
NEWS RELEASE

B.C. election campaigns silent on key business issues

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Vancouver, May 2, 2013 – The BC Chamber of Commerce is concerned that B.C.’s political parties are staying silent on crucial election issues for B.C. businesses – and for all British Columbians.

B.C.’s staggering infrastructure deficit, shaky near-term jobs outlook and outdated education system are flying under the radar in the current election campaign.

“These are crucial and large-scale challenges for B.C.,” said John Winter, the BC Chamber’s president and CEO. “British Columbians need to hear clearly how each party’s candidates will address these issues before going to the polls.”

The Issues:

1) Infrastructure: B.C.’s cash-strapped municipalities don’t have the resources to fund billions of dollars of needed repairs for crumbling roads, aging drinking water systems, and run-down wastewater and stormwater networks across the province. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has estimated that Canada faces a \$171.8 billion municipal infrastructure deficit in these four asset areas; the federal government’s new Building Canada plan won’t come close to covering that. B.C. election candidates have not addressed how the province will work with municipalities and the federal government to meet this challenge.

- **Why it matters to B.C. businesses:** Municipal infrastructure is crucial to business as it provides for the flow of goods and services throughout the province. Additionally, a lack of funding plan for significant municipal projects poses tax risks to businesses, which ultimately are penalized disproportionately by property tax hikes.
- **Why it matters to all British Columbians:** Well-functioning infrastructure is critical to British Columbians’ expected standard of living.

2) High-Paying Jobs: B.C. private-sector salaries are not competitive with many Canadian jurisdictions, including Ontario and Alberta. Election talk about skills training and LNG opportunities with a 20-year time horizon, while positive for business, doesn’t address if and how each political party would support the growth of high-paying B.C. jobs now. The BC Chamber calls on B.C.’s political parties to clearly map out how they plan to support B.C.

companies and drive the growth of good, high-paying jobs in the near term – for both the resources sector and the services sector.

- **Why it matters to B.C. businesses:** Supporting businesses' growth so they can create higher-paying jobs province-wide will build B.C.'s economy and business opportunities.
- **Why it matters to all British Columbians:** High-paying jobs will improve British Columbians' standard of living. In addition, greater economic wealth in B.C. will help fund B.C.'s hospitals, schools and social programs.

3) Education: B.C.'s education system is failing to turn out the skills and attitudes that will make British Columbians successful in the long-term. The problem isn't about validating the trades as an alternative to university education – an important but separate issue. The core challenge is the need to re-invent B.C.'s education system for the needs and opportunities of a new century, moving away from rote-learning models. The challenge is also to encourage a life-long learning model that teaches British Columbians how – and why – to pursue constant retraining throughout their careers to handle rapidly-changing workplace demands.

Why it matters to B.C. businesses: There's a clear disconnect between the skills and attitudes that B.C. schools (secondary through post-secondary) cultivate and what employers need, including gaps in literacy and essential skills. Reforming B.C.'s education system is key to driving economic growth in the province and strengthening B.C.'s role in the global economy.

Why it matters to all British Columbians: Education is a key means for raising wages and living standards throughout the province.

Winter emphasized that the economy is top-of-mind for voters in this election and called on B.C.'s political parties to clearly state how they plan to address these critical issues.

“For an election that's supposedly all about the economy, it's troubling that parties aren't tackling these crucial topics,” he said. “But there's still time to act.”

The BC Chamber is the largest and most broadly-based business organization in the province. Representing over 120 Chambers of Commerce and 32,000 businesses of every size, sector and region of the province, the BC Chamber of Commerce is “The Voice of Business in BC.”

- 30 -

For further details please contact:

John Winter
President & CEO
BC Chamber of Commerce
T 604.638.8110



Suite #1201-750 West Pender Street,
Vancouver, BC V6C 2T8
(604) 683-0700 Fax: (604) 683-0416
Website: www.bcchamber.org

C 604.376.3577

E jwinter@bcchamber.org

Jenny MacPhee

Communications Officer

BC Chamber of Commerce

T 604.638.8114

E jmacphee@bcchamber.org