

Forest Products
Association of Canada
fpac.ca



Association des produits
forestiers du Canada
fpac.ca

The Standing Committee on Finance Regarding the Study on Youth Employment

**Brief Submitted by
The Forest Products Association of Canada**

April 7, 2014

Context

Canada's forest products industry is facing a shortage of employees, contractors and service providers.

In May 2012, the Forest Products Association of Canada (FPAC) unveiled a new industry-led vision that outlines where the forest industry sees itself by the year 2020. One ambitious goal of Vision2020 is to renew our workforce with at least 60,000 new recruits, including women, Aboriginal people and new Canadians. Vision2020 is more than aspirational. It includes clear goals and metrics that we need to meet in order to succeed.

The sector faced particularly difficult years as a result of the recent economic downturn including the collapse of the U.S. housing market in 2008. As a result, some mills — both in Canada and the U.S. — were closed, and numerous jobs were shed. However, with strong renewed growth in demand from the U.S. and elsewhere, the industry has recovered and needs people who have the skills, knowledge and desire to work in a dynamic sector.

The forest products industry competes with other resource industries that are recruiting employees with similar skill sets. This has made retention as important as initial recruitment.

Today, the forest sector remains one of the most significant contributor to full time jobs in Canada. It directly employs 234,000 Canadians and is the lifeblood for about 200 rural communities of which about half are entirely forest dependent. The sector is comprised of a wide variety of employees such as forestry technicians, material handlers, millwrights, electricians, engineers, accountants and managers.

Partnerships

Youth are a key demographic that will contribute to the FPAC vision of hiring 60 000 new employees by 2020. However, informing and training thousands of youth across the country is not easy and the industry cannot do it alone. The forest products industry has partnered with all stakeholders ranging from community groups, academics, provincial associations, unions and federal and provincial governments. By working together we can maximize resources to reach out to as many youth as possible to ensure they have information to make their career choices.

Best Practices

The industry must understand the needs and drivers of youth regarding job employment. This new generation has grown up in the new technological age and have different aspirations for their careers than the older generation. FPAC is currently reviewing and assembling best practices on hiring and retaining youth such as providing scholarships, flexible benefits plan and wellness programs for employees.

Reaching out to youth

Through the partnership of the Forest Products Sector Council (funded by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)), FPAC launched in February 2013 “The Greenest Workforce” (<http://thegreenestworkforce.ca/>) which is an on-line resource tool for teachers, students, parents and others that showcases the life-style advantages of working in the forest products sector as well as available careers right across the country. The forest industry knows it has to compete for skilled labour. We are on a recruitment drive for a dynamic sector that is green and growing. Reaching out to youth is critical.

FPAC recommends that the government continues to support programs that provide youth with information about job skills requirements and availability such as the “Job Bank” portal.

Adequate labour market information

Through the Sectoral Initiatives Program at ESDC, FPAC is currently working with academics, other industry sectors and government partners to develop a \$1.4 million comprehensive national Labour Market Information (LMI) web application tool for the forest products industry to be completed in 2016. This tool would permit data queries at the regional, provincial and national levels, would produce regular LMI forecast reports and would use existing communication approaches to disseminate the LMI information. This system will allow youth to get the current and forecasted job information relating to the forest sector. It is also envisioned that the system will have job matching capabilities for both youth and the forest products industry.

FPAC recommends that the federal government partner with FPAC to inform all stakeholders of “Greenest Workforce” and the availability of this web tool to help youth find a job.

Skills

The forest products sector offers all types of jobs that require different skills such as truck drivers, forestry technicians, electricians and engineers. FPAC supports the Government of Canada’s announcement to create the Canada Apprentice Loan and is pleased that the Canada Job Grant will proceed. The forest products industry operates across the country and recommends that apprentice training and the journey-person to apprentice ratio be harmonised across provinces so youth do not have to re-start their training if they have a job opportunity in another province or territory. The governments have started to address this issue with ten Red Seal job classification but

FPAC recommends accelerating this process to complete all Red Seal jobs within the next five years.

Federal Government Initiatives

Federal government should ensure that initiatives developed to help youth find jobs are tailored to their needs. Many programs are complicated and take time to apply or receive the funding which hinder youth to get first hands-on experience and received a decent pay.

FPAC recommends continued/increased support for targeted youth skill development programs for jobs that are in high demand. For example, Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) provides high school credits while the student has on the job learning opportunities in key trades, and power engineering. This program addresses job skills, job search and the promotion of the industry.

Consolidated list of recommendations: PAC recommends that the federal government

1. Continue to support programs that provide youth with information about job skills requirements and availability such as the “Job Bank” portal.
2. Partner with FPAC to inform all stakeholders of the “greenest Workforce” and the availability of the LMI forest products web tool to help youth find a job.
3. Accelerate to complete the harmonization of the training and journey- person-to-apprentice ratio for all red seal trades within five years.
4. Continued/increased support for targeted youth skill development programs for jobs that are in high demand.

About FPAC:

The Forest Products Association of Canada (FPAC) is the voice of Canada's wood, pulp and paper producers nationally and internationally in government, trade, and environmental affairs. Canada's forest products industry is a 57 billion dollar a year industry that represents 12% of Canada's manufacturing GDP. The industry is one of Canada's largest employers, operating in 200 forest-dependent communities from coast to coast, and directly employing 234,000 Canadians across the country.