**FINDING THE RIGHT INGREDIENTS:**

**LABOUR MARKET CONSIDERATIONS FOR**

**TORONTO’S FOOD & BEVERAGE PROCESSING SECTOR**

**DISCUSSION FORUM**

**OCTOBER 29, 2018**

**EVENT SUMMARY REPORT**

**Opening Remarks – Judy Morgan, Chair, Intergovernmental Committee for Economic and Labour Force Development**

* ICE facilitates collaboration among all three orders of government around economic and labour force development in Toronto. Our goal is to break down the silos and facilitate information sharing and collaboration across government.
* Our activities are made possible by the financial support of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and Toronto Economic Development & Culture. They include identifying topics of collective interest around which we commission research and host forums such as today’s event.
* Today’s forum was born at an event we co-sponsored with the Metcalf Foundation and Toronto Workforce Innovation Group in 2015. It explored sector-based industry-led approaches to workforce development. This led to the foundation of the Toronto Skills Academy and to both Toronto and Ontario initiating pilot programs.
* ICE commissioned a research project on Toronto’s food and beverage processing sector that you’ll hear more about in a few minutes. The sector specialists in Toronto Economic Development & Culture and Toronto Employment and Social Services pulled together expert panels to discuss some solutions to the labour market issues unpacked by the research.

**Finding the Right Ingredients Research – John MacLaughlin, Anova Partnership**

See Presentation Slides and Research Report available at [www.icecommittee.org](http://www.icecommittee.org) for detail.

Key Points:

* Food & Beverage Processing is the largest and fastest growing manufacturing sector in GTA.
* Majority of growth is taking place in small and micro businesses
* Aging workforce + few youth being recruited = growing labour market shortage
* Production schedules are often extremely variable, leading to a requirement for temporary workers available on short notice.
* Most entry level jobs don’t require specific skills; soft skills are important.
* Many larger firms draw heavily on immigrant population for their workers.
* Wage rates, in-house training and advancement opportunities, HR practices and working conditions vary across the sector and between different companies.
* Publicly-funded workforce development system is not designed to meet the needs of the sector, especially smaller firms. But some new promising approaches are being piloted – e.g. Elevate and Elevate Plus in Quinte, Hospitality Workers Training Centre in Toronto and possible Alternative Staffing Organization (ASO) pilot in Chicago (for temporary staffing).

**Finding Solutions - Pipeline Development**

**Elevate Plus Training Program – Mike Hewitt, Quinte Economic Development Commission**

See presentation slides at [www.icecommittee.org/research](http://www.icecommittee.org/research) for detail

Key Points:

* Collaborative sector-based program to find jobs for people and people for jobs
* Partnership between Quinte Economic Development and Loyalist College with funding from SkillsAdvance Ontario Pilot (MTCU).
* Close collaboration with employers: 15 companies participating, 4 in food & beverage processing.
* Started in 2016; builds on initiatives that began in 2013 (Elevate)
* 6 week classes with cohorts of approximately 12 (ideal size) job seekers. 10 cohorts have completed Elevate Plus program and 6 cohorts the Elevate Program.
* Provides employer-specific training integrated with soft skills + mentoring with employers to increase capacity to onboard and support employees
* 135 people have graduated (85% of people enrolling). Follow-up indicates that 80% are still employed after 1 year, and only 9% unemployed.
* Social service cost savings estimated at $600/month
* Employers’ bottom line benefits from lower turn over (estimated at $10,000 per entry level worker ($15/hr.) at 33% turn over cost).

**Ontario Manufacturing Learning Consortium – Rod Jones**

See presentation slides at [www.icecommittee.org/research](http://www.icecommittee.org/research) for detail.

Key Points:

* Ontario is facing a shrinking workforce with manufacturers facing increased vacancies. Yet many people are still unable to find jobs. Need a different approach to increase job readiness of unskilled unemployed.
* OMLC approach is to offer industry-led “hands-on” learning and certification programs
* After 5 years, have 50 employer partners who need entry-level employees with particular skills.
* Recruit youth aged 18-29. Applicants are screened against non-technical competencies that OMLC working with industry groups has defined as determining success on the job.
* 4 weeks of class room training at a college. Employers hire trainees for 22 weeks in-house on-the-job training. OMLC coach employers on supporting trainees. Graduates are certified.
* Have worked with 500+ trainees. 80-95% were employed at the conclusion of program, most with the employer who provided the training.

**HR Management Best Practices – Attracting and Retaining Workforce**

Panel Discussion moderated by Michael Wolfson, Sector Specialist, Toronto Economic Development and Culture and Audience Q&A.

Panel Participants:

* Isabel Dopta, Food & Beverage Ontario and Taste the Future,
* Ginette Brown, Riverside Natural Foods,
* Tara MacMillan and Nicole Polifroni, Starbucks

Strategies for attracting Millennial workers:

* Taste Your Future Website and social media channels (<http://tasteyourfuture.ca/>)
  + Launched by Food & Beverage Ontario in 2016 after industry consultation and questionnaire to youth showing that they didn’t see the opportunities in F&B
  + Informs about career opportunities in sector and promotes to youth;
  + Builds employer networks to provide key messages that appeal to youth and other information to support recruitment and retention
* Starbucks culture appeals to millennials (social and environmental responsibility); trying to attract a more diverse work force. Millennials “interview the company” about their social responsibility; very important
* Riverside is experiencing exponential growth; promotes career paths within company; new positions are truly newly created – employees have unusual flexibility to carve out their own niche and define their role within the company
* Actively promote charitable initiatives within work places and in employee communications.
* Active Use of social media essential
* Put a face to the company
* Isabel Dopta mentioned a 2-year program that had been implemented several years ago which recruited recent graduates from business, engineering and science programs. They participated in a 12-week training program on working in the food & beverage sector. 96% of the graduates found jobs in the sector.

Strategies for reducing turnover:

* Riverside emphasizes core values from top leadership down to the plant floor. Display posters, reinforce in training and staff meetings. Almost no turnover
* Starbucks has about half the turnover rate typical of the fast food sector (50%). Also emphasize core values and stay true to them on a day to day basis throughout network (training, outreach)
* Flexibility in scheduling important to part time employees when feasible; but most production jobs have limited opportunity for flexible schedules (people must be working when the line is operating)
* Offer open communications channels with employees (e.g. Riverside uses WhatsApp chat groups)
* Starbucks offers benefits to everyone working more than 20 hours/week. Full flex benefits and discounts; tuition reimbursement; opportunity to buy company stock
* Riverside also offers generous benefits package and tuition reimbursement; quarterly product sales to employees with proceeds donated to charity

Strategies for Recruitment:

* Job Fairs, social media, Workopolis and other popular job boards
* Youth want opportunities for professional development and advancement when applying for entry level jobs.
* Offer experiential learning programs
* Starbucks uses agencies and services such as ACCESS to introduce opportunities in the company to newcomers

Training opportunities in Toronto

* Currently limited capacity for sector-specific training or pathway development; TESS is hoping to form a stakeholder table to strengthen capacity.

Is Automation a threat to jobs?

* Not as much as in many other sectors because product is delicate and non-uniform in shape/size, and most companies are small and unable to afford expensive equipment (John MacLaughlin)

What are the opportunities in Cannabis?

* No coordinated plan yet in Ontario to respond to curriculum opportunities to meet training needs. Some colleges are responding to local needs on an individual basis (audience member)
* From a processing perspective, anticipates that cannabis product companies will have similar characteristics and challenges as other sub-sectors with the added layer of more regulation (John MacLaughlin)

**Wrap Up – Michael Wolfson, Sector Specialist, Toronto Economic Development & Culture**

1. Growth in the sector has consistently been around 5% per year. High quality artisanal products need to be hands-on and small scale and represent the greatest opportunity.
2. The challenge is to find the workers to support the growth of the sector. Days of being able to rely on temporary agencies for short term workers soon will be over.

**Stakeholder Reflections**

**Audience Suggestions on the Following Topics:**

**What Changes need to happen for the work force development system to successfully meet the needs of the Food & Beverage Processing Sector?**

* Manage expectations
* Funders & educators need to present expertise needed
* More informed and available coordinators & intermediaries
* More collaboration between employers, colleges and workforce development areas of government (like ICE & other agencies)
* Early training at school levels coordinated with education system and industry reps.

**What actions can Food & Beverage Processing Companies themselves take to attract and retain the workers they need?**

* Retain services / hire HR folks who know job-seekers in marginalized communities
* Employers need to take an active role in investing into their staff
* Look at what they’re doing to see what is working and what is not – for things not working, how can it be changed to attract and retail workers
* More employment experience opportunities for demographics underrepresented in the industry like people with disabilities

*Event Summary prepared by Judy Morgan,*

*Ice Committee Chair,*

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