

Idled mills get boost to convert into pellet plants

BY BRYAN MEADOWS
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Wood pellet manufacturing in

Jobs market stabilizing

Youth in Northwest fairing better than those elsewhere: report

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Northwestern Ontario's labour market is on more stable footing, and there is some good news for young people looking for a job, according to a report released Friday by the Northern Policy Institute and North Superior Workforce Planning Board.

While the region still faces the challenge of losing youth who move away, the report says that youth participation in the workforce and youth employment numbers are doing fairly well.

"There is a strong case for continuing to connect youth to our communities through partnerships with industry and post-secondary institutions," says James Cuddy,

the author of *Settling Down in the Northwest: Stability and Opportunity in the Northwestern Ontario Labour Market*.

"We need to recognize, however, that resource industries traditionally connected to Northern Ontario, industries that presented lucrative employment opportunities, may not have the competitive advantage that they used to.

"This means getting creative about how we build a new plan for enhancing the region's labour market — keeping (young people) here, keeping them employed, and building Northern human capital," said Cuddy, who is a research co-ordinator with Northern Policy Institute.

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Focus on 'human capital' needed

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The report provides an overview of the underlying trends of the regional labour market and how they differ markedly from those of the province as a whole.

It also notes that while employment numbers in primary and manufacturing industries have declined, there is some indication that the overall labour market is stabilizing and sustainable.

The report explores population, employment, participation, unemployment, and trends specific to the youth labour market here in Northwestern Ontario.

Some of its other key findings include:

- Since 2001, the Northwest has continuously experienced annual youth out-migration. In 2013, there was a net decline of nearly 400 individuals aged 15-29, the majority of which were 20-24 years old.

- For the youth that have remained here, however, participation and employment rates have been higher and unemployment rates lower than provincial and national levels.

- Employment rates in Northwestern Ontario have tended historically to be more volatile than for the province generally. Never-

theless, since 2008 and the last decline in the percentage of primary sector employees in the region, the Northwestern labour market has delivered very stable employment levels.

The report also examines the structure of the labour market, focusing on the distribution of employment among sectors and industries, and found that:

- There has been a lack of employment growth in the goods-producing sector across Ontario since 1987. However, beginning in 2003, growth in this sector became considerably worse in the Northwest.

- Employment in primary indus-

tries has not been able to recover from a major decline experienced from 1989 to 1993, where the region shed nearly 80 per cent of jobs in primary industries.

- Employment in the Northwest's services-producing sector has experienced modest growth, increasing by approximately 15 per cent from 1987 to 2013.

- Trade and health-care industries have remained the top two employers since 1987. As of 2013, health care and trade made up 19 per cent and 16 per cent of total regional employment, respectively.

Cuddy went on to say that "there needs to be greater focus on build-

ing "Northern" human capital, and less of a focus on creating jobs, per se.

"Building Northern human capital requires identifying our competitive advantages and utilizing them by investing in people," he said.

He noted that "there is a strong case to be made for creating stronger partnerships between industry, post-secondary institutions, as well as the public sector in order to ingrain youth into Northern issues."

To view the full report, visit the website: www.northernpolicy.ca.