



Mining Labour Market Transition Project Summary Report

Canada 

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I Summary Report Overview

This research project was commissioned to examine the labour market situation in the Canadian mining industry and explore the feasibility of workforce transition from declining sectors to the mining sector. It looked at several key questions, including: what are the current and expected mining industry labour needs? What gaps exist with regard to skills and training? Where can the industry find potential new workers? How can it do a better job of attracting, recruiting, and retaining workers? Special attention was paid to the issue of recruiting workers from declining industries and some of the challenges surrounding these policies.

The research, conducted from November 2006 to June 2007, involved the following steps:

- analyzing data on the mining industry, especially in relation to labour force characteristics;
- reviewing the existing literature on labour market transitions in general;
- conducting telephone interviews with 60 key informants from the mining industry (representatives of labour, industry, associations, and training providers); and
- conducting five focus groups with former workers in declining industries.

This summary report presents a brief overview of the results of the research and the recommendations which were developed on the basis of the findings. For more information, go to www.mihr.ca.

2 Key Findings

2.1 *The State Of Mining In Canada: A Summary*

2.1.1 Period of Growth

The Canadian mining industry is in the midst of a remarkable period of prosperity. The value of raw materials in general and minerals in particular has soared in recent years. World demand for commodities, largely fuelled by Asia, has driven up prices. The following statistics illustrate the dramatic growth in the industry:

- The overall value of minerals extracted in Canada went from \$20.0 billion in 2003 to an estimated \$26.4 billion in 2005.
- The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the mining industry, including mining support services, was \$14.8 billion in 2003, compared with \$11.6 billion in 1999.
- Investment in new plants and equipment over the past two years has been over \$4 billion per year, compared with an average of \$2.4 billion per year during the 1990s.

2.1.2 The Productivity Challenge

The increase in the value of minerals produced is almost exclusively related to price. In other words, the strong performance of the sector since the turn of the decade is largely the result of increases in the value rather than the volume of production. There are a few likely reasons for this:

- new investment and new workers at many Canadian mines. It will take time – possibly up to five years – for the value of these new resources to bear fruit and make a full contribution to improving productivity;
- the hoarding of existing employees. During a period of economic growth, many employers don't have the luxury of temporarily laying off employees, out of fear that they won't return; and
- the mining of hard-to-find or extract minerals. This usually happens when resource prices are high, meaning that it is a good idea to extract as many minerals as possible.

There is evidence, however, that the industry is seeking to increase production to take advantage of the higher prices. Recent investment includes a large component of machinery and equipment; earlier investment was concentrated more on new facilities.

2.1.3 Labour Force Characteristics

Workers in the mining and mining services industry are not unlike workers in other industries, except that they tend to be male, have a lower level of completed education, work longer hours, and have a high rate of pay which is augmented by premium pay for overtime.

Total employment in the mining industry has declined slightly since 2001, when there were 51,200 employees; the estimated number in 2006 is 50,600. However, over the same period, employment in mining support services has increased by an average of over 10% per year to reach an estimated 82,800 in 2006.

Overall employment growth in the sector has thus been increasing, but the increase is concentrated in the mining services group and especially hourly paid workers or “production” workers. From 2001 to 2006, the number of production workers grew by 11.1% per year, on average, compared with 1.5% per year for salaried employees.

In 2006, weekly earnings for paid workers in the mining industry were well above the national average: \$1,250 (gross before deductions) versus \$750 per week. Somewhat surprisingly, however, the base earnings for workers in the mining industry have not increased much in recent years. They have gone up by only 0.3% per year from 2001 to 2006. This compares with average increases of 4.8% per year in mining support services and 2.4% in the general Canadian economy.

Adjusted for inflation, earnings in the mining industry have actually declined from 2001 to 2006, whereas they have increased in the mining support services industry. Excluding overtime and other premium pay, average earnings have dropped by an average of 0.5% per year from 2001 to 2006 in the mining industry and increased by 4.3% per year in mining support services.

It is important to recognize that the base earnings figures do not include any overtime or premium pay; there are on-site mining employees who are making at least twice their base salary through various forms of bonus associated with production levels and high commodity prices. Overtime and other premium pay are of particular importance in the mining sector:

compared with a national average of 2%, fully 12% of earnings in the sector arose from overtime and other forms of premium pay in 2006. While this represents more earnings, it may not be viewed positively by all workers and is likely not sustainable.

2.1.4 Short- to Mid-Term Labour Needs

The increase in capital investment means that there will be a demand for new workers in the short to medium term. This will be tempered somewhat by the fact that much of the new investment is in machinery and equipment; this kind of investment typically increases labour productivity.

Assuming that real GDP grows at an average annual rate of 3% in both mining and mining services and labour productivity grows by 2% in mining and 1% in mining services, labour demands would grow by an average of 1.6% per year. Full-time employment would increase from 145,000 in 2006 to 170,000 by 2016. For example, as well as replacing retirements and turnover, the industry would require:

- an extra 790 trades workers and equipment operators per year over ten years; and
- an extra 230 new workers in natural and applied sciences per year, many of whom would be engineering or engineering technology graduates.

Assuming that non-retirement turnover is 2% of the workforce per year and retirement turnover 2.9% per year until 2009 and 2.0% thereafter (as projected in the *Prospecting the Future* report), the sector would need to recruit about 10,000 people per year overall, or 100,000 in the next ten years.

2.2 Labour Market Transition Projects

Many domestic and international studies have attempted to evaluate the worth of active labour market measures, including policies, programs and services designed to move workers from one industry to another. While the findings in these studies are limited in many respects, the consensus is that most active labour market policies are generally ineffective. At best, the successes are minor; at worst, these programs either harm the participants or fail to pass basic cost-benefit tests.

Active labour market measures can be of some benefit, especially if they use the following principles:

- They should rely as much as possible on job search assistance programs.
- Public training programs must be small, local, and tightly targeted on both participants and employers.
- Interventions for disadvantaged youth must be early and sustained.
- Subsidies to private employment should be local, targeted, short-term, and closely monitored.
- Job creation schemes should be avoided as much as possible. Those that are used should be short and targeted at the most disadvantaged workers.

This suggests that moving workers into the mining industry is less likely to be successful on a large scale across entire regions or industrial sectors. Successful transition programs should be small, local, and temporary, with a tightly focused connection between the individual, the employer, and the program.

The available literature suggests that certain kinds of worker are more likely to transition to a new industry and to obtain full-time employment again if they are laid off:

- younger workers
- workers with a higher level of education/skills
- male workers (and female workers who are the primary breadwinner for their household)

One study suggests that the first workers to leave a declining industry are those who are most mobile and can expect the best offers in terms of wages and security. This means that the workers who are still available in declining industries, including those the mining industry might target, are likely to be mature workers and/or less skilled workers who may require an investment in mining-specific training.

Conversely, other kinds of workers tend to be less successful in transitioning from a declining industry and pose particular challenges in terms of recruiting:

- mature workers (aged 55 and above): These individuals are often only looking for employment for a short period of time (average five to seven years). When they do shift industries, they suffer a substantial – and permanent – decrease in income. This reflects the fact that they have built up a great deal of firm- or sector-specific human capital and also how relatively unproductive they will be at first in their new jobs. Mature workers also often require additional training. It would therefore be imperative to engage local educational institutions to ensure a smooth transition for these workers.
- female workers: Female workers in declining industries are often not the primary breadwinner and may not face the same pressure to find a new job immediately. Female workers may be able to temporarily exit the labour market altogether or seek part-time employment options.

The factors affecting the re-employment of displaced workers or the transfer of workers from one sector to another are quite diverse, with the transferability of skills playing only a small role. For most workers, the question of skills transfer is of secondary importance in comparison to considerations such as family life, home ownership, quality of life, attachment to a sector or firm, and so on.

Existing literature suggests that recruiting individuals from declining industries should not be viewed as a long-term labour solution for the mining industry. Declining industries are likely to provide only a small pool of labour, primarily low-skill or mature workers rather than highly educated or skilled workers. Recruitment initiatives such as relocation subsidies or flexible shift options (e.g., week on, week off) are likely necessary. The availability of jobs would seem to be sufficient motivation for many workers to move to a new industry, but better wages may be required to lure them to a new region.

2.3 Mining Sector Challenges: A Summary Of Key Informant Interviews

2.3.1 Short- and Mid-Term Industry Outlook

On the whole, representatives of the mining industry are optimistic about the industry's future. The current growth and associated labour demand is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. Technological change will not eliminate the need for workers, but may create a different set of employment needs. It was widely recognized that the industry will need to make some adjustments in order to adapt to the changing labour landscape. The current reliance on having existing workers do more work (i.e., overtime) or employing short-term contractors was not viewed as a sound long-term strategy.

2.3.2 Skills Gaps and Training Opportunities

It was generally felt that additional skills training will be needed to help existing workers adjust to technological changes in the industry. Both hard and soft skills are likely to be important, most notably:

- technological skills
- technical skills
- literacy skills
- numeracy skills
- leadership skills

Most respondents indicated that there is a gap between industry requirements and current post-secondary training programs. With regard to filling the gap, these points were made:

- Industry will need to partner closely with the education and training sector to ensure skills needs are met.
- Older workers have a role to play in mentoring younger workers and transferring knowledge.
- There is a pressing need to have training conducted in remote regions and on-site.
- More spaces need to be created at colleges and universities for mining-related programs, particularly in Western Canada, Ontario, and the North.

2.3.3 Employment Needs and Labour Market Competition

Key informants were generally concerned about the skilled trade shortage in the industry. Most had experienced difficulty recruiting workers for various positions, most notably:

- Engineers
- Construction trades
- Scientists
- Technicians
- Managers and supervisors
- General miners

Workers from declining industries, especially farming, forestry, and manufacturing, were thought to represent a viable source of new labour for the mining industry, and many industry representatives have had some success in recruiting from these areas. Industry trainers feel that some of these workers can be re-trained for the mining industry in a fairly short period of time.

On the other hand, there is stiff competition – domestically and internationally, within and outside the industry – for the most in-demand workers (e.g., tradespeople, scientists, engineers). Recruiting and retaining journeypersons and heavy equipment operators was identified as a particular challenge. Respondents observed that a few other countries have recently been recruiting in the same field, including Australia and Brazil.

Various points were made with regard to addressing the challenges in attracting, recruiting, and retaining skilled labour:

- It is important to partner with educational institutions at all levels to promote the industry as a safe, lucrative and sustainable career choice.
- It is important to offer salary and benefits packages which are competitive with other industries, especially oil and gas.
- Flexible shift options, training options, spousal job bundling, fly-in camps, and geographic proximity can also make mining jobs more attractive.
- Relocation packages should cover the full cost of relocation, not simply the traditional moving costs.
- Extensive career development and succession planning for staff is needed; individuals have to see that advancement is possible in the company and the industry.
- Advantages above and beyond salary are needed to keep skilled workers – for example, first-rate food and accommodations at sites, transportation opportunities for workers and families, and lifestyle improvement funds (e.g., gym memberships).
- Labour groups can play an important role in the transition of workers between industries.

For small- to medium-sized companies with limited resources, it may prove difficult to meet skilled workers' expectations.

2.3.4 Recruiting Methods and Challenges

The majority of industry respondents indicated that they are employing outside resources (e.g., domestic and international newspaper advertisements and search firms) in the global quest for talent. Respondents discussed the use of multiple search firms and the practice of searching in other mining communities.

The three most commonly mentioned recruitment approaches were:

- headhunters
- newspaper advertisements
- post-secondary education partnerships

Successful attempts to recruit from declining industries shared many of the same characteristics: developing local support; not requiring permanent relocation by workers; offering competitive compensation and benefits;

The two respondents who had not had success with recruiting from declining industries identified several problem areas: the operations were small or mid-sized and could not match offers from larger firms; workers did not want to relocate; the absence of fly-in camps was a drawback; and workers did not want to move to small communities with limited cultural opportunities.

Most respondents had some level of familiarity with recruiting workers from traditionally under-represented groups. There was a feeling that the industry has to continue reaching out to under-represented groups, since many of these individuals are not coming to the industry.

The public image of the industry does not correspond to the present-day reality of the job and working conditions. Emphasizing the appeal of the mining industry – good pay, good long-term prospects, safety, much-improved benefits packages, etc. – and forming partnerships with high schools, colleges, and private trainers is important in attracting new workers, including women, youth, immigrants, and Aboriginal workers. Each of these groups offers somewhat different challenges in terms of recruiting, so a one-size-fits-all strategy may not be the most effective approach.

Some specific challenges included:

- Aboriginal workers, immigrants and women often view mining as a white, male-dominated work environment; the image poses a problem to recruitment.
- The lack of high school completion is preventing entry into the mining industry for many Aboriginal people, especially for skilled labour positions.
- The industry needs to assist secondary schools in positioning mining-related occupations as real career choices for young females.
- Increased childcare services were also identified as a way to increase the number of females in the mining labour force.
- The approval process for immigrant workers is onerous, confusing and protracted.
- The lack of English skills can be a problem when employing immigrant workers, especially with regards to workplace safety.
- There are often problem when trying to equate immigrants' foreign credentials with domestic ones.

2.3.5 Training Outlook

Trainers' institutions offer a wide array of mining-related subjects. The majority offered some combination of trades training and many different technical programs – mostly resource-, environmental science-, or engineering-based. The majority of respondents indicated that they had updated some portion of their training in the past 12 to 24 months, and others believed that further changes were imminent.

Most respondents indicated that mining-related programs at institutions are experiencing increased, diversified demand. They said that there are more young students, most of whom are coming directly from secondary school, and female students pursuing mining related subjects.

Most training respondents indicated that they had some form of partnership with industry and, as a result, offered programs that were grounded, practical, and in sync with industry needs. Even those respondents whose institutions had no formal agreements with industry articulated how they work closely with industry colleagues to ensure student and industry training requirements are met.

Some institutions – e.g., Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology – are now offering an increasing number of training opportunities on-site. Interested individuals can pursue different types of training, mainly theoretical, for short periods of time. This option is becoming popular in the North, particularly for individuals pursuing apprenticeship programs.

2.4 Declining Industry Focus Groups

2.4.1 Participant Backgrounds

Five focus groups took place in Ontario (three) and Saskatchewan (two). Most participants had been laid off within the previous year. They were drawn from two main industries: forestry and manufacturing. Males significantly outnumbered females. Their educational backgrounds were varied, but were somewhat correlated with age: older participants were less likely to have completed high school, while younger participants were more likely to have some form of post-secondary education.

2.4.2 Training Experience and Skills

Individuals had participated in a wide range of training. The training experiences they mentioned can be sorted into three groups: safety, operational, and general. Safety training was by far the most common type of training completed. In comparison, operational training opportunities were often dependent on the type of job being performed and on the operational structure of the employer. General training was even more sporadic and often at the request of the employee.

Participants highlighted the fact that training was often not of much value outside a particular firm:

- Training was frequently company-specific and, as a result, the benefit of the training was limited to one site only.
- Training was often designed to help workers advance within the company rather than to provide a universally recognized benefit. Certificates and other forms of paper-based recognition were granted sporadically.

Participants identified a wide array of skills which they had developed since entering the labour market. The most frequently identified were: analytical skills; communication skills; computer

skills; conflict resolution; critical task analysis; environmental recognition; leadership skill; organizational skills; problem solving; safety awareness; and teamwork skills. Many participants believed that there were similarities between the type of work done in their former industries and the work done in the mining industry.

Most participants indicated an interest in pursuing future training. They felt it would be a valuable resource and mentioned that they would engage in training if: (a) secure employment was waiting upon completion; and (b) there was some form of assistance. On the latter point, participants noted that they did not just want financial aid; in addition, they would need to speak with human resource representatives and educational or government officials to find out where specific training leads, how long it lasts, and where it is offered. Training currently being considered by participants is for the purpose of employment bridging.

In terms of future training, the five most commonly identified areas of interest were: Computer / mechanical training; electrical training; field service technician training; heavy equipment operator training; and industrial mechanic training.

2.4.3 Employment Options

Most participants had, until being laid off, not given much thought to changing jobs or their industries. They were comfortable in their occupations and industries and had invested significant capital in their present lifestyle. Accordingly, participants indicated that there were limits to how much personal change they were prepared to embrace when changing occupations or industries.

Participants are considering employment in the mining industry because the work appeals to them and the ability to commute by plane is an advantage. Most indicated that they are willing to work almost anywhere for short periods of time (e.g., two weeks on, one week off), but there was considerable resistance to the idea of permanently relocating outside their home province.

A series of financial and non-financial employment incentives which would be helpful in recruiting were mentioned:

- full compensation for all relocation expenses
- proper compensation for overtime
- attention paid to camp living conditions
- training opportunities
- proper acknowledgement of skills and past education and training
- spousal assistance
- clear employment path

2.4.4 Impressions of the Mining Industry

Impressions of the mining industry were generally positive. Miners were typically identified as multi-skilled individuals who do dangerous shift work and receive a good salary and good benefits. The work was thought to be dirty, dusty, and difficult. The perception of mining as

a steady, well-paying job that could provide a challenge and the ability to learn new skills was one of the dominant reasons for participants' interest in joining the industry. Most participants expressed no hesitation about moving into an industry where shift work is common. Almost all pointed out that they come from industries where shift work is the norm.

Some individuals had had some exposure to mining recruitment initiatives, but generally without success, because:

- companies were commonly offering low wages and benefits;
- certain companies were not willing to hire anyone with ties to organized labour;
- many companies approached displaced workers with a request to permanently relocate for new employment; and
- recruitment efforts lacked organization and were not co-ordinated with local officials.

Most participants lacked information about training and employment opportunities in the mining industry. Nevertheless, a large number of Thunder Bay and Prince Albert participants had already submitted multiple job applications to various mining companies throughout Canada; not a single person at the Mississauga session had done so. Some had also pursued mining-related training to no avail and expressed frustration at the lack of a clear, consistent message from industry and trainers.

3 Recommendations

3.1 Transition Workers From Declining Industries Into Mining

During the research, three declining industries in particular emerged as potential sources of new workers for the mining industry: farming, forestry, and manufacturing. Many current or former employees in these industries have essential skills which are similar to those needed in the mining industry. They also tend to be accustomed to shift work and have experience with heavy machinery or process operations, and they may have had training which is applicable to the mining industry (e.g., safety, leadership). And in the case of forestry and farming, individuals are often located in areas (e.g., rural, northern) where mining operations are likely to be found. Many of these workers would therefore be a good fit for the mining sector. This first set of recommendations addresses the recruitment of these workers.

Recommendation 1: Create a marketing campaign aimed at declining industries with the same type of workers.

The mining industry needs to let individuals thinking about a career change know that mining is an option and inform potential recruits of training and employment opportunities. A communications strategy should be developed and, to maximize efficiency, focus on key regions:

- Farming: Western Canada
- Forestry: Northern British Columbia, Northern Quebec, Northwestern Ontario, and Vancouver Island
- Manufacturing: Central Canada

Recommendation 2: Create a series of recruitment pilot projects targeting workers from declining industries.

Recruiting potential employees from declining industries often requires more than just a simple newspaper advertisement. Several key groups should be engaged to facilitate the process:

- First, successful companies should establish relationships with local individuals – e.g., mayors, reeves, union officials, chamber of commerce representatives, local training and adjustment boards, and key economic development personnel.
- Second, labour unions representing individuals in declining industries can play a key role in facilitating labour market transitions. Labour unions often manage employee databases containing valuable information for potential employers. One example is the Communications, Energy, and Paperworkers Skillfinder website (www.skillfinder.ca), which was designed to link union members with potential employers and vice versa.

The mining industry also needs to be aware of specific recruitment challenges it may face when dealing with certain types of worker from declining industries:

- Mature workers: because they are invested in their communities, they often choose not to relocate when offered traditional recruitment compensation and benefits.
- Female workers: many delay re-entry into the labour market due to family obligations or a desire to work part-time.

In order to maximize the success of labour market transition pilot project(s), initiatives should be small, targeted, local, and conducted in collaboration with the necessary individuals and organizations (e.g., community groups and training institutions). They should also be tailored to each declining industry and destination workplace.

Regardless of the sector being targeted, it is likely that some gap training would be required for potential employees. Some individuals will also require flexible shift options to consider mining as a new career. Finally, it may be necessary to secure one or more post-secondary institutions or private trainers as partners.

Recommendation 3: Ensure the Mining Attraction, Recruitment and Retention Strategy (MARS) project gets input and involvement from organized labour and local training and adjustment boards.

The MARS project (described at www.mihr.ca) should involve labour unions and local training/adjustment boards as members of the project steering committee. Labour unions are often the primary point of contact for individuals who are experiencing downsizing and could potentially transition into a career in the mining industry. Thus, engaging these groups early in the MARS project will ensure the deliverables produced throughout the project will be relevant and applicable to their needs.

Recommendation 4: Create and distribute a catalogue of promising practices, lessons learned, and potential barriers for workers moving from declining industries into mining and other sectors.

Many mining operations reported relative success with recruiting employees from industries in decline. The MiHR Council should explore the possibility of creating a database of these experiences, highlighting necessary transition tools and processes. Also, the addition of an information session at an annual conference or event would provide a venue for human resource representatives to share past experiences with their peers.

Recommendation 5: Work with industry representatives to develop a set of nationally recognized training standards.

The lack of standardized employer-provided training hinders the ability to transition throughout the general labour force. The creation of occupational standards could form the basis for standardized recognition of employer- and institution-based mining training programs through a system of training accreditation and worker certification. The standards could also provide the benchmark for recognizing transferable skills and training received in other sectors or even other countries (i.e., foreign credential recognition).

Recommendation 6: Work with educational institutions, employers and labour union representatives to develop and disseminate career information for various mining-related occupations.

Individuals in declining industries often have a single government-funded training opportunity, which is usually funded through Employment Insurance. These workers need to clearly understand what kind of mining-related training can lead to and where to pursue the training.

3.2 Grow The Talent Pool

The mining industry doesn't operate in a human resources vacuum. There are skills shortages throughout Canadian industry (i.e. petroleum, electricity, construction, trucking, etc.). These sectors are also looking at ways of attracting workers from other industries. In the end, no single industry will come out ahead. At some point, with many employers pursuing the same limited pool of potential workers, the only long-term solution will be to find a way of making the pool bigger. The remaining recommendations focus on this issue.

Recommendation 7: Re-brand the mining industry.

The mining industry needs to continue to highlight the personal and societal benefits of the sector and also reinforce the safety of the domestic industry. The Canadian public – especially youth – needs to be aware of the profession's modern reality. Individuals need to be informed that modern mining means the ability to earn high wages, work in a safe environment, operate various pieces of machinery, and control computerized equipment.

Recommendation 8: Promote and foster lifelong learning in the mining industry.

A significant (and increasing) portion of today's labour force tends to have some post-secondary education and is inclined toward lifelong learning. Individuals want opportunities to learn new abilities and skills. These opportunities will only come about with a new learning culture in companies.

Traditionally, companies have offered training in one of three areas: new employee training, in which the basics are emphasized; formal, usually in-house training related to an occupation; and limited off-site training at a college or university tied to continual employment or directly related to an occupation. These education and training activities should be viewed as a start and not an end point.

Companies should view education and training as a benefit for both parties and seek to involve as many employees as possible each year. One way to ensure that this can happen is to allow individual employees to provide input into their own education and training options.

Recommendation 9: Conduct national and international labour market research for the mining industry

Globalization has reduced borders and barriers for skilled workers. Jurisdictions can no longer rely on the domestic labour pool to fill all employment vacancies and are now locked in a global war for talent. This struggle means that all jurisdictions need to be aware of the global human resource policies and strategies being created to deal with impending skills shortages. MiHR should conduct research examining international human resource practices aimed at addressing mining skill shortages. The countries studied in the investigation should include Australia, Brazil, and the United Kingdom, among others.

Recommendation 10: Ensure acareerinmining.ca is the central hub for mining career and training information

Individuals interested in entering the mining industry need to be able to consult a single source which:

- makes the connection between occupations which are in demand from the industry, the skills needed to perform employment tasks, desired level of training, type of work an individual can expect, and anticipated salary range;
- provides provincial or regional information on employment prospects; and
- provides information about training availability and requirements.

Recommendation 11: Establish education incentives for Aboriginal youth

This strategy should include more than just simple post-secondary education scholarships. It could include separate initiatives targeting different points in the educational cycle. It is not enough to attempt to entice potential workers with the promise of money when entering post-secondary education. The real breakthrough will come when more Aboriginal youth are qualifying for post-secondary opportunities. Possible incentives include:

- partnerships with local schools or school boards to provide equipment (e.g., computing, recreational, sporting) to youth.
- Aboriginal learning accounts that allow individuals to pledge to fully complete their studies in return for the promise of a monetary package invested in an educational savings account.

Recommendation 12: Establish mentorship programs to help reach Aboriginal youth in high schools

Aboriginal youth need to be exposed to role models from within the mining industry. Current Aboriginal mining employees should be encouraged to become ambassadors for the mining industry and participate in educational sessions targeted at Aboriginal communities and schools.

Recommendation 13: Develop and disseminate promising practices in recruiting and retaining older workers

Many companies are modifying mature worker practices (e.g., changing pension schemes, lobbying for provincial mandatory retirement legislation changes) in order to tap into the vast experience, extensive technical knowledge, and strong work ethic of mature workers. The mining industry needs to follow suit. Mature workers still have up to a decade of employment contributions to provide to a company or industry. They need to be shown that the mining industry is prepared to engage them and meet their changing needs. It is important to revisit worker hiring and interview practices to ensure human resource representatives are not ignoring this potential labour pool.

It is also important that the mining industry work hard to solidify its current labour pool. The next generation of the labour force needs to benefit from an employment information exchange whereby current mature workers share practices and information with newcomers.