



# Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce Newsletter

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## DID YOU KNOW?

- **The August unemployment rate for Alberta was 3.5% down from 4.1% in August 2006.**
- **In 2006, 65.7% of Aboriginal people living off reserve were employed.**
- **In 2006, there were 17,777 more employees between the ages of 15-24 years old compared to 2005.**
- **In 2006, there were approximately 10,900 Albertans who retired which was 700 less than in 2005.**
- **The average age of retirement in 2006 was 63.9 years of age.**
- **In 2001, 55.6% of persons within working age with disabilities were either employed or looking for employment**

## A Message from the Minister

It's been just over a year since Alberta's labour force development strategy, *Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce (BETW)* was released. Since that time, government and industry leaders have made tremendous progress in addressing labour and skill shortages in our province in a number of sectors including retail, tourism and hospitality, energy, manufacturing, construction and health care.

BETW's most challenging priority focuses on retaining people in the workforce. With more people retiring and fewer workers entering the labour market, employers must find incentives and remove barriers for all Albertans to remain in our labour force. I believe retention is not just about encouraging workers to remain in the workplace, but creating an environment in which they want to stay.

Mature workers, for example, currently account for over one-third of Alberta's labour force. Alberta's aging workforce presents labour challenges while at the same time opportunities for employers to be innovative. People are living longer and many mature workers want second careers or the opportunity to try new things.

If we want to move to a more value-added economy, we should also make efforts to keep under-represented labour groups engaged in the workplace. Research tells us that that under-represented labour groups, which include people with disabilities, women and First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, find jobs but often don't stay in those positions. As a result, employers face major hurdles in creating more welcoming work environments. When I hear about employers taking a lead to attract under-represented labour groups, I know our strategies are working.

My priority is to ensure Albertans have the tools they need to sustain Alberta's economic growth and prosperity. We've done a lot of good work already and I look forward to meeting new challenges in the coming months.



**Minister Iris Evans**

## Retaining your skilled staff

*B*uilding and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce's "Retain" theme focuses on improving retention of mature workers, First Nations, Métis and Inuit, immigrants and other under-represented groups.

This can be achieved by putting supports and incentives in place to assist individuals in overcoming their barriers.

Priority actions are:

- Work with industry, employer groups and labour groups on increasing workforce retention of mature workers, including increasing the flexibility of work arrangements and pension programs.
- Work with community agencies, employers and other partners to provide improved support programs and networks for integrating immigrants, First Nations, Métis, Inuit and other under-represented groups into workplaces and communities.

The Government of Alberta has a number of initiatives in place and is continuing to develop additional projects to "Retain" the workforce including the following:

- Community integration plans have been developed for immigrants in Calgary, Lloydminster, Red Deer, Edmonton and Vegreville.
- \$850,000 in grants have been awarded to reduce racism and discrimination in communities, organizations and workplaces.
- Conducted 97 workshops to promote building inclusive and respectful workplaces.
- Produced a framework for creating inclusive communities called: *Framework for the Future 2007-2012*
- Expanded the Workforce Partnerships Program to include the Attraction and Retention Program.
- Extended health benefits to all persons leaving income support for employment.
- Formed a working group to develop strategies to retain mature workers.
- Presented the Diversity Leadership Award to recognize organizations that embrace diversity.
- Coordinated research into retaining highly qualified people in Alberta.
- Developed new training for child care staff and day home providers to support the needs of a diverse labour force.
- Published an Alberta resource to assist municipalities end racism and discrimination.
- Developed and broadcast "Help Make a Difference" public service announcements on Global TV.
- Provided employment programs to under-represented groups including those for women in trade, and professional immigrants with training in accounting and engineering.
- Piloted a cognitive thinking training program for hard-to-employ clients.



## Workforce Attraction and Retention Program

The Workforce Attraction and Retention Partnerships (ARP) program is a new program element under the Workforce Partnerships Program. The ARP program is intended to assist employers and employer associations to take timely and direct action to attract and retain workers.

Funding priority for ARP is given to projects that support attraction and retention activities that are project-based and meet the objectives of the ARP program. Projects funded

under ARP must support attraction and retention activities that fall under one or more of the following categories:

**Connect** employers and employer associations to current knowledge and resources that will support the attraction and retention of workers.

**Promote** information sharing about effective practices within the employer community (for example, career fairs, conferences and effective practice forums).

**Pilot** test and/or apply tools, techniques and processes that assist in the attraction and retention of workers (for example, job counseling and retention supports to employers of under represented group members).

Program information and proposal guidelines are available online at: [www.employment.gov.ab.ca/etoolkit](http://www.employment.gov.ab.ca/etoolkit).



## Update on the Workforce Strategies

The Alberta government is continuing to work with industry and community representatives to address labour force issues by supporting the development of industry led workforce strategies. Under the framework of the government's 10 year labour force strategy, *Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce*, the workforce strategies identify labour force challenges specific to the industry and list priority actions to inform, attract, develop and retain their workforce.

To date, Workforce Strategies have been released for the following industries: Retail, Tourism and Hospitality, Energy and Manufacturing.

To start off industry's work on the Health Care Workforce Strategy, government has produced and released a Health Workforce Action Plan that outlines the steps that government needs to take to address shortages in the Health Care Sector.

We are anticipating the release of workforce strategies for the Non-profit/Voluntary sector and the Construction sector later this fall.

Workforce Strategies are under development for the following industries: Transportation and Logistics, Forestry and Logging, Aerospace, and Health Care.

Please visit the ministry website at: [www.employment.alberta.ca](http://www.employment.alberta.ca) to view the workforce strategies already released.

## 2007 BETW Forum: Alberta's Global Talent

Gain valuable knowledge, share your best practice solutions and build relationships with other Alberta businesses and government representatives.

The *Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce* Forum will continue to build capacity and knowledge around effective human resource strategies and tools that can make your business more successful.

Hear from Industry Panels and keynote speakers including:

- David Baxter and Andrew Ramlo present "Alberta's Changing Demographics and the Effect on the Workforce."
- Judith MacBride-King presents "HR practices in Alberta: How to Deal with the Labour Shortage."
- Judy Laws presents "How to Recruit and Retain a Diverse, Well-Qualified Workforce."

**Date: October 9th and 10th**

**Location: Shaw Conference Centre**

**For more information please visit: [www.albertasglobaltalent.ca](http://www.albertasglobaltalent.ca)**

## Alberta Business Awards of Distinction

For the past 16 years, Alberta businesses have been recognized through the Alberta Business Awards of Distinction for excellence and diversity. Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry sponsors three of these awards: Premier's Award of Distinction, Employer of Youth Award and Employer of Persons with Disabilities.

The Premier's Award of Distinction recognizes a business that exhibits the Alberta Advantage through leadership and community involvement. The Employer of Youth Award honours an organization that has demonstrated outstanding achievement in hiring youth and providing them with ongoing career-oriented opportunities. The Employer of Person with Disabilities Award is awarded to an employer who has been instrumental in hiring, training and developing employees with disabilities.

For more information, visit [www.abbusinessawards.ab.ca](http://www.abbusinessawards.ab.ca) or contact Tracy Elofson at the Alberta Chambers of Commerce, [telofson@abchamber.ca](mailto:telofson@abchamber.ca). Submissions open September 10, 2007 and close November 18, 2007.



Premier Ed Stelmach attended the 2007 Alberta Business Awards of Distinction. He presented the Premier's Award of Distinction to Rick Brink, president and owner of Weddingstar Inc. of Medicine Hat, for outstanding leadership in business and local community.



Minister Evans presents the winner of the Employer of Youth award to Janet Plante, CEO of Davco Solutions Inc.