



Workforce Development Board  
159 King Street, Suite 208  
Peterborough, ON

## **AGING WORKFORCE STORIES CLUSTER COMMUNITY CONSULTATION MEETING MINUTES**

Monday June 8, 2009

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### **Present:**

#### *COMMITTEE MEMBERS:*

Peter Carroll	President Ontario Secondary School Teacher Federation (OSSTF) District 15
Robbie Cushing	WDB – Summer Student
Jenn Harrington	WDB - Director of Programs
Alan Law	Trent University – Associate Professor, Sociology
Dawn Berry Merriam	Social Planning Council
Jim Struthers	Trent University – Canadian Studies

#### *GUESTS:*

Barrie Cope	Retired
Doug Downer	Retired
Gord Evans	CEO – WDB
Ann McLeod	Retired

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*Meeting Objective:* To solicit feedback from older workers and seniors regarding 'Individual Project Level' needs and design for the Aging Workforce Research Project and the New Horizons for Seniors Funding application.

#### *Discussion Points:*

1. What are the needs of the community regarding aging and work?
2. How do we get older workers and seniors involved in the project?
3. Feedback regarding project design

#### 1) *What are the needs of the community regarding aging and work?*

##### *Employment & Community Involvement*

- Opportunities for mentorship – older workers to younger employees
- Succession planning is important – there seems to be a lack of planning for small businesses
- Local intelligence and up to date information is needed.
  - What are the ages of employees in specific industries? Who will be retiring? Are there trends? Which industries have the most rapid aging workforce? Which jobs will actually exist in 20 years time?
- Need to connect employment strategies with health strategies
  - Costs – providing proper health services
  - Opportunities – increased job opportunities – For example, fall prevention company

- The mentality of Retirees
  - o Somebody vs. Nobody
  - o Many people identify with their job → who are they when they leave their job? How is this different among generations?
- Retirement
  - o Changing definition, probably related to timing
    - 2 factors: Loss of savings and end of mandatory retirement
    - How are people's plans for retirement altering?
  - o Retirement also now contains an element of work as people do not make a complete break from employment. What are the opportunities associated with this?
  - o Other possibilities → Volunteering, part-time employment...
  - o How many retirees are trying to re-enter the workforce in different jobs?
    - Requires new training – Costs!
    - Many employers are hiring younger workers – many of them more “in tune” with modern technology – need less training perhaps.
  - o What kind of work would retirees want to do? Different from past jobs, something related to their skills, or a total change / try something completely new?
  - o Pensions
    - Many people don't have a company pension when they retire. What does this mean for retirement?
    - What will happen to people who lose their pension? e.g. GM.
    - How many more years are required to work to make up for their lost pension?
- There are an increased number of older workers (50-70) in the workforce
  - o Deteriorating health vs. disabled – (using “disability” not recommended). For example, a teacher who is finding it harder to hear as a result of hearing loss due to old age – Not deaf. Creates challenges
  - o What are some of the performance issues related to older workers? The workplace is changing constantly, need to adapt quickly.
- Climates and attitudes for workforce changing
  - o Harder for older employees / retirees to manage
  - o Easier for younger employees / youth to manage
  - o Dealing with younger employees coming in
  - o Need to explore attitudes of employers
    - May be happy not having to train (younger employees) or may want a new dynamic – bringing in younger workers
- Seniors are more active compared previous years. Their interests are changing, how will this impact business and services in the community to meet the needs of this group? Business will need to change and adapt – but first need to understand needs of this group.
- Agricultural Sector:
  - o Average age of farmers is 60
  - o Lack of incentive for next generation to maintain agricultural land
  - o 100 mile diet – the new Fab! Which some restaurants are now serving. This is an important issue for many retirees / seniors who want to eat well, and want to know where their food is coming from. Presents opportunities for business.

### *Aging & Caregiving*

- Where are aging people going?
  - What jobs will be required to support the Aging at Home Initiative? More PSW's may be needed, but pay and working conditions will need to be improved.
  - What about transportation?
  - Perhaps an outcome of this project can be to influence policy with regards to employer strategies, supports and health policies related to the Aging at Home initiative.(i.e. PSW pay)
- Ability to select caregivers
  - The elderly are very vulnerable → they need very well trained staff
  - Funding – much given to hospitals, very little given to nursing homes or to elderly living at home or to their families who are looking after them.
  - Need to consider working 'kids' who are caring for their parents. It's an exhausting job, with lots of stress & strain on the worker. Even from a distance. What supports are there?
- How do we keep the elderly healthy / active for as long as possible? What is the role of the community in this – i.e. walking trails, information about nutrition, and access to physical activity, etc. The challenge is to reduce healthcare costs without diminishing lifestyle.
- Driving. In light of the fact that an increased number of elderly are opting to live at home, driving is continued. What are the risks? Health risks?
- How can technology help with aging at home? I.e. have cameras to monitor, can use Skype, or MSN let elderly and families being able to talk to from far distances

### *2) How do we get older workers and seniors involved in the project?*

- Seniors are a talented group who can provide time and support great initiatives in the community
- How do we make opportunities know for this group????
  - Word of mouth, leverage networks
- Baby boomers – less interested in volunteering – except those who had careers in this or similar sectors.
- How do we get those who didn't work in that sector to volunteer
- Retirees not so flexible – in town for ½ the year, at cottage / in Mexico for ½ the year
- Education is important – about retirement, options, volunteering, etc.
- For this project: go through HR depts. to connect with workers approaching retirement (GE)
- Our guests at the meeting agreed to continue to participate in the project in some capacity!

### *3) Feedback regarding project design*

- What is the structure of the project?
  - As per Alan: 60 interviews – interviews will be conducted by seniors, interviewees will be workers aged 55+ who are nearing the traditional age of retirement.
  - Interviews will be about 1 hour long, shared by four researchers.
  - Interviews are semi-structured – more of a conversation where a relationship develops between the interviewer and interviewee, which uncovers deeper layers of information. This produces approximately 30 pages of text.

- Barry: broad range of issues, need to focus questions and find a common theme.
- Suggestion: focus on particular group(s) such as Autoworkers, Transport, Manufacturing, and Service sector. Though this leaves out the agricultural sector – unfortunate because it's such an important sector
- Good to involve some workers from the service sector; auto workers will come back better than others; they are worried about their pensions; many don't have pensions to worry about
- Important to clarify that seniors will be interviewing older workers – this is crucial for the project.
- The steering committee is quite large, may be better having a smaller advisory committee to govern project
- For Interviewers: questions have to be very well defined, need input from the community and researchers on design
- Selection of interviewees is important – needs to be as unbiased as possible
- Question re balancing interviews with a balance of focus groups as focus groups can seem less threatening than personal interviews
  - As per Alan: much harder to analyze information from focus groups
- There are differences between how men and women deal with the transition into retirement, as the then to experience economic transition very differently.

**ACTION ITEMS:**

1. Jenn to include input from meeting members into the New Horizons Funding Application, due June 12<sup>th</sup>. Changes will include:
  - Clarify definition of Seniors as Interviewers, and older workers as interviewees
  - Project focus to be on four main sectors: Agriculture, Manufacturing, Healthcare and Retail, with equal participation among men and women.

Meeting adjourned at 12:30

Thank you all for your participation