



Labour Market Bulletin

Human Resource Centre of Canada

Sault Ste. Marie and Area

~ An Analysis of the Sault Ste. Marie and Area Labour Market ~ January to March 2005 ~

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An overview of the area served by the Human Resource Centre of Canada-Sault Ste. Marie, including Sault Ste. Marie, Elliot Lake, Blind River, Wawa, and St. Joseph Island.

Heading into 2005, labour market activity in the Sault Ste. Marie Management Area continued the strong showing exhibited in 2004. The entire region reported positive news. The immediate future holds numerous opportunities for employment growth, including proposed power plant construction, new water treatment plants, road construction and a new arena.

The Employment Insurance claimload decreased by 14% compared to the same period last year, while employment opportunities increased by 20%. The highest volume of opportunities available, were once again, in sales and service occupations.

Conditions in Northeastern Ontario mirrored the Sault Ste. Marie Management Area. While the unemployment rate in the Northeast rose from 6.9% in the fourth quarter of 2004 to 7.7%, it is substantially lower than the rate of 8.3% recorded in the first quarter of 2004.

HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ Algoma Steel seeking to build 150 MW power plant.
- ▶ Blind River Cameco expanding again.
- ▶ Algoma Steel smashes earnings records.
- ▶ Sault Area Hospital still laying off but fewer than expected.
- ▶ Searchmont Ski Hill in danger of closing.
- ▶ Michael Moore visits Sault Ste. Marie to promote film festival.
- ▶ Employment Insurance claimload down 14% from last year.
- ▶ Advertised job vacancies up 20% over last year.

The Sault Ste. Marie and Area HRCC Labour Market Bulletin is a quarterly report produced by the area Labour Market Information Analyst. This bulletin and other LMI products may also be found on our website. (aussi disponible en français)

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Visit our website at: www.labourmarketinformation.ca

Note: *In preparing this bulletin, HRSDC has taken care to provide clients with labour market information from reliable sources that is timely and accurate at the time of publication. Since labour market conditions are dynamic, some of the information presented here may have changed since the bulletin was published. Readers are encouraged to also refer to other sources for additional information on the local economy and labour market. Information contained in this bulletin does not necessarily reflect official policies of HRSDC.*



LABOUR MARKET NEWS

Highlights on industry activities that have an impact on the local labour market, this information is derived from several sources including local newspapers, newsletters and various publications. Please refer to "Notes to Readers" for additional information.

Forestry, fishing, mining, oil and gas

Another exploration company has settled in the Wawa area. Dianor Resources joined Pele Mountain Resources Inc., De Beers Canada Exploration, and Band Ore Resources Ltd. in the search for diamonds in the area immediately outside Wawa. The growing number of large gem quality diamonds found in the area is increasing the likelihood that a local bedrock source will be found.

Utilities

Algoma Steel Inc. (ASI) is seeking to build a 150 MW co-generation plant. If approved by the Ministry of Energy, the \$150 million project should enable ASI to become energy self-sufficient. The company currently uses between 100 and 140 MW of power annually, at an estimated cost of \$60 million. ASI plans to sell any excess energy produced by the plant. Algoma's announcement comes on the heels of Brascan's application to build a 116 MW natural-gas-fired plant locally.

Construction

While no major construction projects have commenced this quarter, the outlook for the area looks bright. The city will spend \$550,000 to replace an east-end pumping station. A \$1.6 million addition to the Group Health Centre has begun. Construction of Wawa's \$9.6 million water treatment plant resumed this quarter after ceasing for the winter months; completion is expected for the spring of 2006. Blind River accepted a \$10.5 million tender from TESC Contraction to build their new water treatment plant. Construction is expected to start immediately and be completed in the spring of 2006.

Manufacturing

Boniferro Mill Works and USWA-IWA Local 1-1000 have agreed to an early renewal of their collective agreement. The original agreement was to run from March 31, 2003 to March 30, 2008. The new agreement now expires December 31, 2010. Wages will increase by 11% over the life of the contract while the standard work week will drop from 43 hours to 40 hours by 2007. The company grew from 32 employees in 2003 when it

purchased the assets of the Domtar Hardwood Mill, to its current level of 60.

Advanced Thermodynamics Corporation, located in Batchawana First Nation Industrial Park, has announced plans to triple its workforce. The company manufactures auxiliary power units for independent heating and cooling of transport trucks and diesel locomotives. The product allows engines to shutdown, yet still keeps the engines warm while providing the operator with heat or air conditioning. The average fuel savings per locomotive is 8,000 gallons per year. The 17,500 square-foot facility will increase to 50,000 square-feet while staffing levels should increase from 50 to 150.

Birchland Veneer Ltd., located in Thessalon, has laid off most of its 65 employees. A flood of cheap imports from China is cited as the primary reason. A sister mill, Birchland Plywood Ltd., still operates in the community. The plywood market is currently very strong and the company is attempting to transfer some of the laid-off veneer mill employees to the plywood division.

Enquest Power Corporation Inc. has entered into an agreement with the City of Sault Ste. Marie to convert waste into energy. Located at the municipal landfill site, the company initially plans to convert one tonne of waste per day into energy, which can then be used for heating or to fuel cars. If the trial run meets their expectations, the company hopes to process 100,000 tonnes annually at the Sault Ste. Marie location.

Blind River Cameco announced plans to hire 20 to 30 employees. This number is in addition to the 10 hired in the fall of 2004. The company has signed a 10-year agreement with British Nuclear Fuels Limited of Lancashire, UK, to convert five million kilograms of uranium annually. The company also plans to invest \$6 million towards expanding production and drum filling facilities at the Blind River site.

Algoma Steel Inc. (ASI) continued to declare record earnings. In the three-month period ending December 31, 2004, the company earned \$122.2 million, \$600,000 more than the previous record high earned in the third quarter. Total earnings for 2004 amounted to \$343.8



million, more than double the previous annual high of \$165 million, earned in 1981. ASI currently has massive cash reserves of \$453.2 million, thus putting the company in a favourable position in the event that the market softens. ASI also announced it is no longer considering submitting an offer to purchase Stelco of Hamilton. ASI has decided to pursue other opportunities for partnership.

Trade

Sam's Foodline of Wawa, has closed, leaving one remaining grocery store in the community. The owner stated that start-up costs and renovations to the 14-month-old business were too much to handle when combined with hydro bills in the range of \$10,000 monthly.

Dollarama opened for business in Elliot Lake's Algo Centre Mall. The store employs 25 people.

Loblaws is poised to build a 30,000 to 40,000 square-foot "No Frills" grocery store in Elliot Lake. The Ontario Municipal Board dismissed an appeal from two separate parties who were attempting to put a halt to the development. The City of Elliot Lake has been actively supporting the new store since it was first proposed over a year ago.

Transportation and warehousing

The City of Sault Ste. Marie continued to lobby upper levels of government in its quest to become a multi-modal transportation hub. Ongoing meetings with federal and provincial representatives have resulted in little progress toward their goal, which is to have goods imported into Canada from the Asian rim sent by rail to Sault Ste. Marie. In Sault Ste. Marie, the large crates would be opened and repackaged for distribution throughout North America. The theory is that the Sault Ste. Marie border crossing is underutilized and would take pressure off the Detroit-Windsor border, decreasing delivery times and costs. While the governments have expressed limited interest in the program, the rail carriers have not yet bought into the process.

Professional, scientific and technical services

Eight local Entourage Technology Solutions workers joined 1,400 others across the province in strike action. The Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada, Local 38 stated the primary issue is the \$9.11 per hour wage difference between Entourage and Bell

Canada workers who do the same work. Bell, which currently owns 43% of Entourage, recently agreed to purchase 100% of the company.

The City of Sault Ste. Marie has begun lobbying the federal and provincial governments, hoping to establish a Centre for Invasive Species locally. The city is currently home to two world-class research facilities, the Ontario Forest Research Institute and the Great Lakes Forest Research Centre. Invasive species such as the Emerald Ash Borer and Asian Long-horned Beetle have now firmly established themselves in Canada's forests after arriving here as a result of international trade. The goal of the centre, which was originally proposed by scientists at the local research facilities, is to plan and implement a coordinated approach to primary response and treatment methods. Tens of millions of dollars are spent annually in Ontario alone on this problem.

Health and social assistance

Sault Area Hospital has stated it will lay off 20 nurses, 13 full-time and seven part-time. While this is less than the original forecast of 40, the news was not greeted positively by nurses. They stated that the workload is too heavy now and this will only cause further difficulties for patients and nurses alike. The Sault Area Hospital employs 560 full and part-time nurses.

The provincial government has not yet approved plans for a new hospital in Sault Ste. Marie. The Ministry of Health and local officials are still trying to reach an agreement on the size of the new facility or on the services it will provide. The province has downsized the original building from 468,370 square-feet to 398,980 square-feet. The Ministry of Health has not guaranteed that a cancer radiation bunker will be part of the new hospital. Negotiations between the two parties are ongoing.

Information, culture and recreation

The City of Sault Ste. Marie has received \$424,448 as its share of slot machine revenues for the period October 1, 2004 to December 31, 2004. The money represents five percent of the Sault Ste. Marie Charity Casino's gross revenue from their slot machines. This is the third consecutive quarter in which revenues have declined. As of June 1, 2004 smoking within the casino was eliminated as a result of the municipal no-smoking bylaw.



The Town of Wawa will be seen on the big screen in the near future. Producers have announced they will be filming the independent movie, *Snow Cake*, in the community. While local shooting is expected to only last two to three weeks, it is hoped that 15 to 20 townspeople will obtain temporary employment as labourers, security or extras in the movie. The film will star Alan Rickman of *Harry Potter* and *Galaxy Quest* fame, Sigourney Weaver of the *Alien Trilogy* and *Galaxy Quest*, and Carrie-Anne Moss of *The Matrix Trilogy*. The world-famous Wawa Goose will also be featured in the movie. Filming was scheduled to commence in April.

Accommodation and food services

Searchmont Ski Resort has announced that it will not be operating its ski hill next winter. Jack McDermott, who owns the resort, stated that more than \$3 million in repairs is required. Mr. McDermott stated that the low earnings of the ski hill eliminate any incentive to invest the money required to bring ski lifts up to necessary safety levels. If outside investment, or someone willing to operate the ski hill is not found, Mr. McDermott plans to sell off the assets of the ski operation. However, he plans to continue to operate the non-ski related interests at the hill, such as the 21 chalets, the lodge and the bicycle trails. More than 150 people work at the resort during the winter months.

The local hotel and motel association has teamed with Tourism Sault Ste. Marie and pledged \$500,000 towards the construction costs of the city's new multi-purpose arena. The group plans to contribute \$100,000 a year, for five years. The two parties have stated that the arena is an integral part of tourism for the community and were the first group to pledge funds for the arena. The money

will come from a three percent fee on all hotel and motel room accommodations in Sault Ste. Marie.

Tourism

The Little Native Hockey League (Little N.H.L.) tournament was held in Sault Ste. Marie for a second consecutive year. The tournament is the largest native sporting event in Ontario, attracting over 6,000 people to the community over the March break. It is estimated the five-day event injected over \$5 million into the local economy.

The City of Sault Ste. Marie's waterfront tourism project has found new legs. Toronto based developer, Philip Ganforth, of The Ganforth Group, has met the March 31st deadline imposed by city council and submitted a feasibility study and business plan for development of the site. The 40,000 square-foot, \$50 million project has had several potential investors since 1998. The complex is expected to employ between 400 and 500 people when completed.

The Shadows of the Mind Film Festival held during last week of February, was a resounding success. The festival played to record numbers throughout the week-long event. The locally filmed production, *Looking for Angelina*, was a hit, with six sold-out screenings. Michael Moore, director of such films as *Roger and Me*, *Bowling for Columbine* and *Fahrenheit 9/11*, made a surprise visit to Sault Ste. Marie to watch a documentary on the late director, Stanley Kubrick. Organizers stated the publicity generated by his appearance will act as a catalyst for further growth.



LABOUR FORCE TRENDS

Northeast weaker in the first quarter

The Northeastern Ontario labour market weakened in the first quarter of 2005. Employment fell to a four-quarter low. This caused the employment rate to drop from 57.0% in the fourth quarter of 2004 to 56.4%. This was the lowest employment rate seen in the region in more than a year. A little more than half of the quarter's job losses were part-time. The labour force contracted slightly, pushing the participation rate down from 61.3% in the previous quarter to 61.1%. As usual, this was the lowest participation rate recorded among Ontario's 11 Economic Regions. Since employment fell without a corresponding loss of labour force participants, unemployment increased. As a result, Northeastern Ontario's unemployment rate rose from 6.9% in the fourth quarter of 2004 to 7.7%.

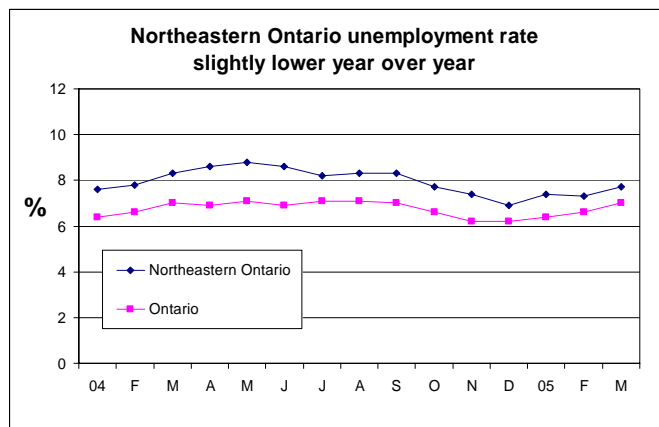
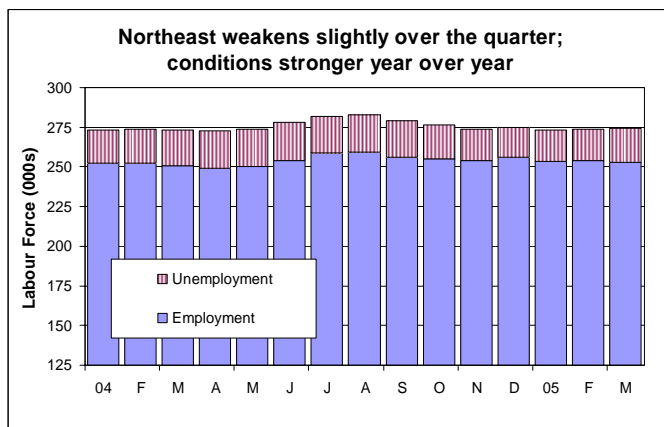
These conditions are stronger than those recorded in Northeastern Ontario in the first quarter of 2004. Even with the quarter's job losses, employment in the region is higher on a year-over-year basis. This job growth is reflected in a higher employment rate. Labour force participation is also slightly stronger in comparison to the first quarter of 2004 when the participation rate was 60.8%. Because the region has seen more new jobs than new or returning job seekers, unemployment decreased. As a result, Northeastern Ontario's unemployment rate fell from 8.3% in the first quarter of 2004 to the current 7.7%.

Northeastern Ontario (Economic Region 590) Area Labour Force Trends

	January to March 2005	October to December 2004	January to March 2004	Change Quarter/Quarter Absolute	Change %	Change Year/Year Absolute	Change %
Population 15 +	448,600	448,800	449,300	-200	0.0	-700	-0.2
Labour force	274,100	275,000	273,300	-900	-0.3	800	0.3
Employed	253,000	256,000	250,700	-3,000	-1.2	2,300	0.9
Full-time	197,100	198,400	196,500	-1,300	-0.7	600	0.3
Part-time	55,900	57,600	54,200	-1,700	-3.0	1,700	3.1
Unemployed	21,100	18,900	22,700	2,200	11.6	-1,600	-7.0
Not in labour force	174,600	173,900	176,000	700	0.4	-1,400	-0.8
Participation rate	61.1%	61.3%	60.8%	-0.2		0.3	
Unemployment rate	7.7%	6.9%	8.3%	0.8		-0.6	
Employment rate	56.4%	57.0%	55.8%	-0.6		0.6	

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding.

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey.



Employment by Industry

Goods-sector employment hits record low

Northeastern Ontario's first-quarter job losses were centered in the goods-producing sector. Employment in the sector fell more than five percent to 50,100. This was the lowest level of employment recorded in the sector since the current time series began in the first quarter of 1987. Job losses were recorded in construction and manufacturing. While employment on the services-producing side of the labour market was stable, there were job shifts within the sector. Among the most notable losses was a decline of almost 11 percent in trade.

The region's year-over-year employment growth was recorded in the services-producing sector. Gains in eight of the 11 industry groups in the sector resulted in a net increase of four percent year over year. The goods sector contracted significantly over the same time period.

Including the first quarter losses, employment in the sector was 10 percent lower than in the first quarter of 2004. Most of these losses occurred in manufacturing, where employment was almost 28 percent lower year over year.

Northeastern Ontario (Economic Region 590) Employment by Industry

Industry	January to March 2005	October to December 2004	January to March 2004	Change		Year/Year Absolute	Year/Year %
				Quarter/Quarter Absolute	Quarter/Quarter %		
Total	253,000	256,000	250,700	-3,000	-1.2	2,300	0.9
<i>Goods-producing sector</i>	50,100	53,100	55,800	-3,000	-5.6	-5,700	-10.2
Agriculture	2,200	2,100	2,400	100	4.8	-200	-8.3
Forestry, fishing, mining, oil and gas	17,100	15,700	16,600	1,400	8.9	500	3.0
Utilities	...	2,400	2,800
Construction	13,500	15,200	11,600	-1,700	-11.2	1,900	16.4
Manufacturing	16,100	17,600	22,300	-1,500	-8.5	-6,200	-27.8
<i>Services-producing sector</i>	202,900	202,900	194,900	0	0.0	8,000	4.1
Trade	39,900	44,700	42,500	-4,800	-10.7	-2,600	-6.1
Transportation and warehousing	13,600	11,500	13,500	2,100	18.3	100	0.7
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	11,600	11,400	9,000	200	1.8	2,600	28.9
Professional, scientific and technical services	8,800	9,900	7,900	-1,100	-11.1	900	11.4
Business, building and other support services	12,400	11,100	10,400	1,300	11.7	2,000	19.2
Educational services	22,400	21,100	20,300	1,300	6.2	2,100	10.3
Health care and social assistance	37,400	38,800	39,500	-1,400	-3.6	-2,100	-5.3
Information, culture and recreation	10,800	10,100	9,600	700	6.9	1,200	12.5
Accommodation and food services	14,800	18,200	16,200	-3,400	-18.7	-1,400	-8.6
Other services	12,600	9,900	10,100	2,700	27.3	2,500	24.8
Public administration	18,500	16,000	16,000	2,500	15.6	2,500	15.6

Note: "..." indicates that data are too small to be expressed and are not appropriate for release. Totals may not add due to rounding.

Source: Statistics Canada. Labour Force Survey

Northeastern Ontario (Economic Region 590) is comprised of eight Census Divisions: the Districts of Nipissing, Parry Sound, Manitoulin, Sudbury, Timiskaming, Cochrane and Algoma, and the Greater Sudbury Division (formerly the Sudbury Regional Municipality).



LABOUR SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Employment Insurance Claim Load

The number of regular claims this quarter rose substantially over the fourth quarter of 2004. This was not unexpected as this situation normally occurs every year. Retail workers laid off after the Christmas season, as well as seasonal construction workers inflate first-quarter totals every year.

The decline in year-over-year totals is welcome news. While there were fewer males claimants in the first quarter of 2005, there was a substantial decrease in the number of female claimants year-over-year.

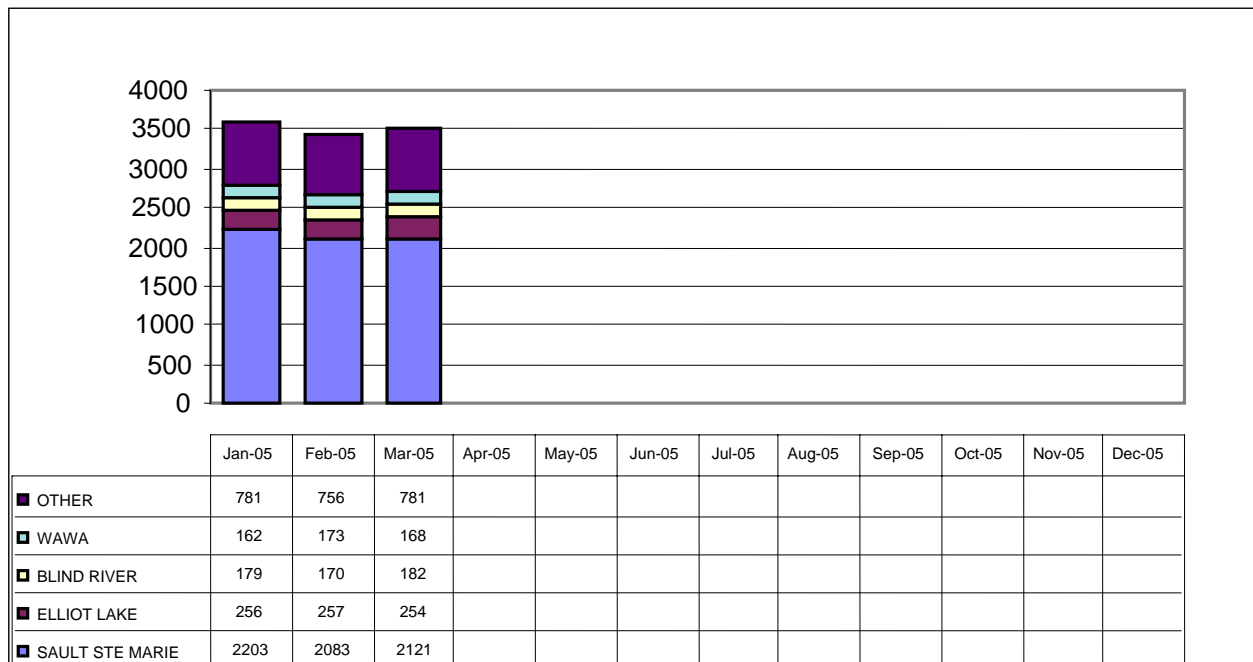
Regular Employment Insurance Claimants – Sault Ste. Marie Management Area

	January to March 2005	October to December 2004	January to March 2004	Change			
				Quarter/Quarter #	%	Year/Year #	%
Male	2,499	1,732	3,026	767	44.3	-527	-17.4
Female	1,323	1,201	1,421	122	10.2	-98	-6.9
Total	3,822	2,933	4,447	889	30.3	-625	-14.0

Source: HRSDC Administrative Data C-356 (Average of month-end totals for the quarter)

The amount of regular Employment Insurance benefits paid in the first quarter of 2005 was also lower in comparison to the final quarter of 2004. In the first quarter of 2004 the Sault Ste. Marie HRCC paid out \$13,115,395 in regular benefits.

Regular EI Claimants in the Sault Ste. Marie Management Area



Source: HRSDC Administrative Data-Month end Totals



Employment Opportunities

Advertised job vacancies rebounded this quarter. Both full-time and part-time advertisements increased both quarter to quarter and year-over-year. The year-over-year totals increased by over 20% in the region as an additional 173 full-time opportunities were advertised. Most of this increase occurred in Sault Ste. Marie, while activity in the Elliot Lake/Blind River area remained relatively stable. The decline in the Elliot Lake area lasting the first quarter of 2005 was mainly in part-time opportunities.

Employment Opportunities – Sault Ste. Marie and Area

	January to March 2005			October to December 2004			January to March 2004		
	Total	F/T	P/T	Total	F/T	P/T	Total	F/T	P/T
Sault Ste. Marie Area (excluding Elliot Lake)	1,427	1,123	304	1,197	927	270	1,178	947	231
Elliot Lake (including Blind River)	73	48	25	88	41	47	71	51	20
Management Area Total	1,500	1,171	329	1,285	968	317	1,249	998	251

Source: HRCC vacancies and newspaper want ads

Sales and service occupations led the way when it came to advertised job opportunities throughout the Sault Ste. Marie Management Area. This has been the case every quarter for the last three years. Call centre activity is the primary reason for this trend. Manufacturing and utilities reverted back to its historical level now that Algoma Steel’s recent hiring spree of last year has been completed. All major occupational groups showed some growth either on a quarterly or a year-over-year basis.

Advertised Vacancies by Major Occupational Grouping-Sault Ste. Marie Management Area

Occupations (NOC)	January to March 2005	October to December 2004	January to March 2004	Change		Change	
				Quarter/Quarter #	%	Year/Year #	%
Total Vacancies	1,500	1,285	1,249	215	16.7	251	20.0
Management	37	33	49	4	12.1	-12	-24.5
Business/administration	326	243	178	83	34.1	148	83.2
Natural & applied sciences	103	188	97	-85	-45.2	6	6.2
Health	43	36	26	7	19.4	17	65.4
Social science & education	87	90	80	3	3.3	7	8.8
Culture & recreation	19	20	14	-1	5.0	5	35.7
Sales & service	659	465	498	194	41.7	161	32.3
Trades & transport	175	173	120	2	1.2	55	45.8
Primary industry	32	28	18	4	14.3	14	77.8
Manufacturing & utilities	19	9	169	10	111.1	-150	-79.4

Source: HRCC vacancies and newspaper want ads.



Human Resource Centre of Canada for Students (HRCC-S)

Once again the Government of Canada is bringing employers and students together via its popular Human Resource Centre of Canada for Students program. Services include:

- job postings
- group information services
- one-on-one job counselling
- resume and cover letter assistance
- labour market information
- free access to the Internet, telephones, fax and photocopier machines
- referral to other services

Employers can get quick access to enthusiastic workers by contacting one of the local HRCC-S offices during the summer months.

Students can drop into their local HRCC-S to check out job opportunities or talk to the Summer Employment Officers- who are students themselves. Through the Centres' group information sessions, students learn how to look for a job, write a résumé and get ready for an interview. Both employers and students can also get information on wage levels, labour laws and federal and provincial programs

For more information, contact your local HRCC-S.

Sault Ste. Marie
22 Bay Street, 1st Floor
705-941-3202

Elliot Lake
151 Ontario Avenue
705-848-2801

Blind River
214 C Hanes Avenue
705-356-1611



Notes to Readers:

1. The **Sault Ste. Marie and Area HRCC** is comprised of Sault Ste. Marie and Elliot Lake.
2. For the purpose of this publication, the **Sault Ste. Marie and Area HRCC** includes all of the above communities as well as White River, Wawa, Dubreuilville, St. Joseph Island, Bruce Mines, Thessalon, Iron Bridge, Blind River, Spragge and Spanish. The area covers most of the Algoma District.
3. The information contained in the Labour Market News section is gathered using a variety of internal and external sources. The primary sources of information include **The Sault Star, Sault This Week, SooToday.com, The Elliot Lake Standard, Northern Ontario Business, Algoma News Review, HRSDC Administrative Data and Statistics Canada.**
4. **Definitions – Labour Force Survey data**
Population 15+ (the working age population) consists of all persons 15 years of age and over residing in Canada with the exception of residents of the Territories, persons living on Indian Reserves, inmates of institutions and full-time members of the Canadian Armed forces. The **Labour Force** consists of people employed or unemployed and searching for work. Those who are neither employed nor unemployed and are not willing or able to supply labour services are considered **Not in the Labour Force**. The **Participation Rate** is the percentage of the working age population (15+) who are seeking work or are employed. The **Unemployment Rate** is the number of people who are unemployed and looking for work as a percentage of the number of people in the Labour Force. The **Employment Rate** is the number of people employed as a percentage of the working age population.
5. **Definitions - HRSDC Corporate Data**
Employment Insurance claim load: The number of individuals with an active claim for regular Employment Insurance benefits. Data on Employment Insurance claimants is not an accurate measure of the absolute level of unemployment. The data does not include unemployed individuals who: 1/ have not met the program's eligibility requirements or 2/ have exhausted their benefit entitlement.
Employment Opportunities: Advertised employment opportunities are comprised of vacancies notified to the HRCC offices in our area and newspaper want ads. This data is not a count of all labour market activity; in practical terms, such a count is not feasible. This data is useful to track short and long-term changes in the demand for individual occupations. The total number of opportunities is equal to full-time plus part-time and casual.
6. This review uses data from **Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey (LFS)**. In any survey there is a chance of variation due to sampling size. **Three-month moving averages** are used for selected labour force characteristics in an attempt to improve the reliability of this data. For further information on the Labour Force Survey, visit Statistics Canada's website at:
<http://www.statcan.ca/english/concepts/labour/index.htm>
7. For more information on Industrial and Occupational categories used in this review, visit **Statistics Canada's website** at:
<http://www.statcan.ca/english/concepts/index.htm>

