



**The Saskatchewan Environmental
Industry and Managers Association**

**ENVIRONMENTAL INDUSTRY
SECTOR LABOUR STUDY**

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Executive Summary

ES-1 – Overview

The Saskatchewan labour force is undergoing a fundamental shift. Rapid economic growth in 2007 and 2008, combined with population out-migration over the past decade, reduced the unemployment rate to 4.1% in 2008, one of the lowest in Canada. The province is experiencing labour shortages for the first time, which limits the ability to grow and prosper.

During 2007 and 2008, the Saskatchewan economy attracted over 20,000 individuals, yet businesses still reported labour shortages. These shortages are occurring prior to the retirement of Saskatchewan's 171,500 working baby boomers over the next two decades. Labour market competition will intensify over the next two decades and this will have direct impacts on the environmental sector. While the labour force will be facing increased competition in the coming years, the competition for skilled and highly skilled workers will be even greater.

The competitive position of the environmental sector is quite good. The environmental sector has a very high value proposition for prospective employees. There is significant demand for the work, the work is rewarding and more aligned with workers' core values, and the image of the industry is quite positive. One of the key pieces that is missing is the public awareness regarding the career potential in the environmental workforce.

While the competitive position of the industry is good, the industry is going to have to be proactive to attract the over 1,200 skilled and highly skilled workers it is forecast to need on an annual basis.

ES-2 – Key Findings

- Saskatchewan's environmental workforce is 2.7% of the workforce or 14,500 people with the majority being skilled and highly skilled workers.
- The environmental sector is, in many respects, an enabling sector as environmental impact analysis and environmental planning are critical components to major projects that drive our economy.
- The forecast demand over the next three years is 3,721 workers with the vast majority requiring post-secondary training.
- 1,028 of these workers will require engineering, science, or technician/technologist backgrounds.
- The industry is facing recruitment challenges and these challenges will intensify as the industry grows and labour shortages become more acute.
- While there are some challenges relating to training capacity, much of the battle

will be in encouraging people to choose the environmental sector both as a training goal and as a career.

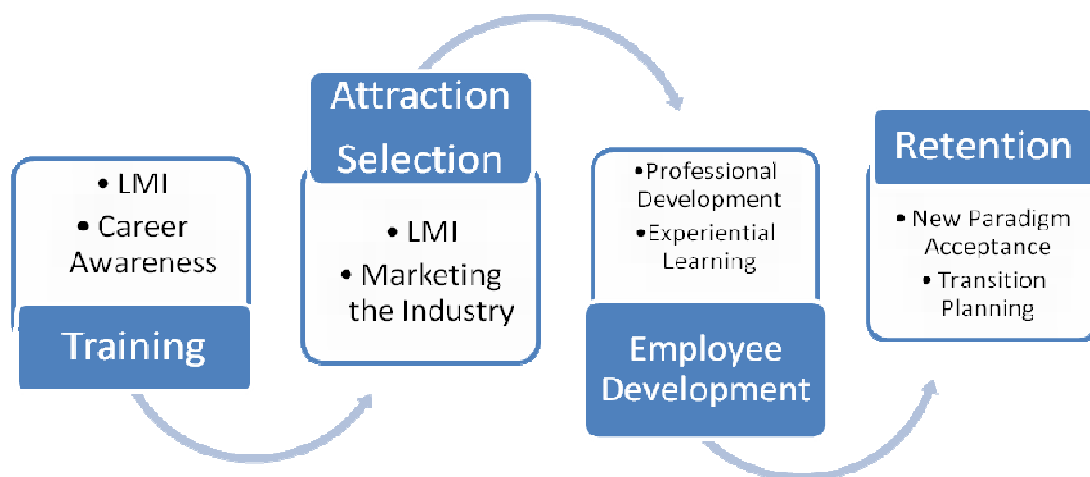
- Aboriginal engagement and immigration could form key parts of meeting the industry's labour force needs, however, demand and training requirements must be communicated to the respective groups.

ES-3 – Conclusions and Recommendations

Saskatchewan is dealing with some fundamental labour force issues. Saskatchewan, based on current projections, does not have the labour force capacity to meet industry needs in the coming years. This issue is exaggerated in sectors in which the labour pool is restricted to skilled and highly skilled workers such as the environmental sector. Industries that engage in strategic labour force planning will give their respective members an advantage as labour force issues become more prevalent and competition intensifies.

Successful labour force strategies are about getting the right information to the right people so they can make rational career choices. Labour market information is also critical for people to make rational training decisions. The labour force strategy is based on the following model:

Figure 1 – Environmental Workforce – Talent Management and Optimization



ES-3.1 – Training Focus

- **Communicating the Needs of the Industry** – Develop an online portal to communicate the labour needs of the industry. This would be done with the goal of informing and influencing both career and training decisions.

- **Environmental Innovation and HQP** – In science, technology, and research-based industries such as the environmental sector it is critical to cultivate highly qualified people (HQP). The development of a centre for excellence in environmental technology/innovation would be an excellent opportunity to cultivate the development of HQP trained in Saskatchewan’s unique environmental challenges and opportunities.
- **Increasing Training Opportunities** – The demand for specific professions, such as water and waste water technicians/technologists is significant. Training institutions must be informed of the demand for environmental workers to help with planning and program development.
- **Sponsor Scholarships in Key Areas** – Areas of critical interest to industry could develop industry-sponsored scholarships as a way to get targeted groups involved in the industry.

ES-3.2 – Industry Attraction and Selection

- **Communication Strategy to Attract People to the Industry** – Another aspect of the LMI communication strategy will be to engage already skilled individuals to enter a career in the environmental sector. Utilizing the inherent advantage of the industry brand and key labour market information about employment in the industry, awareness and attachment to the industry can be fostered.
- **Aboriginal Engagement** – SEIMA has already signed an AEDP Partnership Agreement with First Nations and Métis Relations. However, the communications strategy should be utilized to communicate back to the industry the best practices identified in that agreement. SIIT, GDI, Aboriginal Participation and Upskilling Initiative, and the Northern Labour Market Committee are also partners that could be engaged to access Aboriginal people.
- **Presence at Career Fairs** – An industry presence with real job opportunities is important. In the current labour market environment participants at career fairs have gone beyond providing information to offering actual jobs. These fairs are becoming increasingly competitive and industry must respond to be effective.

ES-3.3 – Employment Development

- **Professional Development Programs** – An industry-led committee should provide ongoing labour market information to training institutions, particularly with regard to professional development programs. Professional programs are becoming a best practice with universities and other training institutions wishing to engage with industry with programming. An industry-led committee is the best organization to make recommendations on such courses. Short courses in topics such as Saskatchewan’s regulatory regime would likely be well received by the industry.

- **Experiential Learning** – Experiential learning allows students to get real world training as well as fostering an attachment to Saskatchewan’s environmental sector. This information can be communicated to the industry as a way of increasing industry participation in internship and work terms as this is a best practice that should be encouraged.

ES-3.4 – Retention and Succession Planning

Employee retention is a key part to addressing labour force shortages. However, addressing retention issues takes, in part, a paradigm shift on behalf of employers. With an aging demographic the issues are not of simply losing manpower, but also losing the brain trust. Succession planning must take into account the potential loss of knowledge and skills. Because retention is such a complex issue, retention best practices seminars could be offered to industry to accentuate information communicated to the industry through the communications strategy.

ES-4 – Next Steps

ES-4.1 – Communication Strategy – Four Distinct Audiences

Four distinct messages must be developed for four distinct groups including:

- **Employers and Professional Organizations** – There is a labour shortage and it is going to get worse, however, there are a number of things that can be done at the organizational level that will mitigate the impacts.
- **Students/Employees and the Broader Public** – There is a need for them in the environmental sector – training in skills relating to the environmental sector is an investment that will pay significant dividends in the long term. This message must be communicated to the broad public as well as specific groups such as the Aboriginal Community.
- **Training Institutions** – There is a need for more training spots, a need to maintain and expand environmental programs.
- **AEEL/Immigration** – Representatives Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program within Advanced Education, Employment, and Labour must also be informed with regards to the labour force demands of the environmental sector.
- **Communications** – The core of the communications strategy must be accessible and relevant information available online. However, additional communication mediums must also be utilized to ensure the message is received by employers, students/employees, and training institutions. For each group key messaging will vary:
- **Employers and Professional Organizations** – A great many of the key employers are already SEIMA members, and can be updated directly and provided with key information. Another key contact group for employers and employees are the

professional organizations such as the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists (APEGS) and the Saskatchewan Applied Science Technologists and Technicians (SASTT).

- **Students/Employees and the Broader Public** – A broader communications campaign will be required and will likely require the assistance of a communications company.
- **Training Institutions** – SIAST, which has been identified as having a direct impact on the industry labour supply, can be contacted directly. However, universities, GDI, and SIIT must also be made aware of the forecasted demand for environmental employees. This will be valuable information in terms of their program offerings and support to existing programs.
- **AEEL and Immigration** – Meet with Ministry representatives to determine how SEIMA and individual industry members can work with the Ministry to meet the sector's labour force needs.

ES-4.2 –Engage an Industry Labour Market Committee

Establish a labour market committee that will continue to oversee labour market issues and advise stakeholders on key issues. This committee will also continue to make recommendations to training institutions and communicate the needs of industry such as professional, degree, and diploma programs. This should include training institutions, employers, professional organizations (SASST and/or APEGS), regulatory bodies, and other stakeholders.