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Our view: Looking for skilled workers

Dec 29, 2016



As the director of the North Shore Workforce Investment Board notes, there's both good news and bad news in the most recent unemployment statistics for the region.

The good news, according to Mary Sarris, is that the unemployment rate for the area that includes Salem, Peabody and Beverly is down to 2.3 percent. That's what many economists would term full employment for a region that not so long ago was suffering the effects of the Great Recession along with the rest of the country.

The bad news, as Sarris also notes, is that while jobs are relatively plentiful, the competition for skilled labor is intense. That's not so good for companies in the high-tech field and those of us who'd like to see more of them locate here.

This region has plenty to attract business including its rich history, diverse neighborhoods and proximity to both the cultural, educational and medical institutions in Boston and the many recreational opportunities available in New Hampshire and Maine. But as Robert Bradford, president of the North Shore Chamber of Commerce points out, employers are not likely to come here if they can't find qualified people to work in their factories, offices and research facilities.

Fortunately legislators, educators and local business leaders have in recent years made investment in teaching young people job-ready skills a priority. North Shore Community College has been adding new spaces and new programs for this effort at its campuses in Danvers and Lynn. And the North Shore's cities and towns recently invested substantial millions in the construction of a new, state-of-the-art technical high school in Danvers.

As the latest figures demonstrate, these are worthy endeavors that must be continued in the interest of keeping our economy on a firm footing.

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