

LARC explores employee shortage

Employers concerned about the growing problem of a lack of qualified workers had a chance to share their feelings with the Labour Attraction and Retention Committee on Feb. 22.

A pair of public forums were hosted on Tuesday to discuss how the southwest can attract and retain people to meet the current and future labour pool needs of the region. Approximately 40 individuals turned out for the two meetings.

"It's encouraging that employers are willing to start the process of looking at new and innovative ways to attract and retain people in our community," said Committee co-chairperson Karen Richmond. "There are many businesses and organizations that are very successful in their attraction and retention efforts, there are some that are struggling. And so this is just a starting point.

The sessions pointed out that even without considering the current and proposed developments across the Southwest, some businesses are finding it difficult to attract qualified individuals to fill existing jobs while others struggle to keep workers because they are sought out for other jobs in different regions

"I think the 21st century employer is going to have to compete on a different level for employees. There is a critical shortage. It's not just in Saskatchewan, it's not just in the Southwest, it's all across Canada." Richmond said.

"It's a global competition for employees. We need to find ways to address that. And so how are we going to do it? What are we willing to do to look at things differently?"

Marianne Hawkins, Executive Director of the Swift Current Chamber of Commerce and co-chairperson of LARC, said labour attraction and retention initiatives can no longer be ignored.

"We had a hunch from all of our past communications with our members that this is something of real importance and it's likely a much more pervasive problem than just looking at attracting and retaining employees. It's about retaining families, it's about retaining teammates on sports teams and friends and neighbourhoods."

Hawkins said one specific issue which arose was the fact that on average only 20 per cent of local jobs are posted. By excluding 80 per cent of job listings to people outside the region can be discouraging for couples who are looking to both seek new opportunities while exploring their career futures.

The committee was compiling information from their two meetings on Tuesday to determine if there are any immediate projects they can tackle or whether there is a single larger project they want to pursue.

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