

NEWS RELEASE

BC Chamber calls for flexibility in Job Grant talks

Canada's Chambers propose 10 principles to guide talks

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Vancouver, November 6, 2013 – The BC Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with Chambers across the country, is calling for flexibility and win-win solutions in critical federal-provincial Job Grant talks this Friday.

On November 8, federal Employment and Social Development Minister Jason Kenney will sit down with provincial and territorial labour ministers to try to find a workable solution to skills funding, the controversial Canada Job Grant, and Labour Market Agreement funds.

“This meeting is critical because skills training is the number one challenge facing B.C. employers, bar none,” said John Winter, president and CEO of the BC Chamber. “If federal and provincial labour ministers can’t find a way through the current stalemate on the Canada Job Grant, we’re all in a lot of trouble.”

The Canada Job Grant was a cornerstone of this year’s Federal Budget. In its current form, it would redistribute federal transfers of labour market funds to the provinces into the new Grant, which employers can access to train up employees. The federal government has proposed a model where the federal government, provincial/territorial governments and employers each pay one-third of the Grant, up to a maximum of \$15,000 per employee.

The structure of the Grant has triggered concern from provinces, territories and businesses. Pushback from provinces and territories, many of which face severe fiscal demands, has centered on the dual challenges of losing labour-market funds in conjunction with new Grant costs. Canada’s business community has raised concern about costs to small and micro businesses, many of which risk being priced out of accessing the grant.

Winter called on federal and provincial ministers to come to the table on Friday with open minds and determination to find a workable solution for everyone. And he proposed a starting point: a set of 10 principles that Canada’s Chamber community has created as a way to move the Labour Market funding talks forward.

“Canada’s business community knows the complexity of these talks, but we also know the driving need to get this right,” Winter said. “That’s why businesses across Canada have crafted principles that we think can meet all parties’ needs and can create a framework for win-win solutions.”

The principles stress flexibility – to enable provinces and territories to adapt a program to fit a specific regional context, and to enable businesses of all sizes to access the grant.

The BC Chamber is the largest and most broadly-based business organization in the province. Representing more than 125 Chambers of Commerce and 36,000 businesses of every size, sector and region of the province, the BC Chamber of Commerce is “The Voice of Business in BC.”

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