

## **Atlantic Workforce Partnership**

In 2012, the Council of Atlantic Premiers recognized the strategic value of working collaboratively to prepare the region and its workers for the significant economic opportunities on the horizon. The Atlantic Premiers established the Atlantic Workforce Partnership (AWP) as a committed and focused group to lead identified priorities and deliver effective and innovative solutions to common workforce and economic issues.

The Premiers recognized that Atlantic workforce cooperation had the potential to increase the likelihood of successfully addressing a range of common workforce and economic development public policy opportunities and challenges.

The Partnership, led by a provincial secretariat, leads regional execution of research, identification of successful programs and services within and outside of the Atlantic Region, develops strategic plans and direction, and fosters cooperation with Provincial, Federal, and Economic stakeholders.

Under the leadership of the AWP Secretariat, the governments of the four Atlantic Provinces are working collaboratively to improve the lives of Atlantic Canadians. Six (6) priority areas have been identified by the Premiers as strategic areas of importance and opportunities for the creation of new and innovative approaches.

**(1) Atlantic Apprenticeship Harmonization** - The Atlantic Apprenticeship Harmonization Project (AAHP) is a joint project with the Federal Government to align processes and standards leading to more consistency and efficiency in the way people enter the trades and work toward certification. Ten (10) trades have been harmonized within this project. An additional 6 trades are currently being developed which will affect 80% of all apprentices in the Atlantic Region. Strong support has been received from stakeholders, employers, training providers, and apprentices in all jurisdictions. Stakeholder participation is an essential part of the success of this project through the participation on Trade Advisory Committees whereby employers, trades people, and training providers work cooperatively to provide input and recommendations into the development of the harmonization process.

A shared information technology solution to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of apprenticeship management is also being developed in conjunction with the four Atlantic Provinces and the province of Manitoba.

### **Atlantic Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Apprentice Mobility**

To ensure our respective systems enable the unencumbered movement of apprentices when they need to travel for work, the Atlantic jurisdictions developed and implemented the *Atlantic Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Apprentice Mobility* (MOU). The MOU supports the need for the mobility of skilled trades' workers among the Atlantic Provinces, helping apprentices to get their necessary training and complete their journey to

certification more quickly. This MOU will ultimately assist in meeting the needs of employers for skilled tradespersons.

## **(2) Atlantic Attraction and Immigration (AAIT)**

Immigration is a key component of Atlantic Canada's demographic, labour market and economic growth strategies. The four provinces have had demonstrated success participating in joint international recruitment missions / career expos and collaborating on joint immigration policies, programs and regional positioning. The objectives of this working group include the promotion of Canada's East Coast as an immigration destination of choice; the attraction and recruitment of more skilled workers, francophone immigrants; business immigrants; as well as secondary migrants; and the achievement of Atlantic positions on immigration policy so that the four provinces can jointly advance them at various FPT tables and with the Government of Canada.

The AAIT recently launched, with officials from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, a new three-year immigration pilot project introduced by the four Atlantic Premiers and Federal Ministers in July 2016, as part of the new *Atlantic Growth Strategy*.

## **(3) Business Supports**

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) account for over 99.9 percent of all the businesses in Atlantic Canada which makes it a significant opportunity for innovative approaches. The group is delivering on the objectives set by the Premiers such as exploring the opportunities presented by major projects; the alignment of skill demands; forecasting of people, skill, and training needs; and succession planning.

## **(4) Federal Programs**

The four Atlantic Provinces face similar demographic, economic, and labour market challenges and opportunities. The AWP has been mandated by the Council of Atlantic Premiers to include regional collaboration on federal labour market agreements as one of the six central pillars of its work plan. The AWP has advanced common positioning for Deputy Ministers, Ministers and Premiers regarding Labour Market Transfer Agreements retooling, and has been effective at identifying areas of regional consensus that is broader in scope than the level of consensus that has been able to be achieved nationally.

## **(5) Labour Market Information (LMI)**

The collection and analysis of LMI continues to be an issue for many jurisdictions – especially those in Atlantic Canada with few large cities and large rural

populations. The LMI working group was established to address shared priorities to assist Premiers in workforce and economic decision making by providing evidence based recommendations and decisions.

AWP is striving to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness with the resources available to minimize duplication, collaborate on more substantive pieces of work, and to leverage federal funding. Through this research agenda, critical labour supply and demand gaps for the Atlantic region that may impede opportunities for continued economic growth and sustainability of the region over time.

## **(6) Youth**

The AWP Youth Initiative Working Group is mandated to work on shared supports to youth retention, particularly related to labour market attachment opportunities. Improving labour market planning for youth, opportunities to support transitions to work, and employer engagement on youth hiring are all areas provinces would like to explore for possible collaborative work.

In summary, the Atlantic Workforce Partnership was developed by the Atlantic Premiers as a collaborative and innovative approach to workforce development within the Region. This bold and strategic decision to work together rather than compete has led to many provincial, regional, and national accolades and successes. Their leadership and commitment of resources to the project has resulted in the successful implementation and development of the AWP into a partnership that is leading the country on the development of successful regional partnerships, impactful positioning of the Region, and the implementation of strategic programming and agreements.