

Human Resources – In the Face of Cuts, Not Everyone Is Complaining

Hélène Buzzetti 20 July 2011 [Canada](#)

Ottawa — Not everyone is lamenting cuts of at least \$17 million being made to a federal program for skilled labour training. At least one impacted group, the Aboriginal Human Resources Council, sees an opportunity to better diversify its sources of revenue.

Like the 34 other Sector Councils previously funded by Ottawa, the Aboriginal Human Resources Council will lose its annual operating grant of \$500 000 as of March 2013. “The decision is a very significant and serious one,” admits Patricia Baxter, Co-chair of the group's Board of Directors. The organization's annual budget fluctuates between \$3 million and \$4 million.

Similar to the other Sector Councils, this one helps employers hire Aboriginal workers and develops training tools for Aboriginal workers in fields where they are likely to be hired. As a result, the group works closely with resource-based industries: mining, forestry, petroleum. “A significant portion of our revenues come from the private sector: about 35%. We are trying to increase this contribution.”

The Aboriginal Human Resources Council believes that since the private sector is the prime beneficiary of a more highly-skilled workforce, it should fund the tools necessary to achieve that goal rather than depending entirely on the government. “We see this as an opportunity to reposition ourselves,” maintains Ms. Baxter. She adds, however, that the half-million dollars being lost “constitutes a substantial amount and [that] it will be difficult to find the resources necessary to replace it.”

Two weeks ago, Ottawa decided to revamp its Sector Council Program, notably by eliminating the basic operating subsidy of \$500 000 granted to each of the 35 groups supported by the program. The groups will now only receive certain amounts already committed to specific projects. The total amount of savings achieved by the cuts is not known, since Ottawa did not respond to any questions from the media.

The Sector Councils, which address training issues related to skilled labour, exist for domains as varied as trucking, textiles, aviation, culture, child care, apprenticeship, petroleum, and even plastics. The Cultural Human Resources Council has informed Le Devoir that it will likely shut down once its subsidy ends. This group helps artists develop management expertise in order to better operate their cultural businesses.