hutchinson, Nanaimo Economic Development Office
11. Cyndy Ireland Bresden, Career Centre
12. Maryann Janzen, Parksville & District Association for Community Living
13. Michelle Jones, Oceanside Developers and Construction Association
14. Kerry Jothen, Human Capital Strategies
15. Sherry Laidley, Global Vocational Services
16. Marc Lefebvre, Councillor, City of Parksville
17. John Leschyson, go2
18. Nanette Longo, Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society
19. Andy Mackenzie, Service Canada, Nanaimo
20. Brent McKinnon, Coastal Community Credit Union
21. Ronald McLeod, Mid-Island Science, Technology and Innovation Council
22. Joyce Morrison, Career Centre Board of Directors
23. Chrissie Nolan, Triumph
24. Rick Roberts, Vancouver Island Economic Alliance
25. Laurie Sagle, Tigh-Na-Mara
26. Blain Sepos, Oceanside Tourism Association
27. Doreen Shaw, Parksville & District Association for Community Living
28. Dennis Silvestrone, Vancouver Island University
29. Wade Simmons, Amber Education
30. Douglas Smith, City of Parksville
31. Christine Stoneman, GT Hiring Solutions
32. Sherree Walter, Community Futures of Central Island
33. Rudi Widdershoven, Real Estate Consultants
34. Cheryl Fortin, Ministry of Economic Development
35. Ed Galenzoski, Oceanside Star and Parksville Chamber of Commerce

solving the oceanside labour crisis

APPENDIX 5 – WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY SURVEY RESPONSES

Oceanside Workforce Development Strategy Consultation Questionnaire

Responses as of June 9, 2008

1. Respondents

There were 35 responses, with 97% of the respondents located on Vancouver Island, and 89% located in the Oceanside area.

2. What is your overall reaction to the draft Oceanside Workforce Development Strategy (WDS)?

50% of respondents strongly agreed with the WDS; 47% agreed somewhat with it; and 3% strong disagreed with it.

3. Do you agree with the Vision, Values and Long-Term Goals?

91% of respondents agreed with the WDS Vision/Values/Goals; 9% did not agree with them.

A few suggested changes were offered:

- Agree generally however vision statement should be changed to read labour market rather than "workforce" (which I believe is too narrow a term)
- In addition to housing and transportation please add day care & infrastructure (services, roads, etc) to what factors need to be present
- Need to address attraction of mid size tech businesses which pay living wages and allow for more semi professional auxillary roles and jobs for partners and spouses

4. Identify your top 3 workforce development challenges that should be addressed in this strategy. (identify your top three below by noting 1, 2 and 3):

The top challenges identified by respondents were as per the following table:

Strategic Challenge	1st most important challenge	2nd most important challenge	3rd most important challenge
Affordable Housing	45.5% (10)	31.8% (7)	22.7% (5)
Transportation	7.1% (1)	50.0% (7)	42.9% (6)
Aging population and workforce and too few young entrants	41.7% (5)	33.3% (4)	25.0% (3)

solving the oceanside labour crisis

Not enough relevant education and training	0.0% (0)	60.0% (3)	40.0% (2)
Strategic Challenge	1st most important challenge	2nd most important challenge	3rd most important challenge
Insufficient employer readiness for responding to changing labour market conditions	60.0% (9)	20.0% (3)	20.0% (3)
Inadequate use of certain sources of labour (eg. immigrants, aboriginals, women and persons with disabilities)	0.0% (0)	44.4% (4)	55.6% (5)
Worker Attraction and Retention	46.7% (7)	20.0% (3)	33.3% (5)
Other (please specify)	25.0% (1)	25.0% (1)	50.0% (2)

5. Identify the top 3 actions you think should be taken to address your workforce challenges?

The most frequent responses from respondents revolved around the following themes:

- Rebranding of Parksville as a community for a diverse age range to work, live and play
- Most important - keep reminding employers in various ways of (existing) training agency resources that are available to assist to identify work-ready employees.
- Encourage and support employers to invest in their employees and business, other retention strategies, raising wage levels
- More affordable housing, particularly for young families and including adequate rental housing
- Encouraging industrial sectors to meet to brainstorm solutions and create action plans
- Link schools to vocational training locally
- Opportunity for mature or retired people willing to stay in workforce to be retrained for part-time work
- Improve public transportation - especially to outlying areas like Dashwood, Errington, Bowser and Nanoose (i.e. a bus service)

6. What lessons have you learned about implementing such or similar strategies?

Some sample respondent comments included the following:

- Devoting time to staying connected to employers to identify work opportunities and link employers to new workers. It is labour-intensive and time-consuming to maintain the relationships but the results keep new residents in the community.
- Very difficult to get everyone working together and finding the appropriate leadership and resources for implementation is critical.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

- Long-term, sustainable solutions are attached to financial profit, and must be delivered by the private sector. Creativity is spawned where there's opportunity for profit and competition for that profit.
- Communicate and stay involved.
- Aging demographics fear growth.
- Cities that have affordable housing and vacant employment positions are an attraction for young families.
- Workers performed much better when included in the decision- making process and need praise when they do!

7. What do you think are the critical success factors for implementing a workforce development strategy?

Supportive affordable housing and transportation policies and programs	63.6%
Supportive provincial and federal government policies and programs	36.4%
Active engagement and involvement of employers and other stakeholders	84.8%
Actions that will achieve positive workforce results in the short term	33.3%
Other (please specify)	33.3%

8. Who should contribute to the costs of implementing this Workforce Development Strategy? (please check one or more)

Employers	78.1%
Employees or job-seekers	12.5%
Educators	34.4%
Federal government	59.4%
BC government	78.1%
Local governments	78.1%
Unions	50.0%
Other (please specify)	28.1%

9. How can the Workforce Development Strategy be sustained?

Some sample respondent comments included the following:

- Wide diverse group of stakeholders providing input towards sustainability.
- Sustainability remains in the hands of the employers once established.
- Proper planning and the political will to do it and stop striking committees to study
- Identifying niche industries which can provide living wages and bring in semi-professional couples.
- Publicize and staff an interested and dedicated career centre. Provide guidance and "comfort" to new entrants to the work force (young and old).
- This is a living document - it must be kept relevant and nimble

solving the oceanside labour crisis

- Community partnerships - everyone needs to do their part in order to create and sustain a viable solution.

10. Are you interested in contributing resources for the Strategy and/or participating in some way in its implementation?

23% (7) of respondents indicated “yes”, 17% (5) indicated “no”, and 60% (18) indicated “maybe”

Some sample respondent comments included the following:

- Despite this is being an extremely important topic, I am too busy fighting the war on climate change and working towards sustainable development
- I am not able to contribute financially, but can offer my home office assistance.
- Our Executive Director is ready to play a key role in the workforce development partnerships that are required to implement the strategy
- Willing to assist in the communication with employers through either hosting forums or communicating through existing newsletters
- Coaching and training
- Association members can be asked for contributions, time
- Local chambers of commerce
- Sit on focus groups, collaborate with the companies I work with to further develop strategies, assist in presentations to stakeholders.....

11. Please provide any other comments you have on the Oceanside Workforce Development Strategy.

Some sample respondent comments included the following:

- Impressed with the collaborative and proactive approach to the issues facing the community.
- I am strongly supportive of the recommendation to create a commuter bus system much like what has been announced between the Cowichan Valley and Victoria. Re Workforce Branding Strategy, the mechanism already exists to market and promote Parksville to new workers and new businesses: the LINX BC initiative, www.linxbc.com
- After training there need to be a program that connects the newly trained + the employer with follow-up to assist each side to iron out difficulties.
- Find a bedroom retirement community that ultimately failed. Does one exist or do these things move forward naturally as a community grows and experiences growth pains that it adapts too. Question is there a correlation between population of a healthy community and number of rental units in that community. Or better question, what is a typical vacancy rate of rental units in a thriving community. I would be curious to know this dynamic.
- There are many retired skilled workers and professionals in our community who would like to supplement their pensions.
- Pursue a variety of businesses--not just tourist businesses.

solving the oceanside labour crisis

- Well done, thorough and represents our understanding of the challenges facing the community
- Worthwhile effort but needs backing from all! Must start at earlier age in school young people must be trained to be an asset to prospective employers and be paid accordingly (\$ 6.00 an hr will not do it!)
- Great start- can't wait to see the data from the full survey.
- Must focus on businesses that provide goods and services to citizens of the area - the "need to haves". Then provide assistance to the "nice to haves" i.e. tourism and resort industry. Disagree with the overemphasis on importing workers. Rather than bring in more workers, force employers to "work smarter" first.
- I am appalled at the lack of effective management of human resources by the local businesses. They don't reward or further develop a good worker.
- Lack of commitment to training by many employers has always been a barrier to employment in Canada.
- This is a good starting point and I look forward to seeing this strategy put forward and hopefully implemented.
- I am encouraged to see it happening....a great show of leadership in the province.

APPENDIX 6 – AFFORDABLE HOUSING RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations from the February 4, 2008 Oceanside Workforce Planning Session

Improve Transportation

Tactics

- Research commuter strategies for similar size community
- Car pooling/shuttles (shiftmatching)
- Bike coop
- More frequency
- Improve public transit
- Utilize E&N

Who

- Government, employers, public

Resources

- Marketing expertise, \$, and research

High Density

Tactics

- More multifamily/townhome
- Secondary suites
- Relaxing rural dwelling limit of Agricultural Land Reserve?
- P3 projects
 - Tax incentives
 - DCC reduction

Who

- Government, developers, banking

Resources

- Land, \$, will

Non-market/Coops

Tactics

- Start society
- Policy
- Marketing strategy/info
- Incentives (tax, DCC, streamline process)
- ALR

Who

solving the oceanside labour crisis

- Society, government, developers, employers

Resources

- Land, \$, will, research/best practices

Staff Housing Policy

Tactics

- Provision for staff housing in all new resort developments (single, family)
- Incentives (tax (tiered), DCC, streamline)
- Rezoning

Who

- Resorts, government, developers

Resources

- Land, \$, will