

A Review of the Labour Market Status of Home Economists on PEI

– funded by HRDC, for UPEI Dept of Family and Nutritional Sciences and PEIHEA

Objective - to find what can be done

by the PEIHEA to re-establish itself as a viable force in the labour market
to attract and retain high quality students to the profession,
to identify any new employment opportunities for home economists on PEI.

New dynamics in the work environment

- ▶ new/increased public demands and expectations;
- ▶ an increasingly older population of consumers;
- ▶ the introduction of technology and the knowledge economy;
- ▶ fiscal restraint policies, and pressures to reallocate financial resources;
- ▶ the restructuring of public policy and delivery organizations; and
- ▶ changes in job roles, functions and classification status.

PEI Statistics

The employment status of 142 of the approximately 217 trained home economists on PEI was identified:

- 50 - School System
- 44 - Health System (primarily Dietitians & Nutritionists)
- 21 - Non-traditional public sector job positions (staffing officer with the Public Service Commission, Project Coordinator with HRDC, Business Development Officer with PEI Business Development Inc., Communications and Public Relations)
- 16 - Retired
- 9 - Self-employed (consulting business, clinical counseling, advice/consultation to customers of large grocery chains and pharmacies, or to various community projects)
- 2 - Part-time from their home (contract work)

PEIHEA Membership:

In 2001, there were 31 members with the PEIHEA/CHEA.

8 - retired

15 - permanent full-time employment, (government agencies, UPEI, the school system, the non-profit community and private industry)

2 work part time,

5 work by contract, and 1 is in seasonal employment.

Traditionally, home economists employed as “home economists” by government.

Graduate with a general Home Economics degree is in much the same position as a graduate with a general B.A. or B.Sc. degree.

Nutritionists & Dietitians:

51 dietetic positions across the health system in PEI (few new recently). Thirty dietitians are between the ages of 25-44, and twenty are between by ages of 45-64 (average age ~45); there is one male. Average income earned is \$37,000

Many existing home economists on PEI are currently employed in some capacity. Concern around underemployment and the lack of new opportunities but no sense that there are large numbers of experienced home economists looking for work.

Canadian Trends:

Canada -employment similar to that of PEI. (Government cutbacks, new policies re global economic and social trends) Home Economics -traditional employment base eroded; difficulty in determining how to re-position itself in terms of profile and influence.

National Overview (Profile of 1995 Graduates in 1997):

Food & Household Science Sector

Undergraduate degree: nutrition, food science, household science, and consumer and family studies

Employment:

Same occupations as community college graduates in cooking, institutional management and service industry technologies, as well as with university graduates from other areas such as health and biology

Work as dietitians, in restaurants, and as food managers. They work in hospitals, long term care facilities, prisons, the bakery food industry, and in social services agencies

In Labour Force, in 1997 two years after '95 graduation

	Food and Household Science Sector	Average of all graduates
In Labour Force	87%;	
Full-time	64%	74%);
Unemployed	14% (2 nd highest unemployment rate for all graduates at the Bachelor's level in life science and primary technologies).	10%
Earnings	15% less than all other univ grads at the Bachelor's level 27% less than those with a similar Master's degree After five years they earned 17% below the average for all graduates at the Bachelor's level	
Post Secondary Enrolment	In 1997, 1,010 students received undergraduate degrees in food and household sciences Increase of increase of 7% from 1987 to 1997, (Since 1992, the number of these graduates has decreased by 10%).	From '87-'97 20% increase
National Career Outlook to 2003	Fair to good.	

Level of Career Satisfaction

How Many Said Yes?	Food and Household Sciences	All graduates of this level
Would you make the same educational choice again?	46%	71%
Are you satisfied with your work?	89%	90%
Does your work directly match your training?	39%	51%
Do you feel over qualified for your work?	53%	33%

Dietitians and Nutritionists

Includes home economists working in dietetics or nutrition jobs/roles such as clinical and community dietitians, nutrition and dietetics researchers, and public health nutritionists.

Labour Force

	Dietitians and nutritionists	All occupations
Employed	29,000	
Increase in employment from 1988-1998		
1988-1993	20.6%	12.3%
1993-1998	17.4%	NA
	2.7%	8.2%
Work Part-time	23%	19%
Self -Employed	17%	17%
Female	66%	45%
Unemployment Rate (1996-1998)	1.9% among the lowest for professional occupations and for other occupations in the health sector	6%

National Career Outlook to 2003

Good”; both employment opportunities and earnings are above average. Stable outlook for next 5 years.

As the Canadian population grows older, demand for health care services of all kinds will grow. Can gov't afford to hire?

Strengths & Assets of Home Economics

(from the Focus Groups):

- **Education – A Solid Base:**
- **Transferable Skills:**
- **Family & Community Focus:**
- **Holistic Approach:**

Issues & Challenges:

Role Delineation & Role Diffusion:

Changing Perceptions of Women's Role:

Cultural-Social Change

Professional Profile & Visibility:

Disconnect between Social Needs & Public Response:

- **Specialization:**
- **Unstable and Underpaid Employment:**
- **Employment/Career Options – Externally Driven**
- **Public Perception/Image:**
- **Limited Promotional Effort/Skill:**

Gender Imbalance:

Home Economics – Too Broad A Focus:

Future Employment Possibilities (from focus groups)

Expanded Nutrition Education & Counseling:

Natural Foods & Supplements:

Life Skills & Family Supports:

Family Poverty & Health:

Family & Community Services:

Seniors Care & Home care:

Healthy Child Development:

Food Safety:

Food Science

Wellness Programs and Clinics

The 'personal chef' market:

Housing and Home Design:

Re-positioning & Future Directions: from focus groups

Interest Based Associations vs Professional Based Associations:

Entrepreneurial Model/Approach:

Technology:

UPEI **changed the title of the Department** to Department of Family and Nutritional Science in 1997 to improve student interest/enrollment, retention and graduation numbers and become more proactive in **connecting its students with the broader employment community**. To date there has been a noticeable increase in student interest and enrollment.

Suggestions for the PEI Home Economics Association

Issue # 1 – Managing Change

The Association is impacted by change: e.g. the focus and direction of CHEA , (fee change, the CHEA Summit), of the UPEI FNS Department, the perception/issues with regard to professional title, and changing consumer/employer needs and expectations.

Strategic Direction

Begin to More Effectively Manage the Transition Issues: to allow its traditional strengths and capacity to adapt/respond to the new needs of families, consumers and employers, and labour market challenges

Strategic Actions:

- (1) Mobilize/Energize the Profession:**
- (2) Establish a “Creating the Desired Future” Committee:** to assume a leadership role in addressing the “change issues”.
- (3) Address the Issue of Professional Title:**

Issue # 2 - Declining Membership Base

Strategic Direction.

- Develop Steps to Strengthen and Expand the Membership Base of the Association

Strategic Actions:

Establish a membership committee to recruit new members, targeting

- a) past members who may have let their membership lapse;
- b) those with specific organizational knowledge and skills to the task of managing change and building capacity; and
- c) new graduates and students.

Issue # 3 - Profile and Visibility

The Association and the profession is not highly visible within the community generally, and with the employers community in particular.

Strategic direction:

Reframe the Profile and Activities of the PEIHEA

Strategic Actions:

- (1) Develop And Actively Promote A Strong Theme/Message.t:**
- (2) Focus On Changing Behaviour/Actions of the Association**
- (3) Focus On Issues Relevant To The PEI Community:**
- (4) Promote And Celebrate The Competencies And Skills Of The Profession:**
- (5) Develop A Media Strategy:**

Issue #4 Developing Partnerships and Collaborations

The Association may be working too much in isolation; there is a need to begin to develop working relationships with associations and groups with similar views and interests.

Build on the diversity of the profession, and develop strategic alliances or collaborations with prospective partners

Strategic Actions:

- 1) Reach Out To Home Economics Teachers Association, Dietitians, and the FNS Department:**
- 2) Identify Other Likely Allies:**
- 3) Host A Discussion Forum:**
- 4) Set A Goal to establish at least two strategic partnerships with allied professional groups or associations.**

Issue # 5 – Build Capacity and Resources

In order to move forward to strengthen and re-position the profession, resources (time, energy, dollars) will be required.

Strategic Direction

Establish an infrastructure and resource base to support the vision, goals, and activities of the Association.

Strategic Actions:

- (1) Develop a plan to have an office base and an executive staff position in place within the next three years.**
- (2) Explore this concept with the Association membership, Dietetics Association & Teachers Association to get their view of benefits and potential barriers.**
- (3) Conduct an asset mapping exercise within the Association and its potential membership base; this would involve documenting the experiences and skills that individual home economists could bring to the collective efforts of strengthening the Association.**
- (4) Contact other professional associations and/or provinces (who may have taken this step), and explore how they approached the task, how funding was secured, the setting up of the office, etc. (e.g Nurses, Licensed Nursing Assistants, Province of Ontario)**
- (5) Identify potential funding sources (governments – through project funding streams, Foundations, others)**