

CLOSING THE SKILLS GAP

**A Report of the
British Columbia Chamber of Commerce
*Skill Shortages Initiative***

April 2002



BRITISH COLUMBIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Suite 1201 – 750 West Pender Street
Vancouver, British Columbia
Canada V6C 2T8
Telephone (604) 683-0700
Facsimile (604) 683-0416

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Page</u>
Preface.....	iii
Summary.....	iv
1. The Imperative.....	1
2. The BC Chamber of Commerce <i>Skill Shortages Initiative</i>	3
3. The BC Chamber of Commerce <i>Workplace Skills Survey</i>	4
4. The BC Chamber of Commerce <i>Surviving BC's Skills Crisis</i> Forums.....	6
5. Addressing BC Skill Shortages: Challenges and Opportunities.....	7
• BC Chamber of Commerce Recommendations	
• Recruitment, Human Resource Development and Retention Tools	
6. Next Steps – Leadership, Action and Change.....	34
Appendices.....	37
• Appendix 1: Committee Structure, Participating Organizations and Presenters.....	37
• Appendix 2: BC Chamber of Commerce Recommendations.....	38
Endnotes.....	41

PREFACE

The challenge of ensuring British Columbia has a highly skilled and adaptable workforce is an economic imperative. While skill shortages have not yet reached a crisis proportion, time is running out for a comprehensive, collective response to this looming problem.

In 1994, the British Columbia Chamber of Commerce put forth its vision of BC Business in the landmark *Moving Forward* report. I call your attention to a quote in the report, which stated the following:

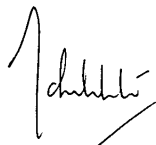
“...education must belong on the economic agenda not the social agenda. Education to develop our human resources is an indispensable investment for the future and is as important to economic development as financial capital and productive facilities.”¹

It has been seven years since the *Moving Forward* report, and skills issues have vaulted from being the fourth most pressing issue to number one. Unfortunately, BC as a province has not made progress on the skill shortage issue and BC is faced with an uncertain future unless something is done now.

The challenge put forth in this report is very clear: Leaders of BC must commit to action and change now, or BC's economy and society will suffer the consequences. Please take the time to review this report, its recommendations and proposed actions.

Leadership is needed to shift words and intentions into action and change. While this challenge is shared among stakeholders, the BC business community must take the lead.

On behalf of the BC Chamber of Commerce, I would like to thank Human Resources Development Canada and the Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission for their financial support of this project; and the members of the Project Steering Committee and forum presenters and panelists for their participation in this project (see Appendix 1).



John R. Winter,
President
British Columbia Chamber of Commerce
April 5, 2002

¹BC Chamber of Commerce, *Moving Forward: The Vision of BC Business*, 1994.

SUMMARY

Leadership, Action and Change

In response to the challenges identified in this report, the BC Chamber of Commerce initiated the *Skill Shortages Initiative*. The Chamber is committed to leadership, action and fundamental change on the critical issue of skill shortages in British Columbia:

- 1. The BC Chamber and its affiliated organization, the Leadership and Management Development Council of BC, will meet with major media outlets to raise concern about the need for immediate action to prevent serious skill shortages and the resulting disruption to economic growth in BC.**
- 2. The BC Chamber will form a “Critical Skills Task Force” to develop an action plan and strategy for Chamber members and other businesses and associations to address the skills gap challenges.**
- 3. The BC Chamber will provide direct input to the Minister of Advanced Education on the development of a new industry training and apprenticeship system in BC.**
- 4. The BC Chamber will work with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce to spearhead leadership on this issue at the national level.**
- 5. The BC Chamber will work with key representatives of women, First Nations, immigrants and visible minorities, and people with disabilities to promote partnerships and effective utilization of BC’s human resources among local chambers and small and medium-sized businesses.**
- 6. In recognition of the provincial and regional economic development and employment potential, the BC Chamber will seek to initiate strategic partnerships and demonstration projects with First Nations and Aboriginal groups.**
- 7. The BC Chamber will work with key education groups such as parents’, educators’ and administrators’ associations to provide input, and develop partnerships for promoting trades and technical careers and industry training for small and medium-sized businesses. The Chamber will provide tools and information to local chambers to undertake such activities at the regional level.**
- 8. The BC Chamber will create a partnership with other groups to sponsor a “Small Business Recruitment, and Human Resource Development and Retention Tool Kit” for use by companies throughout BC.**

The Imperative

British Columbia is at a skills crossroads. The quality and creativity of the workforce has become the single most competitive factor in the industrialized nations. The degree to which skill shortages are averted by stakeholders will be a large determinant of BC's economic prosperity and social health. The BC business community in particular, can choose to take proactive action on this issue, or suffer the consequences.

All Canadian federal and provincial governments reflect the importance of "human capital" in their recent strategic plans and policy statements. The BC business community has increasingly raised concerns about skill shortages. However, concrete strategies need to be implemented in order to convert "words to deeds". Otherwise, BC and its businesses and workers will be marginal players in the global, knowledge-based economy.

There are indications that Canada is weak in this arena. Global indicators show BC and the rest of the country rank very low in, for example, retaining highly qualified workers, labour-management relations, and staff training. Notwithstanding September 11th and the recent economic downturn, skill shortages are not a passing "fad". As renowned educator Paul Gallagher and economist Roslyn Kunin have warned, skill shortages will threaten British Columbians' quality of life.

The BC Chamber of Commerce *Skill Shortages Initiative*

In light of its concern about ensuring a globally competitive economy and workforce, the BC Chamber of Commerce initiated a project summarized in this report. The *Skill Shortages Initiative* involved a survey of over 1,000 Chamber members, six regional forums, and the analysis and synthesis of several reports and studies. The purpose of this project was to engage business and community stakeholders on skill shortages challenges, to identify best practices and solutions for addressing it, and ultimately, to stimulate action.

The many small and medium-sized enterprises that participated, are very interested in the skill shortages issue, and most expect this to become a larger problem unless proactive measures that stimulate change are taken. These businesses and other community participants called for the BC Chamber and other business groups to play a leadership role to identify challenges, opportunities and solutions. The survey and forums also found that business and community leaders are calling for changes in the education system and for all stakeholders to work together. Lifelong learning, improving the image of non-university careers, improved literacy programs, and more workplace education were some of the themes from the Chamber forums. The consensus of the participants emphasized doing something now.

As well as outlining the challenges to addressing skill shortages, this paper provides recommendations for action from the BC Chamber and suggestions regarding tools and resources

for businesses to use in order to recruit, develop and retain skilled workers. These “best practice” profiles are provided throughout the paper.

Challenges and Opportunities

The Chamber survey and forums, along with a review of pertinent literature, identified a number of key challenges related to the skill shortage issue. In the case of each challenge, this report attempts to identify opportunities for leadership, action and change. The key challenges facing BC vis-à-vis the looming skills crisis include the following:

- **Demographic realities** – The impacts of the declining birthrates and of the aging of the BC population, and the need to better utilize existing and new talent pools.
- **Immigration** – The need for change in programs for new Canadians, and the effective and flexible assessment and recognition of their credentials and training.
- **Literacy** – The need to increase workplace literacy strategies.
- **Industry-based training and apprenticeship** – The need to develop a new, flexible industry training model in BC.
- **Attitudes** – The need to shift attitudes about non-university careers, while balancing education and training priorities across all types of post-secondary education.
- **Businesses’ commitment to invest in human capital** – The need to perceive training as an investment, and for businesses and educators to work together to address skill shortages.
- **Secondary and post-secondary education** – The need to revamp these systems should be a major priority for education leaders and government.
- **Information gaps** – Businesses need better information on training resources and skill shortages.
- **Adapting to Economic Transition** – Governments, industries, communities and educators need to develop and utilize more re-employment strategies to move unemployed workers into new jobs.
- **Strategic Workforce Planning** – Governments, industry sectors, employers, workers and educators all need to adhere to a more strategic perspective on human resource management and learning, and collectively to undertake innovative planning approaches.

While the BC Chamber learned about many shortcomings regarding how skill shortages are being addressed in BC, the project also yielded a number of best practices outlined throughout the report. These examples all demonstrated one thing in common: investment in human resource development and organizational change pay dividends; they all involved innovative, creative solutions to the skills challenge. The Chamber profiled these best practices to reinforce learning from success and adapting it to one’s company or industry.

Recommendations

Based on what it found from the survey and forums and other business groups, the Chamber offers 30 recommendations for addressing the skills gap. These recommendations are “opportunities” for action and the Chamber was careful to ensure that each recommendation identifies specific stakeholder sectors. Collectively, the recommendations reflect a shared responsibility among the skills constituencies: federal and provincial governments, business groups and employers, labour and employees, educators and trainers, and communities. Some of the key recommendations in this report are as follows:

- Business, government and community service groups should make it a top priority, and work together to develop partnerships and strategies to recruit and develop human resources from non-traditional sources of workers.
- Federal and provincial governments, professional and trade associations, educators, and immigrant service organizations should develop a fast-track foreign credential assessment and recognition service for immediate implementation in BC.
- Governments and educators should work with business groups to develop practical training and retention tools for smaller businesses with no such expertise or economies of scale.
- Governments should expand “welfare-to-work” training models using work-based training and industry groups to deliver it.
- In unionized environments, employers and unions should work together to develop innovative human resource management and training practices that respond to skill needs and do not overlap into collective bargaining.
- Business, labour, government and education should more aggressively champion and promote trades and technical careers and training among their constituents.
- The federal and provincial governments and business groups should conduct a feasibility study on the cost-benefit of a “human resource investment tax credit” program. Public policies and private practices should reflect the principle of “those who benefit from training, should pay for this investment”.
- The provincial government and post-secondary institutions should increase learning capacity through the use of internet-based training. If every full-time student enrolled in one internet-based course each term, it would increase access by twenty percent.
- The provincial government and education groups should encourage and stimulate public-private partnerships among post-secondary institutions (e.g. public institution-private institution, public institution-industry, etc.)—perhaps by offering financial incentives.
- The provincial government should facilitate the development of a provincial human resource development strategy, lead by the business community with input from labour, education and community groups.

- The provincial government should re-negotiate a new labour market development agreement with the federal government that reflects stronger employer and workforce roles in its planning and implementation.

This report culminates with the BC Chamber of Commerce's commitment to action on the skill shortages front.

*"If not now, when?
If not us, who?"*

Jimmy Pattison

1. THE IMPERATIVE

The start of the 21st century brings a mounting concern about the shortage of qualified skilled workers required for British Columbia to prosper and successfully compete in the global economy. Many Canadian and BC organizations have voiced this concern to the extent that some have referred to this situation as a "crisis". Human capital has become a number one concern among all industrialized nations.

Many provincial and national leadership groups have called for action to address skill shortages

- Bank of Canada.
- Business Council of BC.
- Canadian Federation of Independent Business.
- BC Federation of Labour.
- Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission.
- Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters.
- Human Resources Development Canada.
- Conference Board of Canada.
- Construction industry associations.
- BC-Yukon Building & Construction Trades Council.
- Tourism industry associations.
- Aerospace Industries Association of BC.
- Vancouver Board of Trade.
- And more.....

"The pending skill shortages, in almost every line of work, should be a high priority concern everywhere. It does not yet appear to be so, despite the overwhelming evidence in BC."

Paul Gallagher,
BC Chamber Skills
Forum Panelist,
October, 2001

Some BC industries, companies and economists are cynical about "skill shortages"—they have heard this before in the 80s and 90s. However, the BC Chamber of Commerce and other groups say that British Columbians and employers must take this issue seriously. It is a different world today because of global competition, demographic realities, and the increasing diffusion of information and communications technologies into our lives. As recently as the last few months, business groups have been raising this issue as a major concern.¹

This is not simply a health care phenomenon; or about teachers and highly qualified professionals. Without action, the skill shortage problem will affect every part of British Columbians' work and personal lives: Who will do the plumbing? Who will build or renovate your house? Who will build the new highways and bridges? Who will design and

Closing the Skills Gap

manufacture the new technologies? Who will repair your automobiles? Who will educate our children? Who will weld the oil and gas infrastructure?

The “new economy” reflects three key principles:

- A *global* economy—human resources, investment capital, integrated markets.
- A *knowledge-based* economy—knowledge, skills, ideas, creativity.
- An *innovative* economy—research, development, technology adoption and commercialization.²

In order for BC to prosper, its economy must strongly reflect these principles. However, in certain respects, BC’s and Canada’s economies do not.

As per the chart below, one of the key indicators of economic growth is new business investment in Canada by international corporations. In a recent survey of senior American executives, it was found that among nine factors, “work force” was the most important reason for investing in Canada.³ Also, Canada is ranked 36th out of 47 countries in its “ability to retain well-educated workers”,⁴ and ranks 14th in “extent of staff training” and 46th in “cooperation in labour-employer relations” out of 75 countries.⁵

The Canadian Human Resource Scorecard

“Workforce” as a factor for investing in Canada by U.S. CEOs*	1st out of 9 factors
Ability to retain well-educated workers**	36th of 47 countries
Extent of staff training***	14th of 75 countries
Cooperation in labour-employer relations***	46th of 75 countries

* Industry Canada, *Achieving Excellence: Investing in People, Knowledge and Opportunity*, February 2002, p. 55.

** IMD Switzerland, *2001 World Competitiveness Yearbook*, 2001.

*** World Economic Forum, *The Global Competitiveness Report: 2002, 2002*.

This report is about BC’s competitiveness and about averting a crisis, by BC’s business community and other stakeholders to ensure industries have world-class skills to grow and compete internationally.

The BC Chamber of Commerce and its partners began to recognize the skill shortage issue almost a decade ago. In 1994, the Chamber's *Moving Forward* report pointed out that a critical issue facing BC business was the lack of skilled workers and the need to upgrade education and training. Unfortunately, seven years later, the skill shortage challenge has become more acute due to the aging of BC's workforce, declining birthrates and global competition.

While the events of September 11th and the recent global economic downturn may have reduced the severity of some skill shortages, the BC Chamber of Commerce is concerned that once BC's economy turns around, the competition for talent will be even more severe than before. As David Baxter recently emphasized:

The result is that employers and employees, consumers and taxpayers must all prepare for economy wide labour supply challenges, and pronounced shortages in many sectors, in the medium and long term: the current slowdown in the global economy will simply permit near term postponement of dealing with some of these challenges.⁶

BC's economy and labour market are at a skills crossroads: Either drastic changes need to be implemented in the training, recruiting and retention of skilled workers; or we will face the consequences. It is time that BC business takes on this challenge in partnership with governments, workers and educators. The solutions will require bottom-up approaches in local communities and specific industry sectors.

2. THE BC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE *SKILL SHORTAGES INITIATIVE*

Impact of Skill Shortages on British Columbians

- Reduced productivity.
- Constricted company growth.
- Missed opportunities for labour force participants.
- Reduced provincial economic growth.
- Reduced investment attractiveness from outside BC.
- Reduced tax revenues.

The purpose of this paper is to briefly put into context the implications of the skill shortage issue and to focus on possible solutions. The BC Chamber of Commerce will also outline its intentions for working with partners to address this critical economic issue. The Chamber is issuing a call for action to institute real change in how business, government and educators address BC's need for skilled workers. As recently stated in its briefing to the Standing Committee on Education, "The BC Chamber is not laying blame on this issue. We are looking for solutions."⁷

The BC Chamber of Commerce highlighted the skills shortage issue in BC at its 2001 Annual General Meeting, by hosting a panel of experts to discuss various aspects of the issue. This forum heightened the Chamber membership's appetite for more information.

The Chamber, and many other business organizations, as well as agencies such as the Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission (ITAC) have attempted to raise awareness about skills and learning issues. As a result of the interest generated its AGM, the Chamber entered into a strategic partnership with ITAC to probe Chamber members' views on skill shortages and solutions. This partnership led to a multi-faceted project led by the BC Chamber between September 2001 and February 2002, culminating in this report and including the following components:

1. A survey targeted the BC Chamber's 27,000 member businesses—comprised largely of small and medium-sized enterprises—to solicit member companies' views on human resources needs and solutions.
2. Upon completion of the survey, a series of six regional "Surviving BC's Skills Crisis" forums were implemented in various regions to generate local, grassroots ideas for solutions and leadership. An important part of this process profiled local best practices in skill development and partnerships.
3. The project also involved a review of relevant reports and studies, and experts were interviewed to obtain a better understanding of the skills problem and possible solutions.

Based on this three-part approach, this report details various barriers that require resolution in order to effect change. The report also contains examples of BC best practices throughout its pages, which reflect successful models, partnerships and solutions.

3. THE BC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE *WORKPLACE SKILLS SURVEY*

The BC Chamber's *Workplace Skills Survey* was developed to provide a snapshot of its members' future skill requirements and how they plan to address them.

Closing the Skills Gap

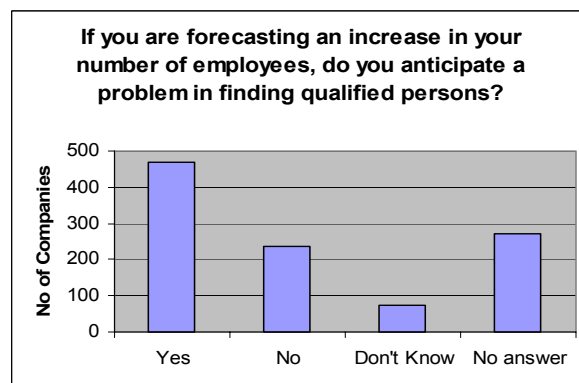
The survey was designed and tested by a Project Steering Committee (see Appendix 1) and implemented in August 2001. A total of 1069 responses were collected and analyzed. The BC Chamber received a broad-based response that reflected both regional and business-type diversity.

Sixty-seven percent of the survey respondents indicated that the BC Chamber should play a major role in the development of BC's skilled workforce. The respondents also indicated that the Chamber should act as a catalyst, facilitator and communicator for the continued development of the province's human resources.

Many respondents stated that they could not wait for government or education to "fix" the chronic and expanding skill shortages, and they "need help now". The survey also reflected a consensus that real change is required in how the education and training system responds to training needs and in how businesses address the skill shortage issue. Many businesses indicated they are already experiencing the effects of the skill crisis.

The survey confirmed that small and medium businesses throughout BC are experiencing difficulties in finding skilled workers and are concerned about the skill shortages issue, and included the following other findings:

BC Chamber Skills Survey



BC Chamber of Commerce, *Workplace Skills Survey*, September, 2001

- Almost three-quarters (74 percent) of those businesses surveyed expected to see an increase in employment in the future; 60 percent of these anticipate experiencing difficulty in finding qualified personnel.
- Businesses saw a need for educators and trainers to emphasize both soft and technical skills.

- The responses reflected a call for business, government, education and labour to collaboratively work to address skill shortages and training needs. They identified education, business and government (in this order) as being most responsible for ensuring a continuous supply of qualified personnel.
- In terms of training existing employees, 44 percent of surveyed businesses are providing in-house continuous training and 25 percent are supporting external ad-hoc training.
- Responding businesses have implemented a variety of measures to ensure an adequate supply of skilled personnel for the future:
 - 18% are working with local schools and colleges;
 - 16% are working with their local industry association;
 - 15% are creating workplace incentive programs;
 - 11% are researching the problem.

4. THE BC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE *SURVIVING BC'S SKILLS CRISIS* FORUMS

The results of the *Workplace Skills Survey* were used by the Chamber to move forward with the delivery of six regional skills forums throughout the province to obtain more qualitative input and ideas for solutions regarding the skill shortages issue. The BC Chamber regional skills forums were held in Kelowna, Victoria, Nanaimo, Kamloops, Trail and Mackenzie.

These forums were designed to stimulate audience participation, as well as provide the participants with an opportunity to hear from expert panelists and keynote speakers and approximately one hour were dedicated to open discussion. The forums developed a high level of community awareness and were covered by local media.

All keynote and panel speakers provided remarks that resonated with forum participants and stimulated thought, dialogue and ideas for action and change:

- † David Baxter of The Urban Futures Institute, provided startling evidence of the impact of the aging of BC's population, including its implications for the supply of skilled workers.
- † Ed Wong of the Business Council of BC, spoke about the "third option" of non-university careers that young people and parents are not considering in sufficient numbers.
- † Brian White of the Centre for Tourism Leadership, showed participants how the tourism industry needs a global approach to recruiting and retaining human resources.

Closing the Skills Gap

- ‡ Paul Gallagher of Gallagher and Associates, talked about the need for change and the imperative of new approaches to workplace training by employers, workers and educators.
- ‡ Kerry Jothen of ITAC, provided an overview of how industry training and trades and technical careers must be promoted among employers and youth.

Forum participants urged the BC Chamber of Commerce to continue to spearhead a skill shortages initiative, and along with other business groups, to take action toward change around this critical topic. Some of the key themes from the forums were as follows:

- Upgrading the skill sets of all workers to meet future skill needs is critical. Therefore, the working population should be encouraged to embrace lifelong learning.
- Lower skilled jobs are disappearing, as more jobs become knowledge-based, requiring stronger basic skills and education; literacy in the workforce needs to be expanded.
- Best practice examples of business training, and partnership success stories should be promoted and replicated.
- The current education and training system is not meeting the skill requirements of the labour market.
- The negative image of trades and other non-university careers held by parents and youth must be reversed.
- The province's businesses need a more flexible industry training and apprenticeship model.
- More workplace education should be delivered directly by Chamber members and other businesses, including mentorships, internships and other experiential learning models.
- Aboriginal and immigrant communities must be included in efforts to address future skill shortages.

Based on completed evaluation forms, the forum participants highly ranked both the speakers and the overall effectiveness of the forum.

5. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN ADDRESSING SKILL SHORTAGES

Some key challenges emerge from a synthesis of what the BC Chamber of Commerce found from businesses and communities through its survey and forums, from a review of recent key reports and studies.

For each of the 10 challenges summarized in this section, corresponding opportunities are identified as “recommendations” by the BC Chamber of Commerce. Also, for each challenge, business tools for recruitment, human resource development (HRD) and retention are suggested. Each sub-section of this “Challenges/Opportunities” section will flow as follows:



One of the alarming findings from the BC Chamber survey, forums and review of literature is how widespread the skill shortage problem is in terms of existing and looming shortfalls of skilled workers in BC.

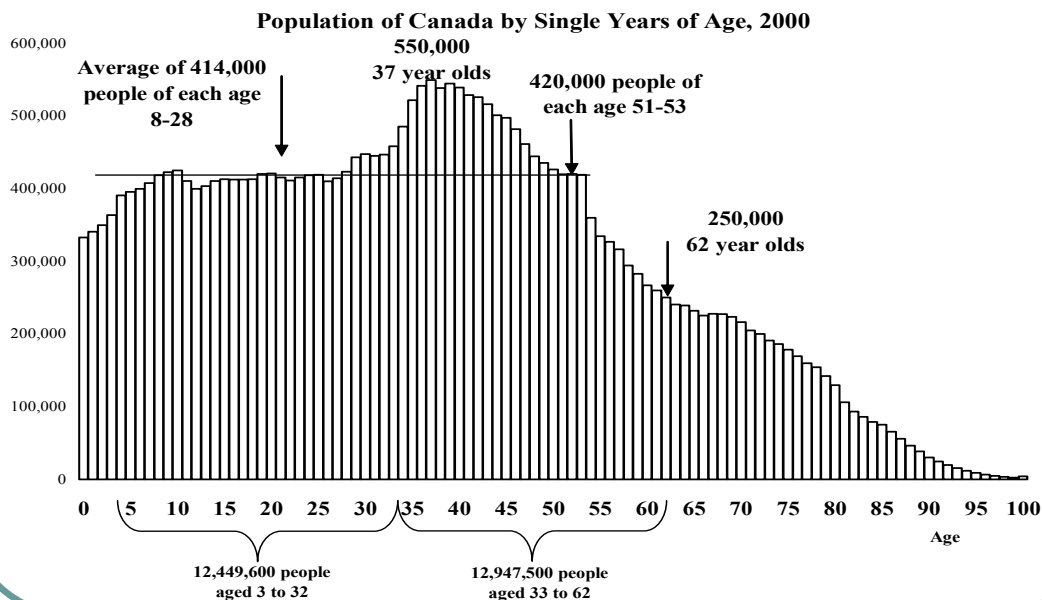
Skill shortages are widespread

- Engineers.
- Accountants & financial analysts.
- Computer programmers.
- Software engineers.
- All types of IT workers.
- Salespersons.
- Nurses, physicians and other health care professionals.
- University teachers and researchers.
- Insurance underwriters.
- Heavy equipment operators.
- Project managers.
- Industrial mechanics.
- Industrial electricians.
- Most construction trades.
- Automotive trades.
- Aerospace trades and technicians.

From Jock Finlayson, Will Labour Shortages Derail the BC Economy? February 2002.

5.1 The Demographic Realities

The “Demographic Wedge”



From David Baxter, *The Retiring Kind*, The Urban Futures Institute, Report #53, September 2001.

A significant factor in the skills challenge that BC faces is the the province’s demographic profile. This is driven by both the increasing age of the baby boom cohort and the declining birthrate—neither of which can be controlled. David Baxter’s chart above shows that Canada has more people in every age group 29-53 (i.e. part of the “demographic wedge”) than there are for the age group 8-28—meaning that “there are not enough young people in Canada to maintain the size or contributory capacity of the labour force after 2010”.⁸

Large numbers of workers will be leaving the workforce in the coming years. As they retire, the economy loses its “human capital” which generates a demand for new workers, particularly new labour force entrants in the 15 to 24 year old age group. Human Resources Development Canada predicts that 56 percent (383,000) of a total of 689,000 new job openings between 1998 and 2008 will be “replacement” jobs due to attrition.⁹ The balance of new openings is due to economic growth.

The effective utilization of British Columbians’ skills will play a critical important role in the province’s collective response to the skills crisis. The talent pool from which employers recruit, will need to include—more than in the past—young people, women, First Nations people, persons with disabilities, and other labour force groups. Collectively, these BC

citizens represent the majority of the province’s labour force growth and future skills supply. This will help to ensure that BC’s labour force stimulates and grows with the provincial economy. Immigrants, another key labour force group, are covered in the next section.

A recent newspaper story warned that, “A crisis looms if we do nothing to train and employ the 920,000 working-age Aboriginal Canadians who will enter the work force by 2006”.¹⁰ The Aboriginal working-age population is growing three times faster than any other group in Canada. The story concluded with two choices: “We can accept the status quo and do nothing, or we can seize an unprecedented opportunity for both Aboriginal youth and corporate Canada”. This is particularly important for British Columbia, given the province’s large number of Aboriginal people and their drive for self-sufficiency and economic capacity-building.

While ten or twenty years ago, it may have been as a altruistic, community thing to do; however, it is now an economic imperative—businesses, unions and governments need to consider all sources of skilled workers and ensure the retention and development of human resources. There are private, public and voluntary resources for each of these talent sources.

The Under-Utilized Talent Pool

Women	While their labour force participation has increased, women are particularly under-represented in growing employment areas such as trades, technologies, self-employment and management.
First Nations Peoples	BC has the second largest Aboriginal population in Canada at over 139,000 people. This is the fastest growing segment of Canada’s workforce (especially Aboriginal youth) at 920,000 workers by 2006.
Immigrants and Visible Minorities	New Canadians will contribute the majority of net new population growth in the next few decades—better recognition of their skills and credentials must be actioned.
People with Disabilities	The majority of Canadians with disabilities (90 per cent of those under 35) describe their conditions as mild to moderate; fewer than 20 per cent require any form of accommodation in the workplace.
Displaced Workers	The 45 to 64 year age cohort has been growing fast, yet there are few re-employment transition programs for the most skilled workers.
Unemployed youth and Non-University Bound Students	Tens of thousands of youth are on welfare and employment insurance. Eighty percent of BC’s public funding is spent on learning for twenty percent of the population. More than half of new jobs will be in careers requiring formal post-school, non-university learning.

DEMOGRAPHICS **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Businesses should make it a priority to develop and retain their own skilled workforce through innovative human resource, compensation, profit-sharing, motivational practices, etc.
2. Business, government and community service groups should make it a top priority to work together to develop partnerships and strategies to recruit and develop human resources from non-traditional sources of workers.
3. The federal and provincial governments should establish a government-business-Aboriginal task force on economic and employment opportunities.

Demographics **Recruitment, HRD and Retention Tools**

- For each of the “talent pools” below, various government departments and community service organizations may be able to assist with funding, advice and expertise, or tools for recruiting and training such workers. Establish working relationships and partnerships with local or regional organizations that serve these clients.
- Explore the Vocational Rehabilitation Services in the Ministry of Human Resources regarding working with people with disabilities, or the local Human Resources Canada Centre office and Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women’s Services for assistance and programs. The Workers’ Compensation Board may have programs to assist businesses to train injured and rehabilitated workers.
- Obtain a copy of *Tapping the Talent of People with Disabilities: A Guide for Employers* from the Conference Board of Canada at www.conferenceboard.ca.

5.2 IMMIGRATION

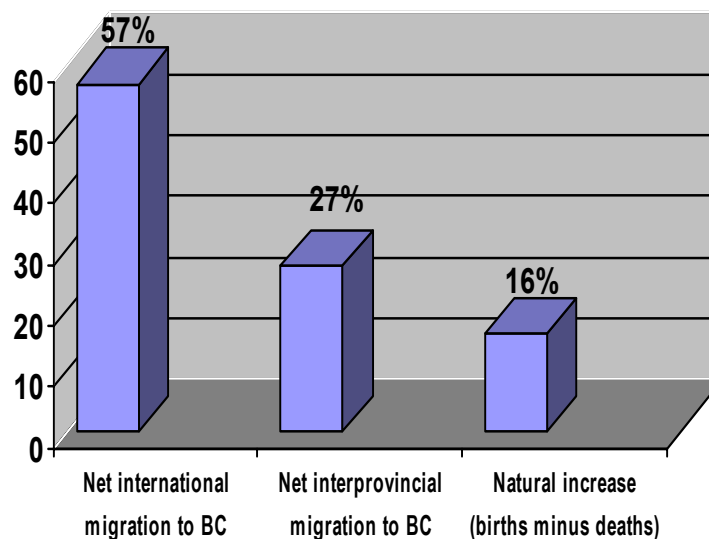
Immigration will be an increasingly important factor in maintaining the competitiveness of BC’s workforce. David Baxter of *The Urban Futures Institute* emphasizes the fact that immigration is an investment in our future, like other human capital investments; and that it

should be considered as an essential component of BC's economic policy, not simply a social policy instrument.

BC must attract skilled immigrants who can help address the province's skill gaps. However, attracting such talented people is becoming much more difficult as all industrialized nations are aggressively competing to attract talent. According to the provincial BC Stats chart below, immigration will account for almost 60 percent of the aggregate population growth and this will increase in the future.¹¹ The BC Chamber believes action is required on the following three issues: credential recognition, English as a Second Language (ESL), and the overall volume of immigration.

One of the key challenges to new Canadians contributing to BC's economy is the lack of effective and quick-response credential recognition capacity. The Conference Board of Canada recently estimated that over 500,000 Canadians were under-employed and could earn an additional \$5 billion annually, and could contribute more to the country's economy and labour market if their learning and skills were formally recognized—the majority of which are immigrants.¹² Also, in a recent study, Jeffrey Reitz, a University of Toronto immigration policy expert, found that the "under-utilization" of immigrant skills represents an earnings deficit of \$15 billion in 1996 dollars.¹³

The Increasing Contribution of Immigration to BC's Labour Force



The federal government recognizes this in its recent *Achieving Excellence* report: “Assessment services are available in a number of provinces, but much remains to be done before we can be satisfied that, as a country, we are taking full advantage of the valuable skills that newcomers offer to Canada”.¹⁴

Another challenge to immigrants fully participating in the BC economy is sufficient access to ESL training. Due to its geographic proximity to the Pacific Rim region, BC attracts a higher than average number of immigrants requiring ESL. Many of these immigrants desperately need work-ready level ESL in order to utilize their technical skills.

A strategy is required by the federal and BC governments, professional and industry groups, and multicultural service organizations to attract more highly skilled immigrants to BC and reduce barriers to their full participation in the economy. This strategy will require recruiting an adequate number of skilled immigrants to BC, as David Baxter asserts:

As 70% of immigrants to Canada are under the age of 35, they provide the opportunity for an almost immediate contribution to the entry stage of the labour force. The 225,000 immigrants per year included in the population projection are not sufficient to ensure an adequate labour supply in Canada; in order to ensure an adequate supply of labour, Canada will...have to increase its immigration rate each year as the population ages.¹⁵

IMMIGRATION RECOMMENDATIONS

4. Federal and provincial governments, professional and trade associations, educators, and immigrant service organizations should develop a fast-track foreign credential assessment and recognition service for immediate implementation in BC.
5. ESL training should be made more of a priority by federal and provincial governments and training institutions. More innovative work-based models should be implemented.
6. Business, professional and labour groups should work with and engage immigrant and multicultural service groups to develop partnerships to address barriers to the full participation of new Canadians in BC’s economy and labour market.

Immigration Recruitment, HRD and Retention Tools

- Partner with an educational institution or prior learning assessment consultant to tailor a program to assess and recognize foreign credentials and an upgrading program for immigrants to meet credential requirements.
- Partner with local educational and immigrant service organizations to develop workplace-based ESL programs.
- Discuss possible collaboration around recruitment, training and retention with immigrant and multicultural associations throughout the province.

5.3 LITERACY

Statistics Canada reports that 22 percent of adult Canadians 16 years and over, have serious difficulty dealing with printed materials and another 24-26 percent read, but not well.¹⁶

British Columbians with low literacy skills earn significantly lower incomes, experience higher unemployment, and rely to a greater degree on employment insurance and income assistance than those with higher levels of literacy.

Feedback from the BC Chamber forum in Mackenzie, indicated that BC has a serious literacy problem that prevents workers from entering certain careers, adapting to technological change, and moving to new jobs. Such workers see former jobs end, and lack the basic literacy skills necessary to upgrade their training. While BC does have groups with special needs such as older workers and immigrants, literacy is not directly restricted to marginalized members of society. Significantly low literacy levels can be found in most communities throughout the province. It has been said that many workers need to continuously acquire new skills and qualifications in order to succeed in the new economy.

The concept of “lifelong learning” is not new but in practice, it remains an ideal. The upgrading of basic skills and literacy will better assure individuals of an improved quality of life. This is increasingly important as technology continually raises the literacy threshold. For example, grade 12 completion is no longer a proxy for literacy, entry into employment or post-secondary education.

Despite the best efforts of groups like Literacy BC, basic reading, writing, numeracy and other “foundation” skills are lacking in a significant portion of the workforce, both young and old. More emphasis needs to be placed on business-education-community partnerships, workplace literacy models, and best practices by stakeholders. The BC Chamber applauds the efforts of the Conference Board of Canada and its partners in developing and promoting the use of its employability skills program across Canada.¹⁷

LITERACY **RECOMMENDATIONS**

7. The Conference Board of Canada’s *Employability 2000+* should be formally adopted by secondary and post-secondary institutions and their respective Ministries, to be a basis for curriculum in all programs at these educational levels.
8. The provincial government should ensure that public post-secondary institutions and school district continue to make literacy and basic skill development an appropriate priority.
9. Business groups should partner with the Conference Board of Canada, Literacy BC, and governments to hold literacy “best practices” forums in BC.

Literacy **Recruitment, HRD and Retention Tools**

- The Conference Board of Canada’s *Employability 2000+* framework can be downloaded from its website at: <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/education/learning-tools/employability-skills.htm> and used to assess levels of basic skills of new and existing workers.
- Local school districts and post-secondary institutions have several levels of literacy programs and often are interested in work-based partnerships.
- Literacy BC has a network of regional literacy groups. It and these local groups can be a useful resource for companies and individual workers. Call toll tree, 1-800-663-1293 or visit the website at: <http://www.nald.ca/lbc.htm>.
- ABC Canada is a national literacy business group that may have useful tools for you. Website: <http://www.abc-canada.org/>.

5.4 INDUSTRY TRAINING AND APPRENTICESHIP

A Skills Best Practice

Black Line Marine – Sidney, BC

As a marine repair business owner in the early 1990s, Campbell Black was disturbed by the fact that many employees saw little future in boatyard employment. The work was assumed to be unskilled and a “dead end” job; and wages and output were low and turnover high. Campbell realized that yacht repair was not recognized as a field of endeavour in its own right. There was no clear description of the work, no training for it, no standards and no career path for young people.

He conceived a vision of boatyard workers as trained professionals, consistent in their skills, working to standards of excellence and holding credentials that would provide the foundation for a long-term career. Acting on his vision, he became the guide and inspiration for a group of industry leaders and established the Vancouver Island Marine Repair Association (VIMRA) in 1995, with training its central function.

In just over four years, with countless hours of volunteer effort, the VIMRA team, motivated by Campbell’s enthusiasm and personal passion, created the curriculum and delivered the training for an entirely new industrial trade now recognized as Marine Repair Technician. Within a few years, attitudes regarding boatyard work have changed. Today over fifty workers are involved in a formal apprenticeship that is fulfilling Campbell Black’s vision—providing respect, learning and a future for employees in one of British Columbia’s most promising industries.

The Chamber heard at its forums that the current apprenticeship model in BC is not meeting the needs of employers, trainees and the labour market. This has also been confirmed in various business groups’ feedback to government during the ITAC Core Services Review process (e.g. Coalition of BC Business submission¹⁸).

The current model was frequently criticized at BC Chamber forums by industries who required millwrights, carpenters, bricklayers, plumbers, and tool and die makers but could not find innovative and flexible models with which to respond to these needs. This is particularly challenging for smaller businesses that do not have the economies of scale nor the training expertise.

A key barrier to participating in BC’s apprenticeship system is its regulatory emphasis. For example, BC has eleven “compulsory trades” (e.g. plumbing, electrical, automotive, etc.), which means that businesses cannot hire and train apprentices in such trades without an adequate number of journeypersons (i.e. ratio of journeypersons to apprentices). This requirement, as well as other regulations, (e.g. wage rates, fixed durations, etc.) represents

barriers to businesses participating in an apprenticeship program. The rigid boundaries that are set for compulsory trades restrict small and medium enterprises in their pursuit of more efficient training practices. These policies need to be reviewed and appropriate changes made as part of the provincial government's "new industry training model".

Apprenticeship in BC is stagnant and inefficient; a new system is needed which will allow small and medium-sized businesses to compete and remain flexible at a time when they strive to meet their need for qualified workers. BC employers' ability to react to the skill shortages will largely depend on the industry training system's flexibility and innovation. This is not unique to BC's apprenticeship system; the Conference Board of Canada concluded this in a recent publication: "We need to have a serious examination of how to improve apprenticeship programs. There is a shortage of tradespeople in Canada, and it will worsen in the next few years. Canada is not prepared to deal with this issue under our current apprenticeship programming."¹⁹

New industry training models must be tailored to individual industry sectors. An apprenticeship approach that provides a "one size fits all solution" will only further exacerbate the skill shortage phenomenon. The BC Chamber will watch with interest the work on a new model under the leadership of the Ministry of Advanced Education.

INDUSTRY TRAINING & APPRENTICESHIP RECOMMENDATIONS

10. Reform industry training and apprenticeship to be more flexible and responsive to the clients (employers and employees), using new models for training.
11. Governments and educators should work with business groups to develop practical training and retention tools for smaller businesses with no such expertise or economies of scale.
12. Governments should expand "welfare to work" training models using work-based training and industry groups to deliver it.
13. In unionized environments, employers and unions should work together to develop innovative human resources and training practices that respond to skill needs and do not overlap into collective bargaining.

Industry Training & Apprenticeship Recruitment, HRD and Retention Tools

- Local chambers of commerce, trade associations and provincial industry associations may have HR and training expertise, information and tools to draw from.
- There are over 25 national sectoral councils which provide various HR and training resources for their industries across Canada. For more information on them, see http://www.councils.org/1main/index_e.cfm.
- In addition to public post-secondary institutions in BC, don't overlook the numerous private post-secondary institutions in the province. Many of them are world-class and are interested in forging industry training partnerships.
- The Ministry of Advanced Education is interested in new industry training and apprenticeship models. If you can help them develop a "new model" to replace ITAC, let them know about it. It could lead to partnerships and involvement in developing new directions in BC. See its website at <http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/industrytrainingandapprenticeship/welcome.htm>.
- The federal *Industrial Adjustment Services* can help your company or industry sector identify training needs and develop strategies to address them. Contact the local Human Resources Canada Centre office for details.

5.5 ATTITUDES

A Skills Best Practice

Fishing for Your Future and Oceans of Opportunities

Educators and schools tend to have ample information on university-level careers, however, there is a shortage of good career information for trades, technical and technology jobs in BC.

In recognition of this need, a local vocational education committee, the Nanaimo School District, Human Resources Development Canada, Malaspina University-College and ITAC partnered to launch *Fishing for Your Future* in which all grade six students (approximately sixty classes) in Nanaimo received a trades/technical career orientation, delivered by community experts. Since then, Malaspina and the school district have developed *Oceans of Opportunities* for the grades 9-10 audience, and are working with partners to expand this model throughout BC.

As well as providing much needed, useful career information, these models contribute to improving the image of trades and creating a more positive attitude towards them as a viable career path.

A significant attitudinal challenge to ensuring a skilled workforce in BC, is reflected in the perception many British Columbians have towards trades and technical fields as viable and rewarding career options. These non-university options are often held in low esteem by young people, their parents, and educators, and society.

In fact, statistics recently published by ITAC indicate that 81 percent of senior secondary school students and their parents planned for themselves/their children to get a post-secondary degree or diploma, when in reality a much smaller percentage actually do so.²⁰ A more recent report by the Business Council of BC found that 69 percent of parents hope their children will attend university, yet only 20% of young people actually do so.²¹

This sentiment is shared by the recently released report of the Select Standing Committee on Education, a legislative committee of the BC Legislature. In its report entitled, “A Future for Learners: A Vision for Renewal of Education in British Columbia”, the Standing Committee offers the following conclusion:

....At age 16, those who drop out will have little in the way of an educational credential. For those who stay in school, as has been stated elsewhere in this report, there appears to be an overemphasis on the preparation for and the value of university education as compared to other alternatives. Further, there is some indication that students who opt for non-university related programs are viewed to somehow have failed.

It is also appears that many parents view opportunities in technical and trades programs as fine for someone else's child. Yet only about 80% of students graduate from secondary school. Also, only about 30% of the secondary school graduates attend colleges and universities and only about 19% of them obtain a degree. Thus, for the majority of learners who do not go on to higher studies after they leave high school, the current situation is not desirable in that all projections for the future indicate an increasing need for the vast majority of learners to attain education and training beyond high school graduation. What is required are both increased technical and trades options for learners and more effective means to convince learners of the need for them to continue their education.²²

ITAC research indicates that 60 percent of the new job openings to 2008 will be in skilled trades, and technology jobs—most of which require some type of formal post-secondary education and credential outside of university (e.g. trades credentials, college certificates and diplomas, and career-based training). This means the majority of high school students in BC and their parents automatically rule out a large portion of career opportunities.

In a soon to be released report, *Attitudes Towards Skilled Trades and Technologies*, Skills Canada will provide research evidence that university is considered as almost the only path to career success by young people, and their parents, peers and teachers.²³

The BC Chamber also believes it is important to avert a “trades versus university” career competition. It is critical that a balance is maintained among these and other types of post-secondary education and training programs in government’s funding and policy priorities.

ATTITUDES **RECOMMENDATIONS**

14. Business, labour, government and education should more aggressively champion and promote trades and technical careers and training among their constituents, particularly among young people, parents, educators, the media, and general public.
15. This is a systemic, cultural challenge—all stakeholders must work together to find resources to sustain a long-term awareness campaign.

Attitudes **Recruitment, HRD and Retention Tools**

- Promote trades and technical careers by championing them within your community, your company, your local schools, and business or industry association.
- Access information from the Ministry of Education, career groups, and career websites on such careers. Use this information to make presentations at schools, etc.
- Promote interest in your company and community about trades and technical careers by hiring students from Secondary School Apprenticeship, Career Technical Centres, Co-operative Education programs, and post-secondary trades and career programs.
- Participate in the annual *Skills Canada* competitions in your region and provincially, and partner with *Skills Canada* to promote trades and technical careers. The *8th Canadian Skills Competition* will be held in Vancouver, May 30 to June 2, 2002.

5.6 BUSINESSES' COMMITMENT TO INVEST IN HUMAN RESOURCES

"...human capital with specialized skills is increasingly understood to be the most critical input to global competitiveness... Investment in any sort of specialized skill acquisition should be made fully tax deductible for the individual or corporation."

Roger Martin and Michael Porter. Canadian Competitiveness: Nine Years after the Crossroads. 2000, p. 29.

Why do some companies not invest in training employees when it may seem to make economic sense to do so? There are many reasons, including some mentioned in the previous section regarding the rigidity of the apprenticeship system. In the table below from Gordon Betcherman et al,²⁴ cost, lost production time, etc. are the main reasons.

Obstacles to Training	
Percentage of BC Companies Surveyed	
Training costs the firm too much	29.1
Lost production time while training	26.6
Insufficient government assistance	19.5
Lack of suitable training courses/trainers	16.5
Lose trained workers to other organizations	11.4

A Skills Best Practice

Intrawest Corporation – Vancouver, BC

Intrawest Corporation is the leading developer and operator of village-centered destination resorts across North America. It employs over 16,000 people in a number of seasonal and full-time management positions. Given the location and economies of many of its resorts, competition for employees is fierce.

Intrawest has developed a multifaceted strategy focused on what works to attract workers with required skills. Its *WeWork2Play* recruitment program is a complete package with its own website name which provides a one-stop destination for job descriptions, positions available, and outlines the benefits of working for the company. Intrawest's job fairs are elaborately staged events complete with activities and themes. Objective tests are benchmarked against top-performing employees, enabling Intrawest to best match candidates with a rewarding job.

A training program for full time employees is a high priority for Intrawest. It has summer and winter resort opportunities for seasonal and full-time jobs, and employees need to be flexible and move from ski resorts to golf courses. Providing alternative work experiences also builds staff loyalty. The opportunity for employees to advance within Intrawest is a key part of its culture. Another attraction with which to recruit human resources is Intrawest's wide range of employee benefits and numerous recognition programs. Intrawest has instituted these components to administer a continuous recruitment and retention program to ensure that it attracts the best.

A key phrase from many of the discussions at the Chamber forums was “*investing in training.*” If a business is only as economically competitive as its people, then it stands to reason that providing employees with training opportunities will only make a business stronger and more sustainable. Extensive work by Kathryn Barker of *FuturEd* shows evidence of direct relationships between training investments by companies and returns on this investment.²⁵

As competition for new workers becomes stronger, part of the solution will be for companies to upgrade and retain existing employees, as a business executive recently argues: “While competitors can match prices and products, it’s much harder to match competency levels of staff”.²⁶

There is evidence that the private sector already invests a significant amount of resources on employee training. For example, Paul Gallagher and Marvin Lamoureaux found that out of an estimated \$1.6 billion that is spent on work-related learning by all sectors in BC annually, the private sector contributes approximately half of this—\$800 million annually.²⁷

At several of the Chamber forums, the attendees stated that it was less costly for them to recruit new employees or “poach” them from other employers rather than to develop their own. Forum attendees frequently advocated some type of “training tax credit” as small businesses cannot single-handedly train their workers. ITAC recently published a paper written by Roslyn Kunin on the concept of a “human resource investment tax credit.”²⁸ While the current fiscal environment is not an opportune time to consider further tax reductions, the federal and provincial governments might consider reforming existing tax systems to reflect the importance of human resource investments in the future.

Also, a reallocation of existing government funding to training institutions could enable specific industries to train the skilled employees that they require. Stimulating individual employee and business investments in training could be done within existing government resources.

The forums also found that businesses need to offer more work-based training models, which should not be seen as competition to the current institution-based education models, but as a complementary addition. Both forms of training need to be part of a provincial strategy to develop a skilled workforce; both are investments in the future. BC’s educational institutions and the BC business community should work together to effectively meet critical skill needs.

The BC skills challenge requires industry to increase its investment in their employees. Kunin and Gallagher wrote the following: “For employers, training and upgrading employee knowledge and skill have become not a cost but an investment – and employers now need to invest in their people even more than in their plant and equipment to remain internationally competitive”.²⁹

The BC Chamber strongly agrees with a principle put forward in ITAC's *Ensuring a Skilled Workforce* report. It suggests that public and private investments in learning should be shared according to a principle of "those who benefit, should pay". Individual workers, apprentices and students should pay a commensurate share with the value of the significant benefits they reap from work-related learning. Employers also experience benefits from training and should therefore contribute. Governments also have an interest in the basic training of young people, unemployed persons, and marginal labour force groups.

FINANCING INDUSTRY TRAINING RECOMMENDATIONS

16. The federal and provincial governments and business groups should explore and agree on implementing innovative new financing schemes that treat training as an investment. Specifically, a feasibility study should be conducted by government on the cost-benefit of a "human resource investment tax credit" program.
17. Public policies and private practices should reflect the principle of "those who benefit from training, should pay for this investment".

Financing Industry Training Recruitment, HRD and Retention Tools

- Consider developing a three-way "training trust fund" shared among the company, employees and others (e.g. school, government or union) to draw from for training.
- Establish a tax-deductible "tuition-assistance" program for employees to enrol in courses related to their job and career. It could be cost-shared with employees or the union.
- Check out the federal Industrial Research Assistance Program to help you hire technical post-secondary students and providing relevant experience and training for them on a technical project. Contact an Industrial Technology Advisor at various post-secondary institutions or also see <http://www.nrc.ca/irap/finance.html>.
- HRDC has *Targeted Wage Subsidies* for hiring and training Employment Insurance recipients. Contact the local Human Resources Canada Centre.
- Check out *JobWave* and *Destinations* as a source of human resource recruitment and training in small business & tourism, respectively. Websites: <http://www.jobwavebc.com/employers/index.asp> and http://www.destinations.ca/jobs_available.html.
- Provincial human resource and training associations such as the Human Resource Management Association have many resources for use or purchase, including seminars and workshops on various topics. Contact the Human Resource Management Association toll free at 1-800-665-1961 or at its website: <http://www.bchrma.org/>.

5.7 SECONDARY EDUCATION AND POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

A Skills Best Practice

Beckville Woodcrafts Ltd. – Maple Ridge, BC

In the late 1980s, Beckville Woodcraft was a small father and son business operating in a small farm setting. As the business grew, they were required to relocate into a larger facility and recruit a number of new staff. Typical of small businesses, the Becks had little experience in searching for and selecting appropriate skilled workers. After numerous negative experiences, and with the encouragement of the local school Secondary School Apprenticeship (SSA) coordinator and ITAC staff, they decided to become involved with the SSA program. Having supported the school district's work experience program for a number of years, the company was well-acquainted to the merits of employing the community's young people.

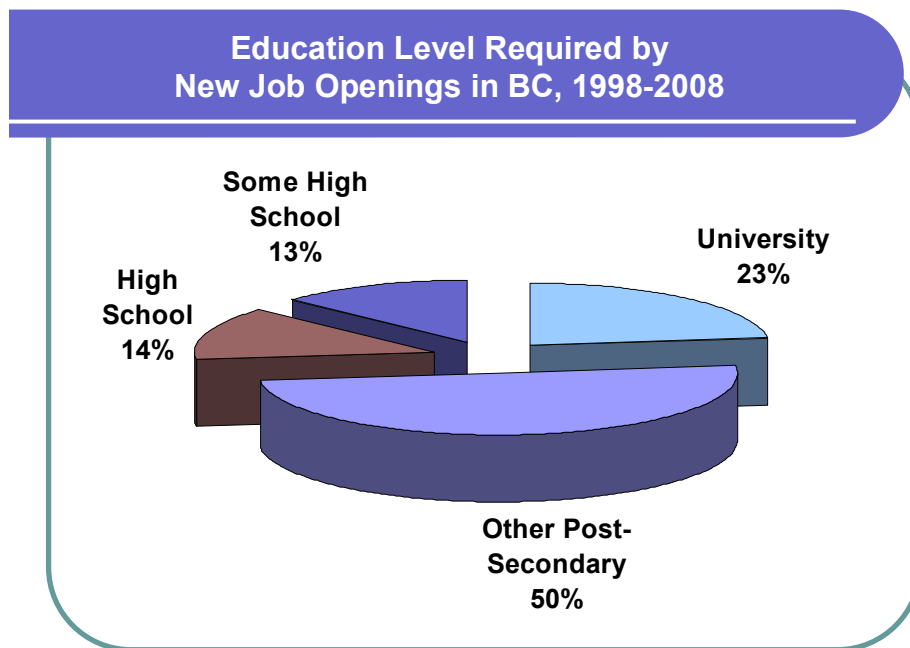
The successes have been so great, the company now looks to the progression through the work experience and SSA programs as the only route to fill the apprenticeship growth needs. The company's three registered apprentices all have obtained their employment through the SSA program. The pre-screening and recommendations by the school have eliminated the time-consuming, less-than-successful recruiting methods of the past. This partnership has improved the company's productivity, increased the skill levels in the shop and made for an all-round improvement in the working environment. The partnership created between Beckville Woodcrafts, the school and ITAC was originally established to correct a hiring deficiency. However, over the last number of years it has blossomed into an agreement that meets the wishes and needs of all the parties and supports the company human resource requirements.

As the federal report, *Knowledge Matters* suggests, despite having many strengths and best practices, [Canada's] "learning infrastructure has gaps and does not always adequately serve the needs of all adults, particularly those in the labour workforce".³⁰

Throughout the Chamber forums and various business reports, BC's business community has called for reform in the formal education system. The consensus of the Chamber survey and forums indicates that all parts of BC's public education and post-secondary system have not provided the quantity or type of skilled workers to fully satisfy the needs of BC's labour market.

Shortcomings in BC's education system contribute to skill shortages and other labour market challenges. The Chamber's input on this issue is reflected in its submission to the Standing Committee on Education: "Part of the skill shortage challenge is due to a fundamental disconnect between business and education. One half of this disconnect is that the education system does not always create the kind of worker the business community is looking for".³¹

As the chart below illustrates, the majority of new jobs—approximately 75 percent—will require some type of formal post-secondary education or training in BC. However, as Jock Finlayson of the Business Council of BC highlighted in a recent analysis, occupations in the U.S. requiring post-secondary education are expected to grow twice as fast as the national average, with jobs requiring “some form of vocational training posting the strongest growth”.³² Finlayson found that jobs with some form of post-secondary education as a requirement will account for 42 percent of the new openings in the U.S. between 2000 and 2010. However, 58 percent of the total employment increase will be from growth in occupations requiring only “on-the-job” training.



Business Council of BC, *The Third Option*, 2001.

The need to shift programs and curriculum in BC’s educational institutions is necessary in order to involve more relevant vocational or job-related training. Programs must be more flexible in terms of how they are structured, scheduled and delivered. This is true of both secondary school programs and post-secondary level programs.

Post-secondary education institutions need to become industry collaborators on a much larger scale if BC is going to effect change in the skilled worker shortage. Now is the time for solutions to current and future skill shortages, not the time for debating roles. The labour market requires graduates equipped with more relevant skills.

The continued effort of educators to partner with businesses and to update course curriculum is needed. This initiative must be expanded to partner directly with businesses and industry to develop core skills required now and in the future. Innovative solutions to

specific skills requirements will produce workers with the requisite skills required by specific businesses and industry sectors.

Private-public partnerships need to be explored and the policies of the provincial government should reflect that private post-secondary institutions need to be an integral part (actual and perceived) of a BC human resource development strategy. Some of the over 1,100 private institutions in BC have world class reputations (e.g. Centre for Digital Imagery and Sound in Burnaby and Vancouver Film School). When the government develops a new post-secondary strategic plan, the private training industry should be involved in the process.

There is already an indication that the provincial government recognizes the role that private institutions can play; the Ministry of Advanced Education's Service Plan reflects this.

Better coordination among education and training providers is needed to ensure that there are provincial standards which provide quality assurance and consistency across institutions. The Chamber forums heard about overlap and duplication among training institutions and government programs. It is hoped that the Core Service Review process will eliminate such inefficiencies. The Select Standing Committee on Education commented on the lack of coordinated planning and articulation in its just-released report.³³

A Select Standing Committee on Education Finding Regarding the BC education system

It appears to the Committee that there is a need for comprehensive strategic planning for the education system as a whole. The Committee has identified the following specific examples:

1. Little coherent planning for the education system as a whole so that the component parts (preschool, K-12, postsecondary, and business and private education) have a better fit with each other.
2. Inadequate processes for identifying what would clearly be in the best interests of the Province or local communities and what priorities should guide the allocation of resources.
3. Insufficient gathering and analysis of outcomes data to enable better decisions regarding effectiveness and efficiency.
4. Resistance or reluctance to accept genuine involvement of parents, learners, and other stakeholders in a meaningful and consistent way.
5. Resistance to stepping out of old or traditional patterns, to surrendering existing roles, and to sharing resources.

From Select Standing Committee on Education, *A Future for Learners: A Vision for Renewal of Education in British Columbia*, Legislative Assembly of BC, March 28, 2002

Another phrase that came up at the skills forums was “*learning while earning*”. Many participants called for further development and expansion of existing and new experiential learning models like co-operative education, internships, mentorships, flexible apprenticeships and other school-work strategies that enable employees to earn a wage while learning new skills.

Access to local technical training is required, where workers are not required to move to the Lower Mainland to attend training institutions. Colleges provide a regional presence that facilitates greater access to skills needed for regional employment. Additionally, the education system, government and industry should work together to pursue opportunities to significantly expand internet-based learning. This will both increase access for rural workers and decrease taxpayer costs for education.

EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

18. The provincial government and school districts should significantly increase the number secondary school students in career-based, experiential programs such as Secondary School Apprenticeship, Career Technical Centres, Co-operative Education, etc.
19. Vocational and technical education programs offered by a number of post-secondary education institutions should adhere to consistent provincial standards. In the context of small business needs, training programs which create and adhere a consistent curriculum, such as the BC Chamber-sponsored *Business Edge*, should be expanded and supported in public policies.
20. The provincial government and post-secondary education institutions should significantly increase the use of flexible delivery methods throughout the province.
21. The provincial government and post-secondary institutions should increase learning capacity through the use of internet-based training. For example, if every full-time student enrolled in one internet-based course each term, it would increase access by twenty percent.
22. A provincial education and training plan and strategy should include private and non-profit training institutions as an integral component, both in the development of such a plan and the implementation of it.
23. The provincial government and education groups should encourage and stimulate public-private partnerships among post-secondary institutions (e.g. public institution-private institution, public institution-industry, etc.)—perhaps by offering financial incentives.

Education Recruitment, HRD and Retention Tools

- Many public and private training institutions have online learning expertise and can help develop internet-based training programs or provide access to the like.
- Many post-secondary education programs (undergraduate and graduate) include student projects as a requirement, and students may look for companies to work with on these.
- Every post-secondary institution has continuing education and contract training departments.
- Provincial agencies such as the Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology (<http://www.c2t2.ca/>) and Centre for Education Information (<http://www.ceiss.org/>) provide various learning-related resources and services.
- An excellent source of new entry workers are K-12 career, co-op, apprenticeship and work experience programs; and post-secondary co-op education, internship and other experiential programs.

5.8 INFORMATION GAPS

Another basic barrier to businesses and individuals investing in training is access to up-to-date information. A survey commissioned by ITAC found that two-thirds of the small and medium-sized businesses polled agree that they lack information about industry training programs.³⁴ Their awareness regarding current training programs tended to be limited to post-secondary education at BCIT and community colleges. Seventy percent of those employers surveyed agreed that a lack of awareness of training programs was a barrier to industry-based training. Only one-quarter of those businesses currently hiring felt that the available information concerning BC-based industry information is adequate.

Another type of information gap is reflected in labour market research that shows the lack of effective “signals” in the labour market provided by employers, counselors, policy-makers and others to young people about career trends and awareness, labour market information, and tools with which to make informed career choices. As a result, many young people—particularly school drop outs and non-university bound students—move between unemployment, welfare, short-term training and low-paying, insecure jobs.

A low-cost, potentially high-yield option for governments and industry associations would be to provide up-to-date, comprehensive training resource information on a public website.

INFORMATION GAPS RECOMMENDATIONS

24. Business and industry groups should do more to profile and celebrate excellence and success in human resource development and work-based training, including publishing “best practices.”
25. Federal and provincial governments should play a more important role in providing useful Information on human resource management and training for businesses. Such information could be posted on an interactive government or business website.
26. The provincial government should incorporate programs like *Fishing for Your Future* and *Oceans of Opportunities* into curriculum throughout the province, and provide schools with the resources to use and update career information.

Information Gaps Recruitment, HRD and Retention Tools

- *WorkInfoNet* provides a wealth of training and employment information. See its site for links to other useful websites at <http://workinfolnet.bc.ca/websites.htm>.
- Industry Canada’s *Strategis* website (<http://strategis.ic.gc.ca>) is a good resource for businesses.
- Chambers of Commerce and industry associations are very good sources of information and tools for their members and other businesses.
- Professional associations provide relevant information on their profession or occupation.

5.9 ADAPTING TO ECONOMIC TRANSITION

In a retrospective 10 years after his landmark study on Canadian competitiveness, Michael Porter warned that, “Canada will be condemned to a declining standard of living compared to other countries...if it does not upgrade the skills of its workers”³⁵

As British Columbia makes the transition from an industrial economy to a post-industrial knowledge-based economy, its businesses require different skill sets. The specific nature of the skills required, limit the talent from which to draw. In a knowledge-based economy there is greater reliance on human capital and human innovation.

Within this transition context, major paradigm shifts will be needed in how policy-makers, educators and industries facilitate the recruitment, development and retention of skilled workers. Major factors such as First Nations economic development, the softwood lumber dispute and health care challenges will all depend on how well British Columbians use their skills, talents and creativity; and how well we manage transition processes.

Business-Aboriginal Partnerships Make Good Economic Sense

“As the largest industrial employer of Aboriginal people in Canada, we feel a great responsibility to help educate other companies and Canadians in general about Aboriginal culture—and to replace negative stereotypes with positive realities...The payoff to our Aboriginal employment strategy runs both ways. The benefits in employment to the Aboriginal community are matched by the benefits to Syncrude of capable, committed employees.”

Eric Newell, Chairman and CEO of Syncrude Canada Limited, from *Strengthening Aboriginal Participation in the Economy*, Report of the Working Group on Aboriginal Participation in the Economy to Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for Aboriginal Affairs and National Aboriginal Leaders, May 11, 2001.

There is several vibrant growth, export-oriented sectors in the province. Despite the current downturn, many of them are poised for a strong rebound. High technology, advanced manufacturing, oil and gas, and tourism are all examples of the engines of BC's new economy; and these sectors will suffer if stakeholders are not ready to provide satisfactory education and human resource development.

In order to effectively adjust to this economic transition, an increasingly important type of program for educators, governments, workers and industries will be “re-employment services” to facilitate the movement of workers from declining industries to new growth sectors requiring their basic skills.

A Skills Best Practice

JobWave and Destinations/Job Partnership Program

With funding from the Ministry of Human Resources, *JobWave* (operated by the Westcoast Group International Consultants Ltd. on behalf of the BC Chamber) and *Destinations* (operated by Grant Thornton LLP on behalf of the Council of Tourism Associations) have become two of the most successful re-employment programs in North America, helping thousands of welfare recipients back to work and saving taxpayers millions of dollars in reduced welfare payments.

JobWave, for example, has placed its clients in jobs paying an average of \$11.36/hour, with a job retention rate of 75 percent across all sectors; and a 95 percent satisfaction rate from employers. *Destinations*, *JobWave* and their related programs have combined to put over 25,000 British Columbians back to work since 1994. *Destinations* focuses on tourism-related jobs, while *JobWave* covers most other sectors from retail and trades to high technology.

These programs are unique in another way; they are two of the few government-funded training programs that are “performance-based.” The Westcoast Group and Grant Thornton do not get paid for their services until the client has been employed for several months.

Truly visionaries, Ian Ferguson, President of the Westcoast Group, and Frank Bourree, Partner with Grant Thornton, saw an opportunity several years ago to work with government to help individuals find meaningful employment and assist businesses to recruit new entry workers—through an innovative, industry-managed model.

ECONOMIC TRANSITION RECOMMENDATIONS

27. With the increasing economic change and volatility, workers will continue to be laid off, and more of them will be older, middle-aged workers. Business, labour, communities and governments should work together to develop innovative, quick-response models and re-employment strategies that can be replicated throughout the province.
28. Federal and provincial governments should work closely with communities, business groups and First Nations people to proactively diversify regional economies and ensure a highly skilled local workforce.

Economic Transition Recruitment, HRD and Retention Tools

- The federal *Industrial Adjustment Service* program can help with re-employment strategies of workers in a company or sector, and company down-sizing. Contact your local Human Resources Canada Centre office.
- Unions and community organizations can provide useful information and resources for helping companies and workers adapt to change. For example, the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 2000 Training Centre provides various employment and re-employment programs for union and non-union workers and companies.
- Regional Community Futures groups, Aboriginal economic development organizations, municipal economic development agencies, local Chambers of Commerce, school districts and regional post-secondary institutions all can provide resources and advice regarding economic adjustment strategies.

5.10 STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLANNING

A Skills Best Practice

Aerospace Industries Association of BC (AIABC)

The BC aerospace sector is a newer, innovative industry being forced to address the skill shortages. In 1999, AIABC sought to forecast the industry's requirements for technical skills over the next five years, and to review existing training and apprenticeship programs and facilities, determine their relevance and adequacy. AIABC undertook an initial study of skill needs in 2000, focusing on firms that collectively employ 4,500 skilled technical personnel in BC. The study indicated that the combination of new positions to support business growth plus attrition within the current workforce will result in more than 3,400 vacancies in 23 skilled occupations over the next five years.

Besides recruiting local graduates and using in-house training to develop appropriately skilled workers, most aerospace companies in BC are recruiting nationally and internationally. Despite these efforts, the industry has not been able to recruit and retain an adequate number of employees with the right mix of skills to meet its growth requirements. Skill shortages will affect the industry's ability to grow in a very competitive international market.

Rather than compete with others in the industry for skilled labour, industry leaders have decided to work together with other stakeholders to develop a human resource strategy to ensure the growth of the aerospace sector in BC. They have worked closely with provincial and federal government agencies to develop this. The anticipated outcomes will result in concrete business actions that will address collaborative recruitment and enhanced training opportunities.

The BC Chamber, other groups and various reports have reflected issues around the ad hoc nature and overlap among government programs and policy directions in the area of human resource or workforce development. There is a tendency for groups in all training constituencies—government, business, labour, education and training, and others—to plan in “silos”. This approach reduces the effectiveness and efficiency of training strategies and causes conflict among various sectors.

The BC Chamber believes that senior levels of government have a leadership responsibility in developing economic objectives and an economic plan for the province, with input from economic stakeholders, particularly business and industry. Further, government can play the role of facilitator to bring together economic partners to develop and implement a coordinated human resource development strategy.

Such processes in other jurisdictions like Ireland, the Netherlands, Massachusetts, Michigan and elsewhere have been critical success factors in their economic turnarounds. As Fred McMahon of the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies, stated in his *Road to Growth*, these jurisdictions “went from being laggards to economic stars”.³⁶

The BC Chamber’s experience is that when BC’s economic partners come together on a concrete issue of importance and put certain differences aside, they can forge agreement on a common direction and action plan. An example of this was an ITAC-led initiative last fall, which involved 24 business, labour, education and government leaders. The *Leaders’ Roundtable on Skill Shortages – A Call to Action* was held in October 2001, and its action plan included the BC Chamber’s *Skill Shortages Initiative*.

Leaders’ Roundtable on Skill Shortages October 18, 2001

Here is what leaders representing a majority of the workforce and companies in BC agreed on as principles or themes for action:

- Skills is a shared responsibility among business, labour, government and education.
- A “cookie-cutter” response will not work—strategies will need to be adapted to industry sectors.
- More innovative partnerships are needed between business and education.
- BC needs an economic vision and plan.
- Employers and educational institutions should share curriculum, facilities, equipment and expertise to respond to employee training needs.
- Lifelong learning and continuous upgrading have become an imperative.
- Simpler mechanisms for the recognition of skills and prior learning are needed.

Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission, *Leaders’ Roundtable on Skill Shortages – A Call to Action*, Vancouver, BC: October 18, 2001.

STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS

29. The provincial government should develop an economic strategic plan, with input from key business, labour and community groups.
30. The provincial government should facilitate the development of a provincial human resource development strategy, lead by the business community with input from labour, education and community groups.
31. The provincial government should re-negotiate a new labour force development agreement with the federal government that reflects stronger employer and workforce roles in its planning and implementation.
32. Government, business and labour leaders in BC should work together to develop a high-level workforce “pact” where trade-offs are sought among these constituencies for the best of the economic and social prosperity of the province.

Strategic Workforce Planning Recruitment, HRD and Retention Tools

- The federal-provincial *Industrial Adjustment Service* Program can assist companies and industry sectors with human resource planning, developing solutions to economic transition, and related challenges. Contact the local Human Resources Canada Centre office or visit the HRDC website at <http://www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca>.
- The federal government funds several Sector Councils, which are engaged in human resource planning and training. There is detailed information on these at the HRDC website (<http://www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/hrib/hrp-prh/ssd-des/english/industryprofiles/prsearch.shtml>) and at the Alliance of Sectoral Councils website (http://www.councils.org/1office/memdetails_e.cfm?id=30).
- Industry sector associations, small business groups and professional associations in BC have undertaken or are in the process of developing human resource development plans or strategies. Examples include the Aerospace Industries Association of BC (Contact Andrew Huige, Executive Director, at (604) 538-0071) and Tourism BC (Contact Rick Lemon, Vice-President of Tourism Operations at (250) 356-6363).
- Other government ministries, departments and agencies related to your industry sector may also provide planning-related resources and advice.

6. NEXT STEPS - LEADERSHIP, ACTION AND CHANGE

BC is faced with a shortage of skilled workers of potentially crisis proportions. The demographics, globalization and technology infusion have combined to make this a different period than when skills were in short supply in the 70s, 80s and 90s—the coming ten years will be pivotal to BC’s and Canada’s future global competitiveness. Human capital will be the determining factor.

BC’s stakeholders largely continue to work independently and this further limits progress to reversing the escalating skills crisis. The shortage of skilled workers will continue to worsen as BC’s population ages, births decline and immigration remains at similar levels and restrictions. Without significant change in the way British Columbians approach training and the attraction and retention of qualified skilled workers, the province will experience massive skilled worker shortages as predicted, for some time. Human resource development—be it training, education, higher education, informal learning, etc.—needs to be recognized as an “investment” in BC’s future, an investment in our economy, and an investment in individual and organizational prosperity.

The skill shortage challenge will not take care of itself. Special leadership and action is required. The BC Chamber of Commerce *Skill Shortages Initiative*’s main objective has been to increase the sense of urgency for action among businesses and communities throughout BC, and to identify examples and solutions for addressing the skill requirements of the BC labour market.

Recognizing and adapting to the current skills dilemma can facilitate BC’s recovery. Certainly, if we do not gear our training and skills capacity up for an economic recovery, the skills problem will be even more acute. The BC Chamber will continue to work toward solutions and will seek out partners to make its vision a shared one that will become a reality. In addition to the suggestions contained in Jock Finlayson’s recent paper³⁷, ITAC’s *Ensuring a Skilled Workforce for BC* is a good starting point from which to look for answers.

You—your firm, your industry sector, your community—have the chance to get new resources to conduct pilot projects for ‘learning for work’. You can be a beacon for the rest of the province—or you can let others take the lead. It is not clear yet that you will seize this opportunity.

Paul Gallagher,
BC Chamber
Forum Panelist,
October 2001

ITAC’s Solutions

- Human resource tax credit.
- Direct financial incentives.
- Sector-specific initiatives.
- Individual financial incentives.
- Revised regulations.
- Responsive, flexible training.
- Collective agreements with flexible human resource provisions.

From ITAC, *Ensuring a Skilled Workforce for BC*, March 2001.

The BC Chamber of Commerce's Commitment to Action and Leadership

There is no single solution to the skilled worker shortage in BC; only a balanced approach among education and training institutions, labour, governments, and business can resolve these problems. The BC Chamber of Commerce will provide its share of leadership and action to ensure the necessary changes are considered, planned and successfully implemented. Specifically, the Chamber will take the following actions:

- 1. The BC Chamber and its affiliated organization, the Leadership and Management Development Council of BC, will meet with major media outlets to raise concern about the need for immediate action to prevent serious skill shortages and the resulting disruption to economic growth in BC.**
- 2. The BC Chamber will form a "Critical Skills Task Force" to develop an action plan and strategy for Chamber members and other businesses and associations to address the skills gap challenges.**
- 3. The BC Chamber will provide direct input to the Minister of Advanced Education on the development of a new industry training and apprenticeship system in BC.**
- 4. The BC Chamber will work with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce to spearhead leadership on this issue at the national level.**
- 5. The BC Chamber will work with key representatives of women, First Nations, immigrants and visible minorities, and people with disabilities to promote partnerships and effective utilization of BC's human resources among local chambers and small and medium-sized businesses.**
- 6. In recognition of the provincial and regional economic development and employment potential, the BC Chamber will seek to initiate strategic partnerships and demonstration projects with First Nations and Aboriginal groups.**
- 7. The BC Chamber will work with key education groups such as parents', educators' and administrators' associations to provide input, and develop partnerships for promoting trades and technical careers and industry training for small and medium-sized businesses. The Chamber will provide tools and information to local chambers to undertake such activities at the regional level.**
- 8. The BC Chamber will create a partnership with other groups to sponsor a "Small Business Recruitment, Human Resource Development and Retention Tool Kit" for use by companies throughout**

APPENDIX 1

Committee Structure, Participating Organizations And Presenters

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

John Winter	BC Chamber of Commerce	President
Mark MacDonald	BC Chamber of Commerce	Project Coordinator
Brian Brumwell	Market Directions	Consultant

PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE

John Winter	BC Chamber of Commerce	President
Kerry Jothen	Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission	Chief Executive Officer
Mark MacDonald	BC Chamber of Commerce	Project Coordinator
Brian Brumwell	Market Directions	Consultant
Richard DeBeck	Human Resources Development Canada	Labour Market Consultant
Virginia Winter	Labour Market Consultant	Ministry of Skills Development and Labour

OTHER COMMITTEE PARTICIPANTS

Andrew Wynn-Williams	BC Chamber of Commerce	Director, Policy and Communications
Brian White	Capilano College	Director, World Travel and Tourism (
David Baxter	The Urban Futures Institute	Executive Director
Bill Walters	Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission	Special Advisor
Paul Gallagher	Gallagher and Associates	Learning Consultant

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Human Resources Development Canada	Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission	Job Wave BC
Literacy BC	Malaspina University-College	Ministry of Skills Development and Labour
Northern Development Commission	Selkirk College	The Community Futures Development Association
The Trail Skills Centre	The Westcoast Group International Ltd.	Western Economic Diversification Canada

PRESENTERS AND PANELISTS

David Baxter	The Urban Futures Institute	Executive Director
Brian White	Capilano College	Director, World Travel and Tourism Council
Paul Gallagher	Gallagher and Associates	Learning Consultant
Kerry Jothen	Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission	Chief Executive Officer
Ed Wong	Business Council of BC	Associate Vice-President, Education Partnerships

APPENDIX 2

BC Chamber of Commerce Recommendations

1. Businesses should make it a priority to develop and retain their own skilled workforce through innovative human resource management, compensation, profit-sharing, motivational practices, etc.
2. Business, government and community service groups should make it a top priority to work together to develop partnerships and strategies to recruit and develop human resources from non-traditional sources of workers.
3. The federal and provincial governments should establish a government-business-Aboriginal task force on economic and employment opportunities.
4. Federal and provincial governments, professional and trade associations, educators, and immigrant service organizations should develop a fast-track foreign credential assessment and recognition service for immediate implementation in BC.
5. ESL training should be made more of a priority by federal and provincial governments and training institutions. More innovative work-based models should be implemented.
6. Business, professional and labour groups should work with and engage immigrant and multicultural service groups to develop partnerships to address barriers to the full participation of new Canadians in BC's economy and labour market.
7. The Conference Board of Canada's *Employability 2000+* should be formally adopted by secondary and post-secondary institutions and their respective Ministries, to be a basis for curriculum in all programs at these educational levels.
8. The provincial government should ensure that public post-secondary institutions and school district continue to make literacy and basic skill development an appropriate priority.
9. Business groups should partner with the Conference Board of Canada, Literacy BC, and governments to hold literacy "best practices" forums in BC.
10. Reform industry training and apprenticeship to be more flexible and responsive to the clients (employers and employees), using new models for training.
11. Governments and educators should work with business groups to develop practical training and retention tools for smaller businesses with no such expertise or economies of scale.
12. Governments should expand "welfare-to-work" training models using work-based training and industry groups to deliver it.

13. In unionized environments, employers and unions should work together to develop innovative human resource management and training practices that respond to skill needs and do not overlap into collective bargaining.
14. Business, labour, government and education should more aggressively champion and promote trades and technical careers and training among their constituents, particularly among young people, parents, educators, the media, and general public.
15. This is a systemic, cultural challenge—all stakeholders must work together to find resources to sustain a long-term awareness campaign.
16. The federal and provincial governments and business groups should explore and agree on implementing innovative new financing schemes that treat training as an investment. Specifically, a feasibility study should be conducted by government on the cost-benefit of a “human resource investment tax credit” program.
17. Public policies and private practices should reflect the principle of “those who benefit from training, should pay for this investment”.
18. The provincial government and school districts should significantly increase the number secondary school students in career-based, experiential programs such as Secondary School Apprenticeship, Career Technical Centres, Co-operative Education, etc.
19. Vocational and technical education programs offered by a number of post-secondary education institutions should adhere to consistent provincial standards. In the context of small business needs, training programs which create and adhere a consistent curriculum, such as the BC Chamber-sponsored *Business Edge*, should be expanded and supported in public policies.
20. The provincial government and post-secondary education institutions should significantly increase the use of flexible delivery methods throughout the province.
21. The provincial government and post-secondary institutions should increase learning capacity through the use of internet-based training. For example, if every full-time student enrolled in one internet-based course each term, it would increase access by twenty percent.
22. A provincial education and training plan and strategy should include private and non-profit training institutions as an integral component, both in the development of such a plan and the implementation of it.
23. The provincial government and education groups should encourage and stimulate public-private partnerships among post-secondary institutions (e.g. public institution-private institution, public institution-industry, etc.)—perhaps by offering financial incentives.

Closing the Skills Gap

24. Business and industry groups should do more to profile and celebrate excellence and success in human resource development and work-based training, including publishing “best practices”.
25. Federal and provincial governments should play a more important role in providing useful information on human resource management and training for businesses. Such information could be posted on an interactive government or business website.
26. The provincial government should incorporate programs like *Fishing for Your Future* and *Oceans of Opportunities* into curriculum throughout the province, and provide schools with the resources to use and update career information.
27. With the increasing economic change and volatility, workers will continue to be laid off, and more of them will be older, middle-aged workers. Business, labour, communities and governments should work together to develop innovative, quick-response models and re-employment strategies that can be replicated throughout the province.
28. Federal and provincial governments should work closely with communities, business groups and First Nations people to proactively diversify regional economies and ensure a highly skilled local workforce.
29. The provincial government should develop an economic strategic plan, with input from key business, labour and community groups.
30. The provincial government should facilitate the development of a provincial human resource development strategy, lead by the business community with input from labour, education and community groups.
31. The provincial government should re-negotiate a new labour market development agreement with the federal government that reflects stronger employer and workforce roles in its planning and implementation.
32. Government, business and labour leaders in BC should work together to develop a high-level workforce “pact” where trade-offs are sought among these constituencies for the best of the economic and social prosperity of the province.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ For example, see Jock Finlayson, *Will Skill Shortages Derail the BC Economy?* Vancouver: Business Council of BC, February 2002.
- ² Government of New Brunswick, *Greater Opportunity: New Brunswick's Prosperity Plan: 2002-2012*, Fredericton, New Brunswick: February 2002.
- ³ Industry Canada, *Achieving Excellence: Investing in People, Knowledge and Opportunity*, Ottawa, Ontario: February 2002, p. 55.
- ⁴ IMD Switzerland, *2001 World Competitiveness Yearbook*, IMD, Switzerland. 2001.
- ⁵ World Economic Forum, *The Global Competitiveness Report, 2002*, NY, New York: 2002.
- ⁶ David Baxter, *The Retiring Kind: An Exploration of the Past and Future of Labour Force Participation in Canada*, Vancouver, BC: The Urban Futures Institute Report #53, September, 2001, p. iii.
- ⁷ BC Chamber of Commerce, *Submission to the Standing Committee on Education*, Vancouver, BC: November 2001.
- ⁸ David Baxter, *The Retiring Kind: An Exploration of the Past and Future of Labour Force Participation in Canada*, Vancouver, BC: The Urban Futures Institute Report #53, September, 2001, p. 56.
- ⁹ Human Resources Development Canada, *HRDC/COPS 1999 BC Unique Scenario: 1998-2008*, Ottawa, Ontario: COPS, 1999.
- ¹⁰ Gerry Bellett, "Leading Industrialists Eye Aboriginals for Labour Force", *Victoria Times Colonist*, March 23, 2002.
- ¹¹ Ministry of Finance, *BC Stats, Population Projections to 2026 for BC*, Victoria, BC: <http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/pop/pop/poppage.htm>, undated.
- ¹² Conference Board of Canada, *The Brain Gain: The Economic Benefits of Recognizing Learning and Learning Credentials in Canada*, Ottawa, Ontario: 2001.
- ¹³ Jeffrey Reitz. *Immigrant Skill Utilization in the Canadian Labour Market: Implications of Human Capital Research*, University of Toronto: October, 2001.
- ¹⁴ Industry Canada, *Achieving Excellence: Investing in People, Knowledge and Opportunity*, Ottawa, Ontario: February 2002.
- ¹⁵ David Baxter, *The Retiring Kind: An Exploration of the Past and Future of Labour Force Participation in Canada*, Vancouver, BC: The Urban Futures Institute Report #53, September, 2001.
- ¹⁶ Maurice Bridge, "The ABCs of our Living Standards", *Vancouver Sun*, February 1, 2002.
- ¹⁷ Conference Board of Canada, *Employability Skills 2000+*, Ottawa, Ontario: <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/education/learning-tools/esp2000.pdf>, 2001.

¹⁸ Coalition of BC Business. *The Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission: What is its Future*, Vancouver, BC: September 2001.

¹⁹ Conference Board of Canada, *Performance and Potential, 2000-2001*, Ottawa, Ontario: 2001.

²⁰ Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission, *Ensuring a Skilled Workforce for British Columbia*, Burnaby, BC: March 2001, p. 9.

²¹ Business Council of BC, *The Third Option: Rewarding Careers Via Non-University Pathways*, Vancouver, BC: September 2001, p. iii.

²² Select Standing Committee on Education, *A Future for Learners: A Vision for Renewal of Education in British Columbia*, Victoria, BC: Legislative Assembly of BC, March 28, 2002.

²³ For further details, contact Rob Chioccarello, Skills Canada BC, robc@skillscanada.bc.ca.

²⁴ G. Betcherman, N. Leckie, K. McMullen, *Barriers to Employer-Sponsored Training in Canada*, Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Policy Research Networks, 1998.

²⁵ Kathryn Barker, *Return on Training Investment: An Environmental Scan and Literature Review*, Vancouver, BC: FuturEd, Spring 2001.

²⁶ Tony Wanless, "Credit union sets up own 'corporate U'", *Vancouver Province*, March 3, 2002.

²⁷ Paul Gallagher and Marvin Lamoureux, *Exploring Investment in Work-Related Learning in British Columbia*, Burnaby, BC: Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission, August 2001.

²⁸ Roslyn Kunin, *The Concept of a Human Resource Investment Tax Credit as a Means to Increase Training in BC*, Burnaby, BC: Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission, September 2001.

²⁹ Roslyn Kunin and Paul Gallagher, *Work-Based Training: A Key to BC Prosperity*, Burnaby, BC: Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission, March 2000.

³⁰ Human Resources Development Canada, *Knowledge Matters: Skills and Learning for Canadians*, Ottawa, Ontario: February 2002, p. 41.

³¹ BC Chamber of Commerce, *Submission to the Standing Committee on Education*, Vancouver, BC: November 2001, p.2.

³² Jock Finlayson. "U.S. Occupational Outlook: All Occupations Will Provide Jobs, But Higher-Skill Ones will Grow Most Rapidly", in *Industrial Relations Bulletin*, Business Council of BC. Vol. 34, March 21, 2002.

³³ Select Standing Committee on Education, *A Future for Learners: A Vision for Renewal of Education in British Columbia*, Victoria, BC: Legislative Assembly of BC, March 28, 2002

³⁴ Market Explorers TTI Market Explorers Inc., *ITAC Communication Strategy Development Research*, Vancouver, BC: November 2001.

³⁵ Roger Martin and Michael Porter, *Canadian Competitiveness: Nine Years after the Crossroads*, January 2000.

³⁶ Fred McMahon, *Road to Growth: How Lagging Economies Become Prosperous*, Halifax, Nova Scotia: Atlantic Institute for Market Studies, 2000.

³⁷ Jock Finlayson, *Will Skill Shortages Derail the BC Economy?* Vancouver, BC: Business Council of BC, February 2002.