

Opportunities

NOVA SCOTIA

PHASE 1 REPORT



NOVA SCOTIA

**Department of Education
Skills and Learning Branch**

June 2007

BACKGROUND

PURPOSE

Opportunities Nova Scotia is a two-phased initiative which works to create valuable connections between Nova Scotia employers and job seekers and to help organizations meet the recruitment and retention challenges of today's labour market. This initiative further aims to communicate, both at home and abroad, that Nova Scotia has many good employment opportunities.

Opportunities Nova Scotia is one of many initiatives the Province is undertaking as part of a "four R" strategy (**R**ecruitment, **R**etraining, **R**etention, and **R**epatriation). These four elements are increasingly integral to Nova Scotia's future prosperity given today's changing labour market. *Opportunities Nova Scotia* works to strengthen efforts in these four areas to ensure that Nova Scotia has the labour force it needs to compete in today's economy.

PROCESS

The Department of Education's Skills and Learning Branch, worked with The People Bank, Jobboom, local regional development authorities, Brand Nova Scotia and other partners to successfully deliver Phase 1 of this initiative. This involved three key elements:

- 1) a series of five hiring fairs that were held between March and May 2007 in key regions across the province (Wolfville, Halifax, Sydney, Port Hawkesbury and Yarmouth), and two pilot events (Truro and Bridgewater);
- 2) an online recruitment campaign hosted by www.jobboom.com and www.thepeoplebank.com from April 15 to June 15, 2007 which enabled job seekers from home and away to apply for *Opportunities Nova Scotia* job postings electronically;
- 3) an employer education piece that identified key labour market issues and presented strategies to address these issues.

The Department of Education launched a comprehensive marketing campaign to raise awareness among Nova Scotians and bring both employers with current job openings and job seekers to the events.

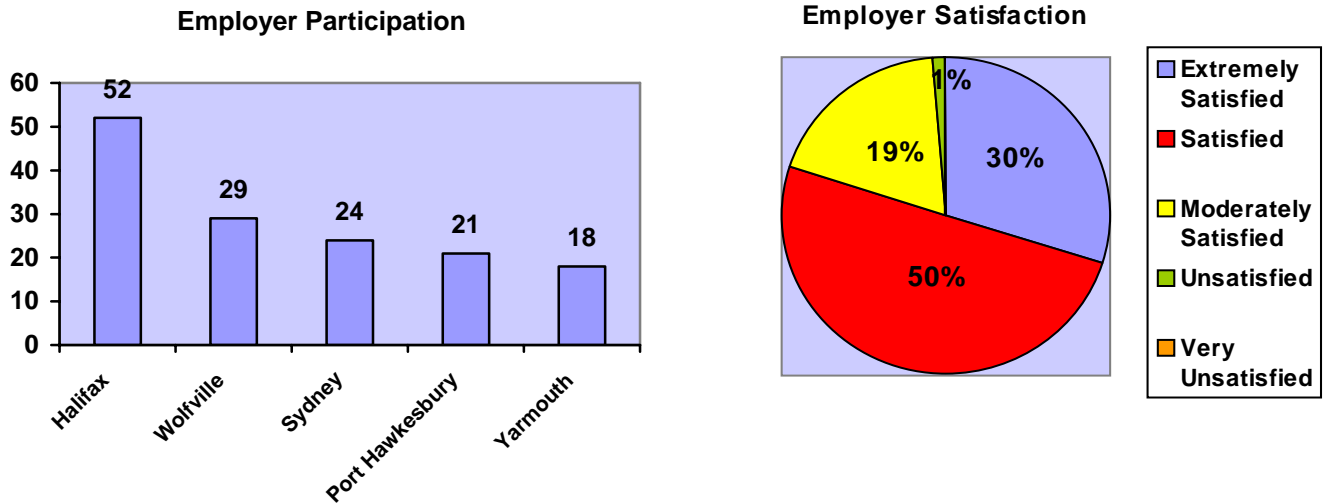
Employers and job seekers completed surveys at each of the hiring fairs. Feedback gathered from the surveys; along with attendance records and data related to online activity provide the basis for this report. Follow-up with employers is underway to determine final figures on the number of resumes received, interviews conducted and employees hired. This follow-up will be completed by the end of June and will inform Phase 2 planning. It should also be noted that as the Truro and Bridgewater hiring fairs were pilot events designed to inform the development and design of the process employed in the other five *Opportunities Nova Scotia* events, the results of these pilots are not included in this report.

Phase 2 will take *Opportunities Nova Scotia* to key regions across the country (Ottawa, Toronto, Calgary and Edmonton) to encourage expatriates and other job seekers to "come to work" in Nova Scotia. Planning for Phase 2 is underway, with the expectation of a roll-out in October 2007.

RESULTS

EMPLOYER PARTICIPATION

A total of 95 employers participated in *Opportunities Nova Scotia* - with a number of employers participating at multiple locations. Eighty-nine per cent of participating employers responded to the survey. Of these, 80 per cent were “satisfied” or “extremely satisfied” with the event.



Comments from employers included:

“This was a great success for our organization. Not only did we receive a great number of applications from qualified candidates, but it was an opportunity for us to raise the profile of our young company. The province really 'stepped up to the plate' to connect employers and prospective employees.”

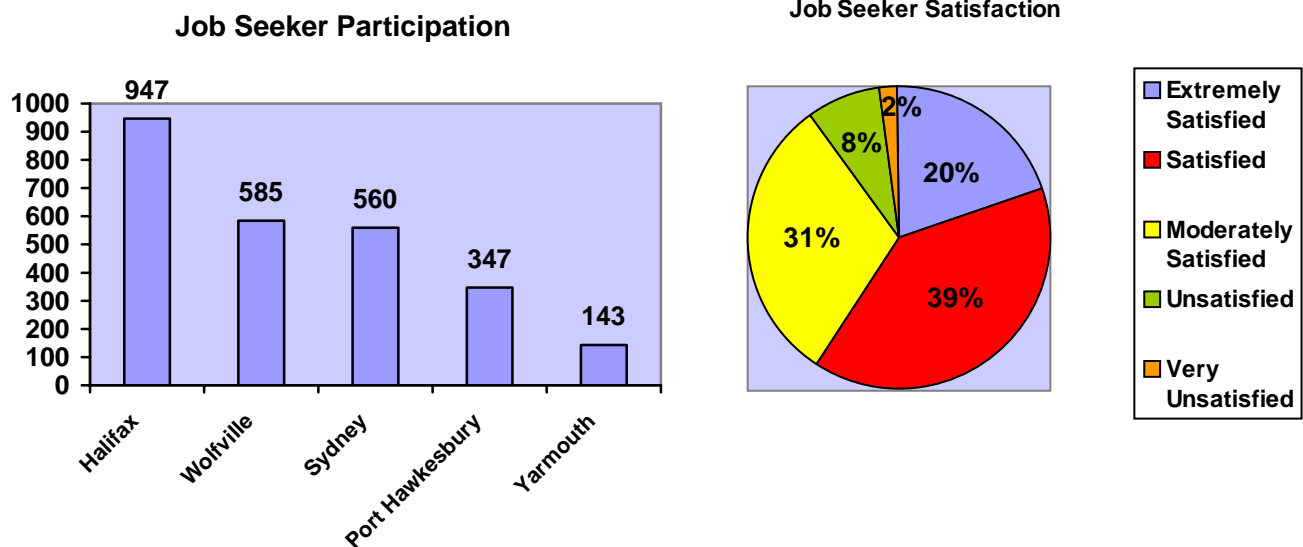
Wayne Ellis, Acadian Mining Corporation

“We were successful in filling two positions. This industry is very competitive and the biggest challenge is retention. Anything you can do that is above and beyond your normal recruiting process is a very good thing. That’s why we participated in Opportunities Nova Scotia. It’s good to know that government is working with industry to help us meet our challenges.”

Vaughn Hatcher, Clarke Transport

JOB SEEKER PARTICIPATION

A total of 2,582 job seekers participated in *Opportunities Nova Scotia*. Forty-three per cent of participating job seekers responded to the survey. Of these, 59 per cent were “satisfied” or “extremely satisfied” with the event.



Comments from job seekers included:

“I wasn’t expecting to find managerial opportunities at the hiring fair but I was surprised and pleased at the variety of positions. Within two weeks I had completed the interview process for a managerial role in human resources and secured a permanent job with a competitive salary and benefits package. I would recommend events like this to anyone. The opportunity for face-to-face contact is key.”

Lisa Nicholson, HR Superintendent

“I had been looking for a job for five months and within a week of attending the hiring fair; I had started my new job. There were so many different job opportunities and it was great to talk to companies at the fair. It can be really hard for people to find good jobs and I’m really glad that government is doing something to help. Employment is good for everyone.”

Lorie LeDrew, Front Desk Administrator

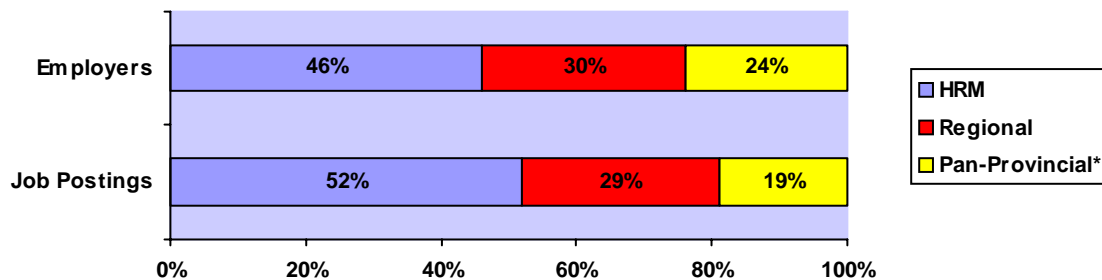
JOBS SHOWCASED

Both at the events and online, *Opportunities Nova Scotia* employers showcased a total of 523 job postings, representing 2,346 jobs in a range of sectors. In many cases, several positions were available under one job posting.

SECTOR	# JOB POSTINGS	# JOBS	SECTOR	# JOB POSTINGS	# JOBS
Call Centre	23	1164	Media	1	1
Community Organizations	9	117	Personal Services	8	21
Construction/Engineering	20	44	Public Sector	18	18
Education	77	86	Retail	35	152
Finance/Legal	12	54	Trades & Technology	27	55
Food Svcs/Processing	30	150	Transportation	15	66
Health Care	108	180	Travel/Hospitality	80	148
Information Technology	8	9	Utilities	41	53
Manufacturing	11	28	TOTAL	523	2,346

The location of employers and job postings was roughly split between those based in the Halifax Regional Municipality and the rest of the province.

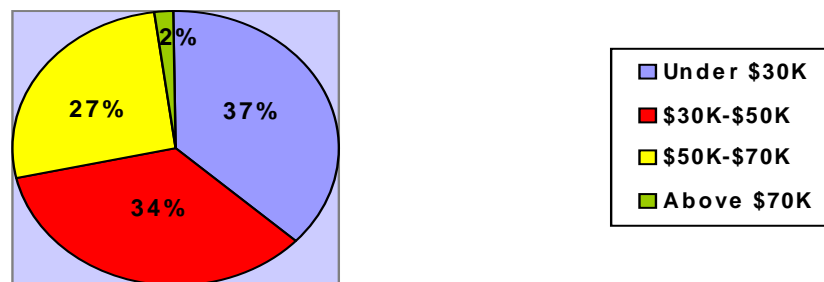
Location of Employers and Job Postings



*Note: Pan-provincial employers are those companies that employ people across the province (e.g.: Nova Scotia Power and Aliant).

An impressive 63 per cent of all job postings were above the \$30,000 salary range. This supports the reality that Nova Scotia has a good range of employment opportunities.

Salary Range of Job Postings



RESUMES DISTRIBUTED

To date, a total of 5,429 resumes have been distributed to employers – 51 per cent of these resumes were submitted through the online recruitment process and 49 per cent were submitted at the events. Several employers received hundreds of resumes while others received very few.

The figures reported below are current as of May 30, 2007 and do not yet include resumes which were given directly to employers. New data will be added once employer follow-up is complete.

SECTOR	# JOB POSTINGS	# RESUMES DISTRIBUTED	EMPLOYMENT TYPE	# JOB POSTINGS	# RESUMES DISTRIBUTED
Call Centre	13	239	Administration	22	405
Construction/Engineering	29	497	Communications	1	152
Education	51	n/a*	Customer Service	49	632
Finance/Legal	15	296	General Labour	32	414
Food Svcs/Processing	31	152	Human Resources	6	283
Health Care	106	209	Other	25	448
Information Technology	24	309	Project Management	1	74
Trades & Technology	42	408	Sales/Marketing	14	244
Transportation	12	102	Senior Management	5	72
Travel/Hospitality	45	493	TOTAL	523	5,429

* Job seekers were instructed to directly apply online for these job postings.

It is also interesting to note that on average, 16 per cent of all resumes received were from out-of-province, with roughly 40 per cent of all resumes received by the 10 largest *Opportunities Nova Scotia* employers being from out-of-province. The highest out-of-province response came from Ontario, followed by Quebec and Newfoundland. Given that *Opportunities Nova Scotia* was not promoted out-of-province, the response rate from out-of-province job seekers is encouraging as plans for Phase 2 are being developed.

HIRING ACTIVITY

As of May 30, 2007, more than 200 hires have taken place as a direct result of *Opportunities Nova Scotia* and several hundred others are in the screening/interviewing phase (according to the employer surveys completed on the day of each event, 223 interviews were conducted and 24 people were hired on site).

It is also interesting to note that, according to employers, those sectors facing significant challenges finding skilled workers include construction/engineering, health care, and finance/legal. In addition, sales/marketing and senior management positions were identified as particularly hard to fill.

MOVING FORWARD

LESSONS LEARNED

In the final analysis, *Opportunities Nova Scotia* provided a forum for connections between employers and job seekers. In doing so, the province was able to reinforce the message that Nova Scotia has many good employment opportunities and a workforce available to meet this demand. In these terms, the initiative was a success.

There is much more the province could be doing to help employers hire skilled workers and to help job seekers obtain rewarding employment. In the face of growing demographic and skills challenges, many employers need to adopt new, more proactive ways of attracting and keeping top talent in their organizations. Similarly, job seekers need to be aware of opportunities and how to best develop and market themselves to reach their career goals. The Department of Education has a key role to play in addressing these systemic issues through working with employers to understand their human resource needs and supporting the education/training of our labour force to meet this demand.

While the results of *Opportunities Nova Scotia* are not a true representation of Nova Scotia's labour market, given the number of resumes submitted by job seekers, it can be argued that the province has the people to fill these positions but many people may not have the right skills (skills mis-match). Combined with an aging and shrinking labour force, lagging labour productivity, and the changing nature of work, Nova Scotia's employers and workers must be more engaged in supporting initiatives that address these issues. For employers, this requires investment in effective succession planning, building inclusive workplaces, competitive compensation, and supporting work-life balance and development opportunities for staff. In short, being an "employer of choice."

NEXT STEPS

The Department of Education's Skills and Learning Branch will use the strategic connections developed through Phase 1 of *Opportunities Nova Scotia* to continue to build understanding of our changing labour market through the development of an engagement/communication strategy. The branch will also continue to develop partnerships and initiatives that address the demonstrated disconnect between employers and job seekers and the skills mis-match resulting from the transition to a knowledge-based economy. *Opportunities Nova Scotia* is one approach to this challenge. Moving forward, the Province must continue to collaborate with key labour market partners and stakeholders to develop effective strategies which facilitate the matching of labour market supply and demand.

While the extent of out-of province interest in *Opportunities Nova Scotia* is encouraging, the less than expected level of employer involvement in Phase 1 (which was of no cost to employers) points to one of the challenges the province will need to address in Phase 2 of this initiative. It will be important to provide strong competition to other labour markets and recruitment events across the country, as well as a solid return on investment. The Province will give proper consideration to these issues when developing the approach and messaging for Phase 2.