

Aging Workforce Research Pilot Project

Highlights of the Older Workers Stories Project

Go to www.solutionsatwork.info to access the full report.

With more and more of our citizens reaching the age of 65 and older in Peterborough, what contribution can an aging workforce make to the sustainable development of the region? How can we involve these citizens and other affected stakeholders in a process that allows everyone to understand what is happening and figure out what to do about it? It is these questions that brought together many organizations and citizens of Peterborough in the fall of 2008 to look at the aging of our workforce from a community perspective.



The Study:

- A qualitative and exploratory study of the sustainability of manufacturing and health care workers ages 55+ in the Peterborough area during 2010.
- Its purpose was to identify and investigate labour market challenges and opportunities confronted by workers at the back end of their careers when work-time is extending, responsibilities are piling up, the public pension is under revision and the job market is under pressure.
- The main question directing the study was: **‘How are people coping, what we can do to help and what more needs to be known to promote the sustainability of a robust senior cohort in the labour force?’**
- Results of the first phase of this study are set out in this document one dimension at a time (including policy implications and further research directions).

“I think industry today has to be flexible with an older worker. Say, you know what? We’d rather have a piece of you than none of you.”

Male 55 Manufacturing Management

Project Partners:

Alternatives Community Program Services
City of Peterborough
Greater Peterborough Area Economic Development Corporation
Northern Lights
Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation - District 15
Peterborough County-City Health Unit
Peterborough Social Planning Council
Service Canada Centre East-Central Ontario
Trent Centre for Community-Based Education
Trent University faculty (Sociology, Business Administration, Economics, Geography, English Literature, Canadian Studies, Mathematics, Psychology)
Watton Employment Services
Workforce Development Board
Community Volunteers

Funders:
New Horizons for Seniors Program
Trillium Foundation



“I enjoy my work. I’m passionate about it. I like it. It’s stimulating. I’m well respected in what I do. I’d just like to have a little more personal time ... Thursday night men’s hockey league when you’re never there ... those kinds of things are things you can’t buy back.”
Male 55 Manufacturing, Management.

Policy suggestions tended to centre on four main items:

- 1. Build productive platforms** in organizations for meaningful and effective intergenerational exchange of strengths.
- 2. Enable small to medium sized businesses** in extending work-structure and financial benefits enjoyed by those in larger agencies with resources to handle what’s needed to increase the sustainability of experiential knowledge.
- 3. Extend accessibility** of work and non-work related education.
- 4. Enable better pension eligibility** for those whose careers have been characterised by part-time work, and particularly women.



“Both my parents became very ill. So I had to quit my work...and take care of them. I loved that work...but you had to make a choice.”

F 63 Health , Lower White Collar

The Older Workers Stories Project is one of 3 parts of the Aging workforce Research Pilot Project.

Part 1 - Statistics: Development of a digital workforce analysis & modeling platform (using existing Statistics Canada data)

Part 2 - Stories & Strategies: Older worker stories & employer strategies for dealing with an aging workforce (two separate projects)

Part 3 - Action Planning and Next Steps: The creation, implementation and monitoring of a detailed Aging Workforce action plan for our community followed by planning for Phase 2 of the project. Contact a project partner if you want to become involved!

“I can’t honestly say even if I hit 65 that I would be able to retire...For me, the sad part is that I can’t even think about when I could retire. There’s no savings there to retire on.”

Female 58 Health, Nurse



The chart below provides an overview of the key directions recommended through this research:

	Contribution of Aging/Intergenerational Relationships	Health	Work/Life Balance	Caregiving	Retirement and Pensions	Upgrading and Education
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	<p>Address ageism in the workplace.</p>	<p>Focus on age discrimination and the multigenerational workplace.</p> <p>Provide information to employers about the benefits of providing employee accommodations in the workplace.</p> <p>Advocate for the continuation of health benefits beyond retirement to alleviate some fear from the prospect of post-retirement aging.</p> <p>Promote the expansion of mental health benefits.</p> <p>Work standards are changing along with technology and new market conditions and need to be adapted with the 'sustainable' worker in mind.</p>	<p>Transitions to retirement could involve expansion of ways to think of the 'self' beyond 'worker'.</p> <p>Expand the range of employment structures to accommodate part-time work (without an erosion of benefits).</p> <p>Extend relationships into the volunteer community.</p> <p>Help with the transition to retirement.</p> <p>Increase supports for smaller organizations to handle variable work schedules and expansion of personnel.</p>	<p>Greater work schedule flexibility to accommodate care-giving responsibilities which are ballooning for workers 55+.</p> <p>Ensure workplace policies are truly gender neutral not just 'lip service' in order to address the stark burden that falls on women.</p> <p>Introduce tax credits for care giving to offset costs.</p> <p>Use of contemporary technology (e.g. 'skype') to enable caregiving to be done at a distance.</p>	<p>Pension reform that enables better outcomes for part-time workers and those with nonstandard biographical work profiles.</p>	<p>An expansion of workplace delivered 'tech/courses.'</p> <p>Investigation into roles that higher education could play in conjunction with flexible work structures (full-time to part-time).</p>
RESEARCH DIRECTIONS	<p>Research should be directed toward discovering means to configure aging as a strength and as a benefit in the workplace, while recognizing the particular challenges faced by older workers and without constructing new clichés about aging.</p>	<p>Explore the characteristics of both healthy and problematic workplaces and their approaches to late career experiences through individual interviews, but more importantly the socio-economic determinants of a healthy social work environment and best management practices that encourage adaptation to aging employees.</p>	<p>Identification and mitigation of factors causing 'workaholism' (including focus on the structure of competitive workplace relations) and identifying the effectiveness, gaps and workable strategy to address employer barriers to expanding work structure options.</p>	<p>Research on the caregiving 'crunch', while making heavy use of national census data, has been more qualitative and has also relied more extensively on community-based research. More survey research is needed to gauge the extent and depth of caregiving problems identified as well as to assess the outcomes of strategies.</p>	<p>Qualitative research on pension policy that measures the subjective experience in the lives of aging workers. This research can point to more nuanced policy options that enable people to adopt retirement 'profiles' which have a better chance of meeting individual needs than 'categorical' approaches can possibly deliver.</p>	<p>Examine post-retraining job results to test the negative 'job councilor' view of things.</p> <p>Examine roles that higher education can play in extending non-occupational opportunities.</p>

Response to the Report

March 31, 2011

The findings from this research process were unveiled to the public on March 31, 2011. A panel of community leaders provided their responses to the findings.

Panellists were asked to reflect on the following questions:

1. Their response to the findings from their own perspective
2. Their response to the findings from their sector perspective
3. What we can do locally



Here are some of their reflections:

Marion Burton – President, Peterborough and District Labour Council

What can be done locally?

- creation of healthy workplace initiatives – excellent initiatives by PCCHU – Health at Work Website
- address age discrimination practices, gender neutrality, accommodations, flexible schedules
- encourage workers to join a union
- support candidates in election that support the Canada Health Transfer Agreement
- Pension reform (increasing CPP contributions)
- Creation of more jobs (green-jobs specifically)



Stuart Harrison - General Manager, Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce

- contribution - create atmosphere/expectation of communication/mentoring reward system
- Health - huge differences between upper level management and lower level workers. Extend benefits beyond retirement and mental health support
- Worklife balance - people who have achieved it have made the conscious decision to do it. Employers can play a role (flex hours, provide time to volunteer, make balance a priority)
- Caregiving - tough issue – many suggestions fall to employer. Not all employers can implement (i.e. flex time) tax credits? suggests telecommuting if possible
- Retirement and pensions - a growing policy issue - pension reform needed.
- Training and Education: Demonstrate value proposition to employers. Ask what is the value of literacy? How do we measure innovation?



Tom Sayer - Interim CEO, GPA EDC

- Responses are highly individualistic, hard to find policies to address all issues, therefore a problem
- Keep up with change – technical and cultural. Cultural change is hard to develop, need tools to help. Technical includes knowledge transfer.
- upgrading/transfer of skills between generations: there is a soft skills component missing with younger workers which is harder to transfer.
- Caregiving: woefully inadequate. Needs to be fixed. Impact of caring for elderly parent is huge and isolation for the caregiver is overwhelming.
- Suggestions:
 - Strengthen/facilitate link between labour and business in program delivery (i.e. retirement planning)
 - Research ways of collecting up to date data for local businesses.
- Flex time, working from home difficult in a manufacturing setting
- Economic development: highly skilled, educated retirees can be a boost to the Peterborough area

Tony Tilly, President Fleming College



- Old key words: worker, workforce, work
- new key words: life, life span, life expectancy
- Our College Perspective
 - 2nd career program, over the last 2 years. Need to make learning do-able, need to have a welcome environment for both young first career people and the mature people with experience.
 - Faculty are often 2nd career as opposed to other school environments
 - In partnership with employers – Flying Colours, a successful business at the Peterborough Airport is a good example.
 - Many students want to go into completely unrelated jobs
 - look at career changing, make sure that employment opportunities are available
- Life expectancy of 79.4 in Canada - provides us many opportunities.
- 60.7 is the average retirement age. For those retiring at that age, they have another 20 years to live. How do we want to use those years?
- Discretionary worker – person who chooses to work vs. has to work
- Pension reform is critical
- Volunteerism - need to encourage volunteering, to enrich workplaces and create opportunities for individuals
- opportunity to look at our own aging population and take a leadership role in coming up with ideas and plans



“If I take a course and upgrade my skills for a year I’m 63. Who’s still going to hire me?”

***Female 63
Manufacturing, Lower White Collar***

For more information about our InfoNotes contact
Dawn Berry Merriam at 705-743-5915 or email dawnbm@pspc.on.ca.



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