



# Collaboration is key to increasing the talent in hard-to-recruit locations

by the Petroleum Human Resources Council of Canada

**DESPITE A SLIGHT SLOWDOWN IN ACTIVITY THIS YEAR,** many petroleum industry companies are still struggling to attract and keep skilled workers. While finding people to work in major centres like Calgary or Halifax can be somewhat challenging, recruiting and retaining employees in smaller, more remote locations is downright difficult.

To help companies address this issue, the Petroleum Human Resources Council (the Council) is running an innovative project called Increasing the Talent. This unique project is designed to increase the supply of key talent in “hard-to-recruit” locations—communities that are remote or lacking amenities.

Increasing the Talent is a multi-phase project that began in early 2006. In the first phase, the Council developed the Increasing the Talent toolkit, which includes a conceptual model, best and promising practices, and an inventory of tools and resources. Then, last summer and fall, Increasing the Talent was introduced to over 80 representatives from industry, post-secondary training institutions, municipal and provincial governments, chambers of commerce, regional economic development groups, employment agencies, and agencies that work with under-represented groups. Those stakeholders confirmed a need for a much greater understanding of how to address recruitment and retention issues, especially for front-line managers in small and mid-sized companies. In addition, everyone agreed that success in attracting skilled workers to hard-to-recruit locations depends on collaboration—among companies, governments, educators, and business and community groups.

To understand how groups like these can best use the toolkit to develop and implement innovative HR practices in their regions, the Council launched two Increasing the Talent pilot projects in May 2007. The pilots are taking place this summer and fall in Fort St. John, British Columbia, and in Alberta’s Peace Region.

The best part about the pilot projects is how they mirror the Increasing the Talent model by focusing on collaboration. For example, in Fort St. John, the following groups are working with locally based petroleum service companies to

test the model and its ideas: the North Peace Economic Development Commission, the City of Fort St. John (including the mayor’s office), Treaty 8 Tribal Association, Fort St. John & District Chamber of Commerce, Northern Society of Oilfield Contractors & Service Firms (NSOCSF), training institutes, and consultants.

In the Peace Region area, pilot participants include the Peace Region Economic Development Alliance, Northern Sunrise County, community colleges, Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry, Grande Prairie & District Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures, municipal districts, and local petroleum industry companies.

The pilots kicked off with a needs assessment to identify the specific workforce challenges in each area and figure out how to address them. Implementation of the ideas began in June and will continue until year-end. In December, a comprehensive evaluation will be done to see what HR tools and resources worked best and what improvements might be made before the toolkit is made available to all industry stakeholders.

By spring 2008, an enhanced Increasing the Talent toolkit will be available on the Council’s website in an interactive web-based format with a searchable database. The Council is also developing products and services to be delivered through information sessions, workshops, and train-the-trainer sessions to support the application of the toolkit, with implementation processes for attraction, retention, and workforce development in hard-to-recruit locations.

Right now, industry representatives are invited to review the interactive Increasing the Talent toolkit in its current form, posted at: [www.petrohrsc.ca/english/projects\\_recruit.html](http://www.petrohrsc.ca/english/projects_recruit.html). The Council encourages all industry stakeholders to make use of the best practices, tools, and resources in the toolkit, and find ways to collaborate with others to meet their local attraction, retention, and workforce-development goals. ●

*This monthly column covers current topics, strategies, solutions, and insights into human resources issues in the upstream petroleum sector.*