

## Nova Scotia develops new strategic plan, looks ahead to annual conference

Near the end of 2013, the Human Resources Association of Nova Scotia (HRANS) polled members to find out what professional opportunities were top-of-mind. While responses varied depending on the organization, industry and experience of each member, the poll did reveal a common interest: Many members are interested in the involvement and development of HR as a strategic business partner within an organization.

"A number of our members have direct influence and are involved in their organization's strategic decisions and plans, beyond HR, enabling them to contribute to the

development of positive and effective workplaces and the ultimate success of their organizations," says Cheryl Newcombe, president of Halifax-based HRANS in an email to *Canadian HR Reporter*.

The association's professional development events throughout the year also delved into leadership and strategy issues.

The 2013 annual conference featured leadership coach and bestselling author Marshall Goldsmith with the address "What got you here won't get you there," as well as author and Olympic performance coach JP Pawliw-Fry, speaking about top performance under pressure.

Also in 2013, HRANS began the process of developing a new

strategic plan for the association's next five years.

"Our process involves input from members and discussions of the strengths, opportunities and aspirations of the association, while also looking at the key opportunities for our members as HR professionals," says Newcombe.

The plan is nearly finalized and HRANS expects to share the details with members in the coming months. The association, which serves Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, has 1,100 members — a number that's essentially the same as the previous year.

"With the trends in the economy and competition for individual members' interest in investment,

we are pleased that membership is holding steady," says Newcombe.

In 2014, the association will continue to deliver learning opportunities to members, as well as educational sessions in a variety of formats (including webinars, roundtable discussions, workshops and lunch-and-learn sessions) on popular topics such as virtual collaboration, bullying versus conflict in the workplace and temporary foreign workers.

This year, the annual conference is taking place in Halifax on June 12-13.

"Each year, our conference is focused on topics to build the skills and effectiveness of our members," says Newcombe.

Cheryl Newcombe, President, HRANS



"It's designed to provide practical knowledge that they can apply to enhance their workplaces right away."

## Focus on growth, targeted education for Newfoundland and Labrador

Boom times in Newfoundland and Labrador continue to drive the activities and plans of the province's HR association.

"We've seen continued growth with some of the mega projects here in the province, including Long Harbour and Muskrat Falls," says Heather Joyce, president of the St. John's-based Human Resources Professionals of Newfoundland and Labrador (HRPNL).

That means skilled labourers — and workers with specific soft skills — are in short supply. The province is experiencing continued constriction of its labour market, says Joyce.

"Obviously, skilled trades have always been highlighted when it comes to recruitment both here and in some of the Western provinces, but now we're seeing it with support labour as well, whether it

be office workers or HR staff," says Joyce.

The past year brought other issues to the forefront for HR professionals in the province.

### Practical sessions on issues such as staff retention and temporary foreign workers are especially popular.

"We've seen a lot of union contracts, particularly in the public sector, come to a close in 2013 so there have been a lot of negotiations underway," she says. "Certainly the management of labour has driven the demand for participation in our association."

HRPNL now has more than 230 members, which represents a 10 per cent increase in general membership from a year ago and a doubling of the number of student

members.

"We're seeing a lot more people studying HR in university and colleges and interested in what the association is doing," says Joyce.

Pressing HR topics on operational issues dictated the content of education sessions in 2013.

"What we're seeing right now is a demand for topics that are less big picture and more focused on things our members can take away right then and there and use immediately in their organizations," she says.

Practical sessions on issues such as staff retention and the legal ins and outs of hiring temporary foreign workers have been especially popular in recent months.

For 2014, the association plans to continue to offer courses in partnership with both regional and national service providers.

Heather Joyce, President, HRPNL



Geographical restrictions present challenges when it comes to bringing in high-calibre speakers, and an even greater challenge for more remote members.

"We might partner with Hays, Knightsbridge, Deloitte, whoever it might be, in order to deliver more to our members this year," says Joyce.

Co-ordinating remote speakers and exploring different delivery methods will enable more members to take part in better-quality events.

This year, HRPNL will take steps to grow its membership as well.

"We're focusing on a larger promotion campaign but we're not just targeting human resource practitioners," she says.

The association will reach out to general managers, whose roles may include HR functions, and to business owners, who do HR work

as part of their daily duties.

The association also plans to develop an education campaign targeting decision-makers in C-suite and executive positions.

"We want the people at those levels to understand the value that HR brings to an organization and the value we can drive for an organization as well," says Joyce.

## Payroll association turns 35

The Canadian Payroll Association (CPA) is celebrating its 35th anniversary in 2014. But that doesn't mean the 18,000-member group is anywhere near slowing down. This past year, it had several initiatives underway — and 2014 promises to be equally busy.

One major change involved the certification programs, with the pass mark for all PCP (payroll compliance practitioner) and CPM (certified payroll manager) courses raised from 60 per cent to 65 per cent.

Everything CPA does is about legislative compliance, says Patrick Culhane, president of the Toronto-based association — so the increase is pretty significant.

"Part of it has to do with the lifecycle of our education programs. We're doing in years what the HR profession and the accounting profession probably did in decades. We're 35 years old this year

but, in relative terms, that's rather young compared to the HR profession and it's definitely younger than the accounting profession. So it's not just about growth, it's also about the quality of graduates and meeting employer expectations for performance on the job when people are certified."

And National Payroll Week in September continued to do well, says Culhane — it reached a total audience of more than 33 million in 2013. There's plenty of interest around CPA's annual survey looking at how people live paycheque to paycheque, he says.

"That has now become an economic measure."

And to promote its value and services, the association developed a separate membership recruitment campaign in Quebec and a new National Payroll Week ad campaign for non-members, says Culhane.

"The messaging that we have to our members is payroll is mission-

critical, but if you talk to people outside of the payroll profession or even accounting and HR, a lot of them, they don't realize payroll is a compliance-driven profession. If you talk about 120 regulatory requirements, they look at you kind of (thinking) 'What, how can that be?'"

A Quebec government relations advisory group has also done "fantastic" work this last year and with the province's latest budget in February, CPA had a big win, says Culhane.

The payroll thresholds for accelerating remitters changed from \$50,000 to \$100,000 and from \$15,000 to \$25,000, to match the change to the federal remittance thresholds announced in the 2014 federal budget, which had not changed since 1988.

"That saves people administration and time," he says.

CPA also helped postpone, from January 2013 to March 2013, the implementation of the Quebec

personal health contribution — introduced in the 2012 budget — so system changes could be made.

"Sometimes governments fail to recognize that when 97 per cent of Canadians are paid using computer technology, you need to give the programmers time to change those systems. So that was a big win," says Culhane.

The association also successfully advocated for an alignment between Quebec Pension Plan and Canada Pension Plan contributions for employees who move into and out of Quebec.

"Overall, we just had a great year," he says.

CPA also worked with Service Canada to prevent the expansion of the paper ROE for the "variable best weeks" employment insurance, saving employers and service or software providers millions of dollars, says Culhane.

Last year, CPA had more than 15,000 registrants at over 500

Patrick Culhane, President, CPA



seminars, webinars and conferences. In 2014, it is looking to expand its legislative compliance product and service offerings and to continue to focus on professional development topics that interest members, such as year-end reporting and filing, labour and employment standards, taxable and non-taxable benefits, and terminations.