

The Labour Market Monitor is an overview of labour market information for the **Northwest Ontario Economic Region** which includes the districts of Thunder Bay, Rainy River and Kenora. The Labour Market Monitor is a monthly report focusing on labour market information produced by Ontario Region, Service Canada Labour Market and Socio-Economic Information Directorate. For further information contact us at: [lmi-imt@servicecanada.gc.ca](mailto:lmi-imt@servicecanada.gc.ca)

### **Labour Force Trends**

Employment in the Northwest Ontario economic region decreased by 3,000 from November 2009 to November 2010. Job losses were in both full-time employment (-1,700) and part-time employment (-1,300). During this period, fewer people looked for work leading to a decline in the size of the labour force (-3,700). This, combined with a decrease in the number of unemployed people, caused the unemployment rate to drop by 0.4 percentage points from 6.5% in November 2009 to 6.1% in November 2010. Over the same period, the provincial unemployment rate declined from 8.4% to 7.9%.

For more information, please visit the Statistics Canada website at:  
<http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/lfss05d-eng.htm>

### **Labour Market News by Industry**

#### **Accommodation and Food Services**

Wequedong Lodge is converting a former adult education centre into a hostel in Thunder Bay with a \$1 million grant from the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC). The hostel, geared towards Aboriginal clients, will contain a traditional healing room, dining facilities, and will house up to 130 clients. The project is estimated to create 10 new jobs for the community.

#### **Construction**

Plenary Justice Thunder Bay LP was awarded a \$247.7 million contract to design, build, and maintain the Thunder Bay Consolidated Courthouse. Once complete the 15-courtroom facility will consolidate the two existing courthouses in Thunder Bay. The project, which is expected to be completed in 2013, will create over 200 construction jobs.

Matawa First Nations announced construction has begun on 24 low-rent housing units in Thunder Bay. Funded through Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services and the First Nation, Inuit, Métis Urban & Rural Program, the project is expected to be completed by the summer of 2011.

Improvements to a section of Highway 17 between Marathon and White River are expected to create more than 40 construction jobs. Pioneer Construction Incorporated was awarded the \$6.1 million contract through Ontario's Northern Highways Program, which is expected to begin in the spring of 2011.

Wincrief Forest Products Limited signed a construction agreement to build five modular cottages for the Minaki on the River project in Minaki, north of Kenora. The project will begin in 2011.

Building permits in Thunder Bay totalled \$17.7 million for October 2010, an increase of 27.9% over October 2009.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) announced 14 housing starts in Thunder Bay for November 2010 compared to 14 in November 2009. [www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca)

#### **Education Services**

The Obishikokaang Elementary School in Lac Seul First Nation, located northeast of Dryden, celebrated its grand opening in November. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) contributed \$7 million towards the project, while the First Nations community provided \$575,000.

The Northern Ontario School of Medicine and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) Local 677 reached a new labour agreement. The union's 150 workers in Thunder Bay and Sudbury voted 78% in favour of the new contract and ended a three month long strike.

### **Information and Culture**

An investment of \$81 million from the federal and provincial governments will help several rural First Nations communities in Northwestern Ontario receive broadband Internet services. Funded under the Northwestern Ontario Broadband Expansion Initiative, service provider Bell Aliant will build and service fibre optic networks to 26 Nishnawbe Aski Nation communities. The project is expected to take four years to complete.

### **Mining**

Stillwater Mining Company acquired Marathon PGM Corporation for US\$118 million in November. Development on a new copper and palladium mine on the property located outside of Marathon is expected to begin in two years, which could create up to 400 construction jobs.

Drill results from an exploration program conducted by North American Palladium Limited have lead to the discovery of a new platinum group metals zone at the Lac des Iles mine northwest of Thunder Bay. Additional drilling is expected at the new zone, named the Sheriff Zone along with other pre-established sites in the area.

### **Public Administration**

Sandy Lake First Nation received a \$2.1 million investment from the federal and provincial governments to build a new police station.

Construction is underway for a new Anishinabek Police Services headquarters on the Fort William First Nation reserve. The new state-of-the-art facility is expected to open in the spring of 2011.

The Marathon Economic Development Corporation is creating an online land inventory database to catalogue industrial and commercial lands and buildings available in the community. The provincial Northern Communities Investment Readiness (NCIR) program provided \$10,000 towards this initiative.

### **Trade, Wholesale and Retail**

A Leon's Home Furnishings Superstore officially opened in Fort Frances.

A Sears department store re-opened in Dryden in November under new management at a new downtown location.

### **Transportation and Warehousing**

Air Bravo Corporation has entered into a purchase agreement to acquire Thunder Airlines Limited. The airline expects to take over all of the Thunder Bay-based company's operations by the end of 2010.

### **Utilities**

The province of Ontario announced the coal-fired Thunder Bay Generating Station will be converted to natural gas as part of a province-wide pledge to eliminate coal-fired power generation by 2014. Construction on the project will begin in 2011. The conversion is expected to take approximately three years and create approximately 100 construction jobs.

*Note: In preparing this bulletin, Service Canada has taken care to provide clients with labour market information from reliable sources that is timely and accurate at the time of publication. Since labour market conditions are dynamic, some of the information presented here may have changed since the bulletin was published. Readers are encouraged to also refer to other sources for additional information on the local economy and labour market. Information contained in this bulletin does not necessarily reflect official policies of Service Canada.*