

Seasonal workers can access training and other work while they wait for seasonal work to start

by Gloria Welton

A special initiative to address seasonal workers' employment gap will run until March 31, 2019. The Government of Canada is working with the Government of PEI to ensure that workers in seasonal industries have access to skills training and employment supports when they need them most.

The PEI Seasonal Worker Skills Initiative will be delivered through Workplace Learning PEI. Essential skills training will be client driven and will consider the specific needs and workplace duties of participants. The training is considered professional development. Workshops will be conducted in a welcoming room with hot coffee and refreshments.

Seasonal workers interested in the project can call 902-368-6280.



Employers

The Seasonal Worker Skills Initiative is looking for placement opportunities for those whose EI has ended and are looking for short-term employment before they return to their seasonal work.

Employers could be eligible to receive a wage subsidy to host a seasonal worker for a short work term.

Employer enquiries can be directed to SkillsPEI at 902-438-4114.



Employer speaks of the benefits

Anytra Eterovich is the Chief Administrative Officer with the Town of Borden-Carleton. She speaks highly of the positive impact of the seasonal worker project. "In the past, our three seasonal staff did not work long enough to earn enough EI weeks to support them until they returned for the next season."

The town would have had to find the money for the extra weeks of work to give the staff the hours they required. This program is a win/win for everyone because people can come back earlier for training and work or extend the work time at the end of the season.



Anytra Eterovich

"We don't always have the budget to extend the work, so this support from SkillsPEI really makes a difference. The employees were very happy about getting extra weeks of work. The extra weeks at the end makes sure that they won't run out of EI for the next work season."

Anytra has worked with the municipality for nine years, and has seen the same staff returning to the seasonal positions year after year. "This system helps us maintain our staff, who rely on this work for their livelihood, and we rely on them for their skill set and availability."

She says the essential skills training was very well received after the initial introduction. "It can be intimidating for those who have been out of the school system or any type of training for many years. All the staff really loved the training and were encouraged by it."

"SkillsPEI and Workplace Learning PEI staff were great to work with to set this up. The training made a great impact because it was customized to what skills they need on the job."

Quotes from participants who took the training

These quotes are from staff at the Tignish Health Centre:

"We live in a community that is based on seasonal work. It can be tough to live on the wages that are available. The extended weeks are a great help. It really can reduce the financial stress." - Joan-Ann Gavin

"The idea of training was very intimidating when I heard it was a component of the program. I had not been in a classroom in years! However, being back in a learning environment was not bad at all. I learned a lot and had a lot of fun." - Lorraine Peters

Funding is provided through the Canada-PEI labour market agreements.

Road leads to an agricultural career for a sixth generation farmer

by Stella Shepard

Keisha Rose Topic grew up riding on tractors and trampling through potato fields with her father and grandfather. R.A. Rose & Sons is a family-owned and operated farming and trucking company established by Robert Rose and carried on by his sons Myles and Boyd Rose of North Lake.

Keisha is the sixth generation of the Rose family, working the same land as her ancestors. She didn't plan on a farming career after completing high school. Instead, she entered the science program at UPEI and later switched to the business program. She took a year off university to work on the family farm.

She graduated with a business degree from UPEI and secured employment with the Department of Agriculture in 2013. Keisha worked for two years as a crop insurance agent before returning to the family farm. She works at the family-owned potato packing facility, East Point Potato Inc.

Her duties include planting, maintaining, and harvesting potatoes, driving farm equipment, promoting and marketing potatoes, and whatever else needs to be done on the farm.

"I really enjoyed working with the Department of Agriculture," says Keisha. "I visited different farms, did field checks and took samples of potato and grain fields. Meeting farmers was interesting, but I wanted to be on my own farm. I felt like I was neglecting the other part of what I was interested in."

Job opportunities in agriculture and trades for women

"There are many job opportunities in agriculture for women," says Keisha. "I suggest women should take time to think about what they want to do. Think outside the box and consider trades or jobs within the agriculture industry."

"You will be successful if you are willing to learn new things, find good mentors, and get to know the people involved in the industry."

Transferable skills that fit agriculture

"Farming equipment is becoming very technical, so electrical skills would be a bonus," says Keisha. "As well, people with machinery repair and welding skills are a huge benefit to the farm."

"Some labour jobs are disappearing because of advanced technology, but there is still room for people with some knowledge of the industry and a willingness to learn."

Staff needed

"We are one of the largest employers east of Souris," says Keisha. "At the potato packing facility, 17 to 20 people work about 10 months of the year. The farming operation employs four year-round workers."

"On the farm side of the business, our hiring needs are greater in the fall and in the spring. We always need about 15 more employees during the harvest season, and probably five to seven more employees during the planting season."

"We look for people who are willing to work and willing to learn, who are team players and committed to the job."



Keisha Rose Topic is a sixth generation farmer with R.A. Rose & Sons Inc. and East Point Potato Inc., which are family owned and operated. "This is where life was leading me, back to the family farm where I will eventually become a partner." Submitted photo.

Job titles

- Sales Manager
- Administrative Assistant
- Sales
- Truck Drivers
- General Manager
- Production
- Labourers
- Machinery Operators

Wages

"Everyone, including the floor workers at the potato packing facility, starts at \$15.00 per hour," says Keisha.

How to apply

"We advertise on the Job Bank, but people can also drop by with a resumé," says Keisha.

For more information visit www.eastpointpotato.ca

