

## Reaching out to “third quarter” workers

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By Ashleigh Viveiros

A two-year pilot project aimed at connecting experienced workers with meaningful employment was launched in Winkler this week.

On Wednesday, the Winkler Chamber of Commerce and the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce kicked off ThirdQuarter, a program designed to match so-called "third quarter" workers - 50-plus individuals looking to delay or return from retirement - with companies that value employees with some experience under their belts.

"More and more often we hear business leaders tell us they worry about a shortage of workers as we head into a retirement boom," said Manitoba Chambers of Commerce president Graham Starmer. "But we also know people who retire from full-time careers have plenty of essential skills they can make count."

"For the Canadian economy to grow and for small towns to prosper, we need those ThirdQuarters to remain active."

The ThirdQuarter program includes a networking and resource website ([thirdquarter.ca](http://thirdquarter.ca)) where workers can create an essential skills profile and connect with employers in their area.

What makes the website different from other job banks is it doesn't use traditional resumes to find matches, said community co-ordinator George Penner.

Instead, the site is designed with an eye to helping older workers find ways of identifying and transferring the essential skills honed in their first career or personal life into a new career path.

"We're trying to redefine how people look at finding jobs and how employers seek workers," Penner said, noting the online skills assessment will help workers figure out what their transferable skills may be.

Businesses can also get some help in defining their positions differently - focusing less on actual experience and more on the skills needed to succeed, Penner.

"We want to have employers thinking outside the box," he said, noting that also includes taking into account the fact most older workers would prefer to work reduced or flexible hours. "So, can jobs be redirected in such a way that those workers can be utilized?"

Other business resources include information and tools to help companies assess their workforce and its demographics, plan and implement workplace changes, and learn how to integrate older employees into their business.

Penner, who returned to the workforce after retirement himself, says there are many people in the Winkler area who could benefit from this project.

"I think a lot of us in our third quarter are looking for meaningful activity ... that brings us joy in our lives," he said, noting full-time retirement can drive most anyone a little crazy with boredom.

In addition to employment opportunities, ThirdQuarter can also be used to help volunteer organizations find older volunteers, Penner noted.

Other ThirdQuarter projects will also take place in Arborg and Thompson, as well as rural communities in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Atlantic Canada.

The project is sponsored by the federal government to the tune of \$2.3 million.

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