

Backgrounder

Northern Essential Skills Training Initiative

November 21, 2008

Initiative to Support Apprenticeship Training For Northern and Aboriginal Residents

Critical skilled-labour shortages in the north will be addressed by the \$4.5 million Northern Essential Skills Training Initiative, Competitiveness, Training and Trade Minister Andrew Swan announced today.

“The initiative was developed to meet the challenge of labour and skill shortages that could limit economic growth in the north,” said Swan. “This program will provide focused, industry-driven training for Aboriginal and northern residents interested in entering apprenticeship, but who require upgraded essential skills.”

Essential skills are those skills needed to be successful at work. They bring a work focus to more general literacy skills and are considered essential for lifelong career advancement. The province’s Adult Literacy Strategy under development through Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy includes literacy and essential skills required for success in the workplace.

“I am pleased with the increasing recognition that industry is placing on literacy as critical to opportunity, productivity and competitiveness,” said Advanced Education and Literacy Minister Diane McGifford.

Essential skills include document use, numeracy, computer use, thinking skills, working with others, oral communication, reading, writing and continuous learning. With respect to apprenticeships specifically, interested potential apprentices often require higher levels of math and document use.

“Our government is committed to improving Aboriginal employment and apprenticeship training opportunities in the north,” said Eric Robinson, acting minister of Aboriginal and northern affairs. “By providing training, we will help open doors for northern communities to achieve independent economic development and give residents of those communities an opportunity to have long-term employment.”

A key partner in this initiative is the Northern Manitoba Sector Council, a non-profit corporation with membership from the northern industry sectors of mining, forestry and energy, said Swan.

“Northern industries employ thousands of people in highly skilled, high-paying jobs,” said Bill Vickman, manager of human resources, environment, health and safety at Vale Inco and chair of the Northern Manitoba Sector Council (NMSC). “We need to be providing essential skills training to northern and Aboriginal people to ensure they have the right skills to be successful in the growing northern labour market.”

“Northern industries need people with skills, and essential skills training will help these industries remain competitive,” said Tom Goodman, senior vice-president, operations, Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Co. Ltd., and a member of the NMSC. “This initiative will help northern and Aboriginal people learn good, solid foundational skills to enter and succeed at apprenticeship and trades training. If we can train local people for local jobs, everyone benefits.”

The Northern Essential Skills Training Initiative will target lower-skilled, unemployed and under-employed people.

Labour force projections suggest thousands of workers will be required in northern Manitoba in upcoming years. The Northern Sector Council estimates that hydro, mining and forestry will require at least 2,800 new hires over the next five years and likely many more.

Funding for the Northern Essential Skills Training Initiative originates from the federal government’s new Community Development Trust Fund.

- 30 -

Backgrounder

[Northern Essential Skills Training Initiative](#)