

Canada-Nova Scotia Labour Market Agreement

2009-2010 Annual Report

Summary

In the 2009-2010 fiscal year, the Province of Nova Scotia invested over \$16 million in Labour Market Agreement (LMA) and Strategic Training and Transition Fund (STTF) funding in labour market development programs.

Through the LMA, Nova Scotia was able to increase participation of under-represented groups and low-skilled Nova Scotians, thereby strengthening the labour market for the future.

The STTF funding supported individuals, employers and communities affected by the economic downturn.

Together, the LMA and the STTF assisted an estimated 4700 Nova Scotians gain better access and attachment to the labour market. The following report outlines the investments and activities undertaken through support of these two agreements.

The future health of the Nova Scotia labour market depends on many elements. The LMA and STTF funding have allowed Nova Scotia to support several key elements to help ensure a bright future for both individual Nova Scotians and the province as a whole.

Background

The Canada-Nova Scotia Labour Market Agreement is a six-year bilateral agreement through which the federal government provides funds for Nova Scotia's labour market programs and services. This agreement was signed between Canada and Nova Scotia in June 2008.

Eligibility for LMA-funded programs and services is limited to:

- Unemployed Nova Scotians who are not eligible to receive Employment Insurance benefits; and
- Employed Nova Scotians who do not have a high school diploma or recognized certification or who have low levels of literacy and essential skills.

In addition, the LMA is designed to target specific groups of eligible Nova Scotians who are under-represented in the workforce. These groups include Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, immigrants, African Nova Scotians, Acadian and Francophone Nova Scotians, older workers, women and income assistance recipients.

The LMA is designed to complement labour market programs and services available to those Nova Scotians who are eligible for Employment Insurance benefits through the Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA).

A widowed single mother in rural Nova Scotia had little hope of finding employment to sustain herself and maintain her household.

Through the provision of an LMA-funded wage subsidy, a local employer was able to provide her with the skills and training required to maintain full-time employment and provide for her family.

An Omnibus Amendment to the LMA was signed on May 1, 2009, providing an additional \$8.2M in 2009-10 through the Strategic Training and Transition Fund (STTF). A part of the Federal Economic Action Plan, the STTF aims to actively support individuals, employers and communities affected by the economic downturn through the implementation of workforce response, workforce stabilization, and workforce growth and development strategies and initiatives. Under the STTF, client eligibility can include both EI and non-EI eligible Nova Scotians.

This report provides a summary of the results of programs funded under the LMA during the 2009-2010 fiscal year, as outlined in Nova Scotia's 2009-2010 Annual Plan (<http://www.gov.ns.ca/employmentnovascotia/lma-information/documents/LabourMarketAgreement2009-2010ImplementationPlan.pdf>).

Planning Context

In 2009-2010, priorities for the LMA were set by the Department of Labour and Workforce Development (LWD) in collaboration with:

- Department of Community Services (DCS),
- Department of Economic and Rural Development (ERD),
- Office of Immigration,

- Office of Acadian Affairs,
- Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs,
- Office of Aboriginal Affairs,
- Nova Scotia Business Inc. (NSBI), and
- The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

Funds are allocated based on provincial priorities and strategies. Funds are used strategically to enhance existing provincial initiatives such as workplace education and adult learning, while other funding permits the creation of new employability programs. Programs and services are typically delivered by third party community organizations and educational institutions.

Activities funded by the LMA are currently delivered by three departments: Labour and Workforce Development, Office of Immigration and Community Services.

Similar to the LMA, an interdepartmental committee applies a collaborative approach to STTF investments. Committee members include representatives from the Departments of Labour and Workforce Development, Economic and Rural Development and Nova Scotia Business Inc.

Nova Scotia's Labour Market Context

Past

Over the 2008-2009 economic downturn, Nova Scotia's labour market performed relatively well compared to other provinces such as Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario. Women and older workers (aged 55 and over) experienced job gains and overall employment in Nova Scotia remained steady.

Nevertheless, jobs were still lost and durations of unemployment rose. Men and youth saw the most job losses. The large increase in the number of regular employment insurance beneficiaries in Nova Scotia (+20%) and Canada (+51%) exemplify the trend in job losses.

Not all industries were affected equally by the recession. Real GDP in goods-producing industries fell 5% in Nova Scotia in 2009, while services-producing industries experienced growth of 1%. Employment losses in the goods-producing sector (-5,900) were concentrated in manufacturing (-5,300), forestry (-1,100) and construction (-900).

Conversely, employment increased over the same period in the service-producing sector (+5,500), with the largest gains observed in educational services (+3,900), and health care and social assistance (+2,300). Some job losses were experienced in areas of the service sector such as retail trade (-2,300) and business services

LMA funding was used to assist a 46-year-old man with multiple physical disabilities obtain employment at a local school performing janitorial duties.

He had been on income assistance since the age of 18. Now he is an active contributor to his local labour market economy.

He states, "I am really proud of the work that I do and I enjoy the people that I work with. Having struggled with disabilities all my life and being on social assistance for so many years, it feels great to be able to have a job to look forward to going to everyday and earning my own way."

(-2,500). This attributed to consumers and businesses cutting-back on spending and reduced tourism across the province.

Present

Nova Scotia's labour market remained sluggish in 2010, with year-over-year year-to-date (January-July) employment growth of just 0.3% and unemployment retracting a slight 0.6%. It does appear, however, that the pace of job losses has slowed down, demonstrated by a decline in the number of received first-time EI claims of 13% (year/year, Jan-Jun).

Future

Labour market information indicates that a post-secondary education will be increasingly important in Nova Scotia's future job market. According to the Canadian Occupational Projection System, almost 9 in 10 jobs openings in Nova Scotia over the next 5 years will require either a high school or post-secondary credential.

Older workers (50-64) and seniors (65+) are playing a greater role in the work force than they have historically, and their continued participation will be important for the future. The province must also better integrate those who are currently under-represented into the workforce in the coming years to meet the projected demand for workers.

An aging workforce and continued out-migration are challenges for the Nova Scotia labour market. Attracting a skilled immigrant workforce will continue to be important for Nova Scotia's prosperity.

LMA Highlights

In 2009-2010, the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Workforce Development invested \$8,166,043 of LMA funds and \$8,211,743 of STTF funds in labour market programs for Nova Scotians for a total investment of \$16,377,788.

The LMA and STTF funding commitments in Nova Scotia assisted vulnerable Nova Scotians in gaining skills and supports required to help them attach to the labour market, or in the case of employed citizens, to help them remain competitive in their job.

Highlights of Program Investments include:

- Over \$2.5 million in funding to support newcomers and immigrants in increasing their employability through enhanced and occupation-specific language training, employment and business development supports, and bridging programs for internationally educated professionals.
- Over \$2 million in funding to help persons with disabilities improve their employment prospects through programs including job maintenance, job coaching, post-employment support as well as literacy and essential skills training programs.
- Over \$ 2.3 million in investments in adult learning programs where adults gain literacy and essential skills to help them transition to employment.

- Over \$1 million in funding to support projects specifically targeting women to facilitate their entry and/or re-entry into the labour market.
- Approximately \$0.5 million to support training and employment initiatives for older workers.
- Approximately \$0.5 million to support Acadian/Francophone Nova Scotians in connecting to the labour market.
- Over \$800,000 in programs and services specifically targeting the African Canadian population to address barriers to employment.
- \$0.6 million invested in transition initiatives to help Nova Scotians affected by business closures remain active in the workforce.

LMA Client Profile

The LMA has over 2200 registered clients for 2009-2010. The STTF has over 1000 registered clients and an estimated 1500 additional clients who received transition and/or self-serve interventions. In total, it is projected that over 4700 clients have benefited from these investments with activities ranging from short-term interventions and referrals to long-term, full-time programs.

Of the registered LMA and STTF clients who identified themselves with a designated target group, 56% were women, 26% were persons with a disability, 26% were recipients of Income Assistance, 24% were immigrants, 24% identified as older workers and 20% identified as youth. An additional 8% identified as Acadian/Francophone, 4% as African Nova Scotian and 3% identified as Aboriginal.

LMA investments supported a program that provides mentorship and skills training to individuals who have experienced a multitude of barriers to employment, and who often come from families who are in receipt of income assistance.

One of the participants in this program was an unemployed youth with a modest work history and the feeling of little hope for the future. His commitment to the training was evident, and he is now employed with his work placement host and has been able to purchase his first car. The program has opened doors for this young man and has allowed him to see how bright his future can be.

The province conducted a follow-up survey with LMA and STTF clients who had completed their intervention more than 3 months prior to contact. Of the LMA and STTF clients contacted during the follow up survey, 80% indicated that their intervention prepared them for employment. The great majority were satisfied with the programs and services they had received through the LMA and STTF.

LMA Priority Areas for Programming

Nova Scotia's 2009-2010 LMA Annual Plan identified four areas of programming focus:

Priority Area 1: Client Access and Service Provision

Objective: Create access to programs for all clients regardless of income attachment

Highlights:

- Assisted immigrant women in increasing their employment and self-employment capabilities through the acquisition of various certifications, English language training and business counseling services.
- Assisted diverse, unemployed women prepare for, obtain and maintain employment in the fields of trades and technology through the provision of specialized workshops in a supportive woman-centred atmosphere.
- Provided older workers (aged 55-64) with the skills and tools they needed to successfully re-integrate into the workforce through the provision of employment assistance services, essential skills training, and work experience.
- Increased access to literacy and essential skills programs for hundreds of unemployed Nova Scotians.

Priority Area 2: Labour Market Skills Development

Objective: Increase literacy, numeracy, and occupation-specific skills through training and skills development programs.

Highlights:

- Supported a construction training and job readiness program for unemployed African Canadians in the trades sector. The program equips aspiring tradespeople from the Black community with enhanced skills, certifications and workplace-based competencies to establish a stronger presence in Nova Scotia's construction sector.
- Supported over 200 clients in more than 9 communities through the Adult Learning GAP Program (ALP-GAP), which increases participant's employment potential from both a practical and academic standpoint by teaching life skills, adult learning (ALP curricula II and III) and work experience to integrate participants back into the work force.
- Supported an initiative to encourage and support the participation of Aboriginal People in careers relevant or used within oil and gas exploration, development, production or industry.

Priority Area 3: Workforce Attachment and Retention

Objective: Link unemployed clients directly with jobs and help them to maintain those jobs.

Highlights:

- Supported the provision of employment and vocational crisis supports (counseling, troubleshooting, technical aids, etc.) to over 150 persons with disabilities across Nova Scotia to enable them to remain attached to the labour market.
- Funded a pilot project to offer and deliver Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) services and the necessary program modules, as per the provincial Continuing Care Assistant curriculum. This initiative was designed to meet the needs of frontline care providers who seek to enhance their existing knowledge or work towards their Continuing Care Assistant certification.

Priority Area 4: Workforce Development

Objective: Support employed Nova Scotians in the workplace by helping them keep and advance in their jobs.

Highlights:

- Supported English in the Workplace training to assist newcomers who are employed or are self-employed in developing language skills in the workplace such as customer service language, pronunciation, presentation skills, writing e-mails, reports and letters.

STTF Priority Areas for Programming

The two-year Strategic Training and Transition Fund has three areas of programming focus:

Priority Area 1: Workforce Response Strategy

Objective: Support individuals, employers and communities affected by workforce adjustments, lay-offs and closures.

Highlights:

- Funded re-training and transition supports for individuals who were displaced by industry decline in Nova Scotia. Services included the provision of employment counseling, workshops, upgrading and training programs to workers in the manufacturing, aerospace, agricultural, tourism, and contact industry sectors.
- Supported the initiation of labour market development plans for the African Nova Scotian, Aboriginal, Acadian/Francophone and persons with disabilities communities.

Priority Area 2: Workforce Stabilization and Development

Objective: Facilitate the continued attachment of individuals to the labour market through workplace-based training.

Highlights:

- Supported the delivery of workshops by industry trained boat builder professionals to improve the skills of the existing workforce in new manufacturing processes, estimating, researching the market, marketing and business management.
- Supported the provision of essential skills and occupation-specific training with a guaranteed job upon completion to over 160 Nova Scotians who were affected by the downturn in the economy. The Health Care, Tourism and Trucking sectors were supported via this One Journey Work and Learn Initiative.
- Funded on-the-job and industry-specific training to new employees to enable efficient and effective transition into full-time employment with Nova Scotia businesses.
- Expanded the Nova Scotia Workplace Education Initiative to provide literacy and essential skills to workers in Nova Scotian companies.

Priority Area 3: Labour Market Growth and Development

Objective: Implement innovative workforce development initiatives to respond to emerging business growth areas.

Highlights:

- Supported the development of practical apprenticeship exams to assist individuals experiencing difficulties on written exams in receiving their trade certifications through physical demonstrations of their skills and abilities.
- Funded a transition program to help internationally trained nurses bridge into employment, including assistance in successfully receiving their nursing designation.
- Provided wage subsidies to companies that were expanding and creating new jobs to support workplace growth.

LMA Success Stories

ALP-GAP

The ALP-GAP Program is a new initiative that was created with the inception of the LMA. Its success can be attributed to the holistic approach the program takes to linking people to employment.

ALP-GAP programs consist of four essential components: life skills development, adult learning program (ALP) curriculum, workplace experience/exposure, and educational/employment planning for the future.

Clients are able to improve essential and foundational skills through the ALP curriculum, gain employability awareness and skills for today's labour market, increase their self-confidence and self-efficacy, develop skills in self-assessment, goal setting, job search, and career/educational planning, develop links with local employers and other community agencies, and gain workplace exposure and experience.

One Journey Work and Learn

Janet was a single mother in receipt of Income Assistance. Through her One Journey Continuing Care Assistance program, she has a full-time job, a career she enjoys and a bright future.

Saying, "I met a lot of great people inside class and out. I've gained confidence, experience, and a good career and diversity."

The One Journey Work and Learn Initiative is a unique partnership between government, community, and industry, whereby unemployed people who are experiencing barriers to employment are trained to fill identified industry skills shortages. A project idea begins with an industry identifying a shortage.

A Partnership Project Team, comprised of government, community and industry representatives, is established; this team oversees the project from start to finish, which involves selecting participants, conducting skills assessments, providing customized essential skills training followed by industry training and work placements.

Guaranteed jobs are waiting for participants upon successful completion. Last year, this program resulted in over 160 Continuing Care Assistant positions being filled, with starting salaries of \$35,000 per year. In addition, more than 30 long haul truck drivers graduated through a program offered by the Trucking Sector Council; these new employees have starting salaries of \$40,000 per year.

A single mother of five children who had for years been reliant on Income Assistance came to the ALP-GAP program and blossomed.

She came out of her shell and accepted the challenges that GAP presented and she is still employed at her original job placement.

Her words sum it up best... "I wanted you to know that I love this job....they are really good to me. I will never forget you, you were so good to me. Because of GAP I am a different person. I look forward to each day in a new way. THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING!!"