

Skills for Growth

British Columbia's Labour Market Strategy to 2020



Minister's Foreword



On November 22, 2010, I was appointed Minister of Regional Economic and Skills Development – a role I'm pleased to take on in addition to my role as Minister of Science and Universities. In both these ministries, I understand how

vital skills and workforce development are for British Columbia's future. That's why I'm pleased, as one of my first acts in this new portfolio, to present *Skills for Growth: British Columbia's Labour Strategy to 2020*.

Over the next decade, British Columbia will be faced with one of its largest economic challenges – ensuring we have enough workers, with the right skills in every region of the province to maximize British Columbia's economic potential. With job openings expected to far outpace our ability to fill them, we need to act now so we can train, attract and retain the skilled workers we will need to keep our economy moving.

Skills for Growth is the focal point for a coordinated effort to bring all stakeholders together to help meet British Columbia's future workforce needs. The strategy will target three areas that can make a real impact on growing our workforce: increasing the skill level and success of people currently in British Columbia, attracting and retaining top talent from across Canada and around the world, and improving productivity in the workplace.

That's why I'm pleased to present *Skills for Growth: British Columbia's Labour Strategy to 2020*.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ida Chong". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Honourable Ida Chong, FCGA
Minister of Regional Economic and Skills Development

The top of the page features a photograph of the British Columbia flag waving on a flagpole against a clear blue sky. The flag's design, including the Union Jack and the gold sunburst, is partially visible. The title 'Table of Contents' is overlaid on the left side of this image in a white, sans-serif font.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 2 |
| British Columbia's Labour Market in 2020 – A Vision for the Future | 3 |
| British Columbia's Economy and Labour Market | 4 |
| British Columbia's Labour Market System | 8 |
| <i>Skills for Growth</i> – British Columbia's Labour Market Strategy | 11 |
| <i>Skills for Growth</i> – Priority Actions | 12 |
| Moving Forward | 25 |
| Summary of <i>Skills for Growth</i> : Strategic Priorities, Objectives, and Outcomes | 26 |



Introduction

Never before has the need been so great to plan for the future of British Columbia's workforce. An aging population, a rapidly growing knowledge and innovation economy, and increased global connections will place pressure on British Columbia's ability to get the right skills, in the right place, at the right time.

Over the next decade, there will be an estimated 1.1 million job openings in the province. However, only 650,000 young people will emerge from our school system over the decade to fill those jobs. While British Columbia will continue to be an attractive destination to persons from other provinces and countries, there is increasing global competition for skilled workers. The challenge will be making use of every opportunity to build a workforce with more skills, and matching those skills with the demand from employers in communities across the province.

Unless we take decisive action to address this challenge, British Columbia's economic future and quality of life will be in jeopardy. Skill shortages will impact communities across the province. Regional economies will struggle because they will not have the workforce to take full advantage of economic opportunities. More economic output will be required from a smaller workforce, not only to produce goods and services but also to sustain social services – including high quality health care and education.

By taking decisive action now with a focus on the province's economic future, British Columbians will be the province's most valuable resource – turning

skills development into a global, competitive advantage. It is the skills and ingenuity of British Columbians that will grow companies and create new opportunities, lead innovation in existing as well as emerging sectors, and continue to support a high quality of life for families in communities across the province.

Skills for Growth: British Columbia's Labour Market Strategy to 2020 is about investing in the people of British Columbia to drive individual and provincial prosperity. It is a plan that answers the call for a higher level strategic vision and framework for British Columbia's labour market. In turn, this vision will guide future public and private investments, program priorities and measurements of success.

Collaboration is essential to delivering a skilled workforce to support British Columbia's economic future. The development of working partnerships – particularly within regions and communities – will ensure British Columbia's labour market is responsive to constantly changing economic conditions. Particularly important will be developing well coordinated partnerships between all participants in the labour market system to successfully prepare all British Columbians to enter, transition into, or re-skill for a constantly changing labour market.

Working together, *Skills for Growth* will pave the way for British Columbia to reach its potential as a global leader in advanced skills, knowledge, innovation, and prosperity.



British Columbia's Labour Market in 2020 – A Vision for the Future

Achieving this vision will enable individuals, businesses and the province to reach our potential and flourish economically. Skills and knowledge will be British Columbia's competitive advantages.

By 2020, British Columbia will have:

A population that has the skills necessary to pursue their economic goals and capitalize on emerging opportunities.

A welcoming environment that is internationally recognized as one of the best places for newcomers and their families to arrive and work, live, study and invest.

A culture of innovation that creates productive workplaces.

Ensuring that British Columbia has the skills for success in the 21st century economy is a top priority of the Province. Achieving success will take planning, hard work, and commitment from all labour market participants.

*Skills for Growth
Vision for 2020:*

British Columbia's highly skilled and globally competitive workforce drives innovation and economic growth across the province.



British Columbia's Economy and Labour Market

British Columbia has evolved significantly from a primarily resource-based economy to a diverse knowledge-driven economy driving all sectors. In the mid-1970s, nearly a third of all workers in the province were employed in primary industries, including logging, mining, fishing and agriculture. British Columbia's economy has undergone significant growth and change, developing a more diverse economic base.

Resource industries continue to be the primary economic drivers in many regions. The province is also now one of the most small business, service-oriented economies in Canada, with just over three-quarters of economic activity originating from the service sector, and nearly four-fifths of its workforce now employed in this sector.

British Columbia's economy is also experiencing growth as a global trading partner. As Canada's Pacific Gateway, British Columbia is becoming a trade hub for goods, services and people travelling to and from the Asia-Pacific region to Canada and the United States. Asia will continue to grow as a global economic power and includes the world's largest and fastest growing economies representing a US \$10 trillion market.

It is predicted that British Columbia will be one of Canada's economic leaders in the years to come – by 2017, British Columbia's Gross Domestic Product is anticipated to increase by over 25 percent. The growth in services, from health care to emerging high-tech to retail sales, will drive this growth.

British Columbia's primary industries are expected to grow and evolve as they take advantage of new technologies and develop products for new markets.

Innovation and entrepreneurship will be essential to further diversify and propel British Columbia's economy in all regions of the province – not only as a source of growth in emerging sectors, but also as drivers of new technology and productivity gains within all sectors of the economy.

Over the next decade, British Columbia will need advanced skills and knowledge to drive a growing and more diverse economy. Emerging sectors such as green technology, digital technology and digital media will flourish, as will innovation within large existing sectors such as natural resources. With growing trade relationships across the Asia Pacific and around the world, British Columbia will continue to grow as a global economy.

BRITISH COLUMBIA'S LABOUR MARKET – OUTLOOK AND KEY CHALLENGES

Currently, there are 2.4 million people in British Columbia's labour force. As a result of economic growth, employment in British Columbia is expected to grow by an average of 1.8 percent each year through to 2019, creating a total of 450,000 new jobs. Approximately 676,000 additional jobs will become vacant due to retirements. In total, there will be an expected 1,126,000 job openings over the next decade. There are about 650,000 young people in our education system today which means that the growth in job openings is expected to outpace the number of workers. British Columbia will need to increase the size of its workforce and ensure it has the right skills to support economic development in all regions.

In the years to come, several factors will impact the size of British Columbia's workforce and the types of skills required.

AN AGING WORKFORCE

Like other Canadian provinces and western economies, British Columbia's population is aging. The initial wave of Baby Boomers has reached retirement age, and the numbers of workers retiring each year is projected to swell from 56,000 to over 62,000 over the next decade. Coupled with rising life expectancies and lower birth rates, this will increase the average age of the population and create a scarcity of skills and experience in the labour market.

FIGURE 1: BRITISH COLUMBIA'S AGING POPULATION

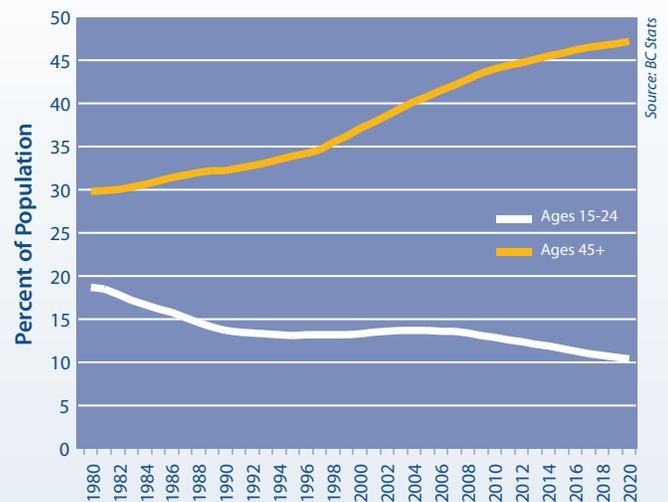


FIGURE 2: OVER THE NEXT DECADE, 77% OF ALL JOBS WILL REQUIRE SOME POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION



THREE OCCUPATION GROUPS ARE EXPECTED TO GROW AT A FASTER PACE COMPARED TO THE PROVINCIAL AVERAGE OF 1.8 PERCENT OVER THE NEXT DECADE:

- » Health occupations (2.6%)
- » Trades, Transport and Equipment Operators and Related Occupations (2.3%)
- » Natural and Applied Sciences and Related Occupations (2.1%)



MORE AND HIGHER SKILLS TO SUPPORT AN ACCELERATING KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

To effectively support economic growth, British Columbia needs to ensure that it has not only a highly skilled workforce, but that workforce skills match economic demands. As of 2008, 67 percent of British Columbia's workforce had at least some post-secondary education. However, the number of workers with post-secondary education will have to increase to meet future demands for skilled workers. The latest projections suggest that 77 percent of job openings over the next decade will require a college diploma, trade certificate, university degree, or higher (see Figure 2, previous page). Many of these new jobs will require advanced skills, including increased science and technology skills.

In addition, almost 600,000 working British Columbians – over one quarter of those currently employed – do not have the minimum literacy and essential skills required to successfully participate in a knowledge economy. There are also populations within British Columbia whose skills are under-represented in the workforce such as Aboriginal persons, youth, women, persons with disabilities, immigrants, and older workers. Many recent skilled immigrants are also employed in occupations that do not reflect their international training and experience.

GLOBAL COMPETITION FOR TALENT

Many other jurisdictions share similar challenges with an aging workforce and increasing demand for higher skills. British Columbia will experience more competition for internationally trained workers. This includes highly skilled and experienced professionals and international students who are potential new labour market entrants. Migration – both international and interprovincial – of skilled workers, entrepreneurs, and students will be key to the economic future of all regions in the province. Forecasts indicate that 36 percent of job openings over the next decade will need to be filled by skilled workers from outside British Columbia.

Skilled immigrant entrepreneurs will be also critical for business succession across the province, and growing new businesses for economic development and job creation. Immigrants bring diverse knowledge and skills as well as valuable global connections, driving innovation, the value of exports, and investment coming into Canada.

With the emergence of our knowledge economy, the proportion of the labour force requiring some form of education or training beyond high school will increase dramatically.¹

¹Rick Miner (2010); *People Without Jobs, Jobs Without People*.



REGIONAL DIVERSITY

To address skills shortages, it will be imperative to incorporate the unique economic and skills differences that exist in regions and sectors across the province. For example, the fact that some regions of the province have young Aboriginal populations provides an opportunity to support development of major projects and sustainable employment with targeted investments in training. While the lower mainland tends to be the hub for arrival of international migrants, coordinated action to attract internationally skilled workers to those regions facing shortages will be required. Small businesses are an important part of the economy in many smaller and rural communities. In view of the aging demographic of business owners, effective responses to business succession in all regions will also be a priority. By understanding regional diversity and opportunities, British Columbia is better positioned to strategically target regional workforce gaps.

IMPROVING PRODUCTIVITY

British Columbia's record of workforce productivity falls behind the Canadian average and ranks a distant 6th among provinces. Increasing the productivity of the workforce – through strategic investments in human resources, new methods of production and physical capital such as machinery and equipment – can decrease the demand for labour and partially address both the need for more skills and the effects of a potentially smaller workforce. In addition, gains in productivity can improve the returns and profits for employers, and drive up wages for workers.

FIGURE 3: IMMIGRATION WILL BE BRITISH COLUMBIA'S KEY DRIVER OF LABOUR FORCE GROWTH

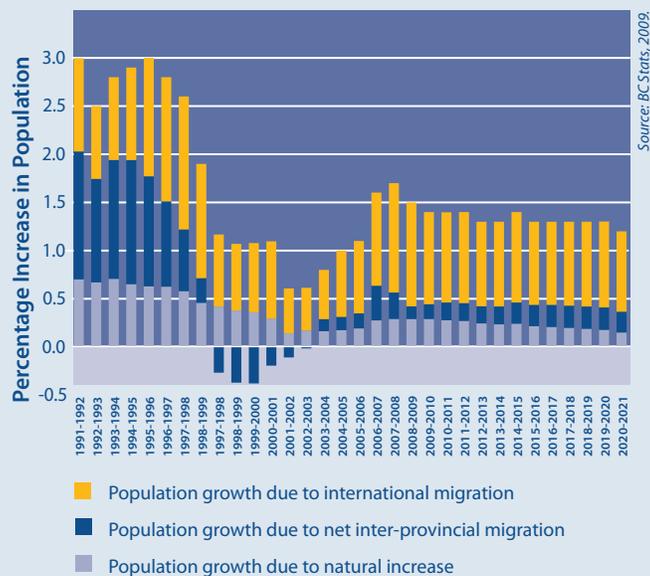
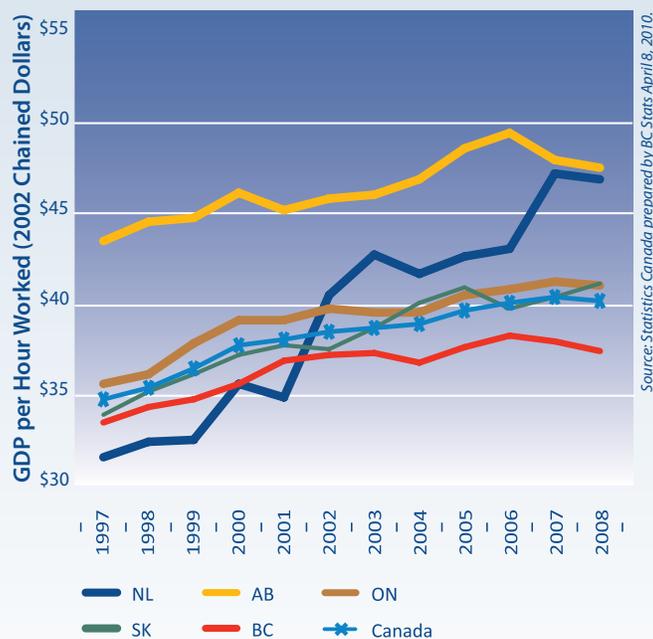


FIGURE 4: BRITISH COLUMBIA WILL NEED TO IMPROVE WORKFORCE PRODUCTIVITY FOR ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS



British Columbia's Labour Market System

British Columbia's labour market system has the key elements to support the Skills for Growth vision.

Meeting British Columbia's labour market challenges will require working collaboratively to align priorities, actions, and investments to ensure that the province has:

- » accessible and reliable labour market information to help guide investments and decision making;
- » policies and regulations that provide a quality working environment to support workers;
- » a coordinated network of organizations that support connections between workers and employers, and workers with training; and
- » a responsive education and training system that meets provincial and regional economic needs.

DIAGRAM 1





LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION

Accessible labour market information is critical to help labour market participants plan for the future, allocate resources and navigate a dynamic and often complex labour market.

- » Students and workers benefit from access to labour market information to map career prospects, connect with potential employers and make informed education, career and employment choices.
- » Access to labour market information helps government, industry and communities to make informed investment and human resource decisions.
- » Labour market information is important for employers to identify sources of workers with the right skills to fill positions and growth opportunities.
- » For post-secondary institutions, labour market information assists in delivery of economic responsive programs and training, and long-term planning.

The Province recently developed a regionally focused labour market supply and demand forecast model.² This model will play a key role in supporting alignments and investments in the province's labour market system.

POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

Being a competitive destination of choice for workers and their families, requires a labour market policy and regulatory environment that supports the needs of

workers and employers. This includes being a global leader in policies that support safe and quality working environments, such as employment standards, labour relations, worker training, and labour mobility.

British Columbia must continually review and advance its labour market and social policies to be an international leader and be the best place in the world to work.

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

British Columbia has a large network of organizations that play important roles in connecting workers and employers. Organizations often have a specific mandate to support a certain group of workers or employers by sector, demographic characteristic or geographic focus. While they all provide different supports, collectively they strengthen British Columbia's labour market system.

By providing about \$375 million annual funding to the province, the federal government is a significant partner in supporting labour market training programs.³ Through a province-wide network of employment service centres, the province also provides support and connections to help British Columbians reach their employment goals.⁴

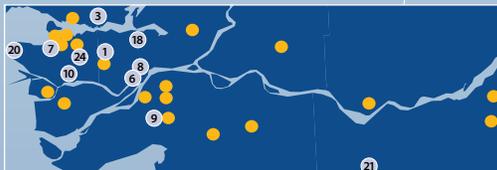
²For more information, go to www.workbc.ca

³For more information on programs available in the province, see www.workbc.ca

⁴For a list of employment service centres, visit www.labourmarketservices.gov.bc.ca



Inset of Lower Mainland



LEGEND

Institutions

- Main Campus
- Regional Campus

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

- 1 British Columbia Institute of Technology (Burnaby)
- 2 Camosun College (Victoria)
- 3 Capilano University (Squamish)
- 4 College of New Caledonia (Prince George)
- 5 College of the Rockies (Cranbrook)
- 6 Douglas College (New Westminster)
- 7 Emily Carr University of Art & Design (Vancouver)
- 8 Justice Institute of British Columbia (New Westminster)
- 9 Kwantlen Polytechnic University (Surrey)
- 10 Langara College (Vancouver)
- 11 North Island College (Courtenay)
- 12 Northwest Community College (Terrace)
- 13 Norther Lights College (Dawson Creek)
- 14 Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (Merritt)
- 15 Okanagan College (Kelowna)
- 16 Royal Roads University (Victoria)
- 17 Selkirk College (Castlegar)
- 18 Simon Fraser University (Burnaby)
- 19 Thompson Rivers University (Kamloops)
- 20 University of British Columbia (Vancouver)
- 21 University of the Fraser Valley (Abbotsford)
- 22 University of Norther British Columbia (Prince George)
- 23 University of Victoria (Victoria)
- 24 Vancouver Community College
- 25 Vancouver Island University (Nanaimo)

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

British Columbia has a world-class education and training system, including a province-wide network of public and private schools, colleges, universities and institutes so students can receive the best possible education and acquire the skills they need to succeed in the labour market. The Province invests \$6.6 billion per year in the delivery of K-12 and post-secondary education and training and since 2001, has invested an additional \$1.9 billion in post-secondary infrastructure and capital projects. The province also invests over \$100 million in British Columbia’s apprenticeship system, which is managed by the Industry Training Authority⁵. With over 1,900 programs at 25 publicly funded institutions – including 11 regional colleges that respond directly to local skill needs - and approximately 375 private institutions, British Columbia’s post-secondary system offers a broad range of education and training options in every region.

Trades and Technical Training in British Columbia

British Columbia has an industry driven trades, apprenticeship and technical training system. Training is delivered across the province in partnership with the Industry Training Authority (ITA), public and private institutions, and employers.

- » *Under British Columbia’s apprenticeship model, approximately 80 percent of apprentices’ training is provided through on-the-job training by employers.*
- » *The ITA provides services to apprentices and employer sponsors, including registrations, exam coordination, assessments and certifications.*
- » *Public and private training institutions, together with partners in the K-12 school system, deliver the technical training component of programs leading to ITA credentials.*

⁵For more information, see www.itabc.ca

Skills For Growth – British Columbia’s Labour Market Strategy

Supporting the continuous growth of British Columbia’s knowledge based economy will require a workforce with the right skills to meet the expected 1.1 million job openings over the next decade. The *Skills for Growth* strategy builds upon the strengths of British Columbia’s labour market system to deliver this objective. The strategy recognizes that significant achievements and investment in the labour market system have been made. It builds on past accomplishments, and improves the alignment of resources to achieve the province’s economic goals. This will require:

- » supporting British Columbians in getting the skills they need for sustainable employment in regions across the province;
- » becoming a destination of choice for skilled international workers for occupations that cannot be filled by British Columbians; and
- » creating a culture of workplace innovation to advance gains in productivity to close the gap in projected unfilled job openings.

**FIGURE 5: SKILLS FOR GROWTH:
SUPPORTING ECONOMIC GROWTH
AND A HIGHER QUALITY OF LIFE**





Skills for Growth – Priority Actions

The Role of Employers

British Columbia's employers create economic opportunity, and generate jobs and income for workers. In a tightening labour market, employers will have to enhance best practices to attract and retain skilled workers. This includes working with supporting organizations to hire talent from more diverse sources, creating safe and quality working conditions, and supporting the ongoing development of employees' skills.

In a globally competitive economy, employers – particularly the 98 percent of British Columbia businesses that are small businesses – need to be supported to continually upgrade their skills, including entrepreneurship, business development, and human resource management, as well as to provide workplace skills training for employees.

Skills for Growth priority actions were developed based on cross-jurisdictional research and analysis, and with input from stakeholders, including employers, sector and industry groups, educational and training institutions. Discussions with different stakeholders had a common theme: there is no single solution that will guarantee British Columbia will have the skilled workforce required to support future economic growth. They also confirmed the need for coordinated actions delivered through a provincial labour market strategy that establishes priorities and shared responsibilities.

While the long-term vision for *Skills for Growth* is to 2020, to respond to changing economic conditions, the actions under the framework will be reviewed and updated regularly with stakeholder input.



Priority 1: Increase the Skill Level and Labour Market Success of British Columbians

British Columbia's future will be built upon the skills and talent of its workforce. This will require a provincial education system that prepares youth – from early learning to high school – for a successful transition into post-secondary training and entry into the labour market. This includes ensuring youth have the core competencies – such as creative and critical thinking and collaboration – to enable transitions between occupations and for success in British Columbia's economy.

To be prepared for future opportunities, British Columbia's workforce will need a higher level of transferable, advanced skills to compete in an ever changing globally competitive economy. Increasing participation in science based education and technology to support British Columbia's growing knowledge based economy will be critical.

The province's regionally focused college education and training system will play an increasingly important role in supporting community economic needs. By building on partnerships between communities, employers and training providers, each region will be positioned to respond to emerging economic and employment opportunities.

British Columbia must focus on every labour market resource we have. The global economic downturn and rising unemployment has impacted several populations within British Columbia's labour market. Although there are signs of economic recovery, unemployment rates for underrepresented populations have increased and unemployment remains high in some regions. Flexible and regionally responsive training supports to connect workers to employers and sustainable employment are needed to ensure that these populations can fully participate in British Columbia's growing economy.

According to the Canadian Council on Learning, a more integrated approach to life-long learning and workforce development that includes early childhood, K-12, post-secondary, adult literacy, and workplace training is essential to supporting people in being successful in the labour market.



PRIORITY AREA 1: KEY OUTCOMES

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p>Short-Term Results by 2012</p> | <p>All regions have best practice programs for transitions from K-12 to post-secondary</p> | <p>All post-secondary institutions use labour market information to inform delivery of student spaces and curriculum</p> | <p>Labour market training programs are responsive to local needs</p> |
| <p>Medium-Term Results by 2015</p> | <p>Youth graduating from the K-12 system have high literacy and numeracy skills for success in the knowledge economy</p> | <p>Student post-secondary financial supports target regionally forecasted occupations under pressure</p> | <p>Strong partnerships exist between employers, communities and training institutions in every region</p> |
| <p>Long-Term Outcomes by 2020</p> | <p>Ninety percent of youth transition from K-12 to post-secondary training</p> | <p>Eighty percent of the working adult population has post-secondary education aligned with British Columbia's economic needs</p> | <p>British Columbia's workforce is a global leader in advanced skills and knowledge through continuous training and up-skilling</p> |



PRIORITY AREA 1: ACTIONS

OBJECTIVE 1: Responsive labour market programs that meet the needs of workers, employers and communities are available in every region

- » Continue to provide flexible and regionally responsive training supports to connect workers to employers and sustainable employment. This includes expanding existing programs and supporting new programs targeting populations impacted by the economic downturn, such as:
 - Expand youth training programs to all regions of the province.
 - Implement new training initiatives aligned with major regional economic development projects.
 - Expand employment programs in regions with high unemployment and for individuals most impacted by the downturn.
- » Utilize the provincial labour market forecasting model to inform labour market programming investments in British Columbia.
- » Strengthen connections between regional labour market programs and users, including employers and workers, through community responsive employment service centres across the province.
- » Collaborate with the federal government to ensure labour market funding agreements are responsive to British Columbia's specific workforce needs.

OBJECTIVE 2: Workforce development plans that support economic growth are in place in each region of the province

- » Strengthen regional partnerships between post-secondary institutions, economic development agencies, and employers to develop solutions to local labour market challenges.
- » Fund the development of training strategies that support the long-term economic objectives of each region of the province.

OBJECTIVE 3: British Columbia's apprenticeship system meets the short- and long-term needs of employers and communities

- » Improve the alignment of the apprenticeship training system with regional economic needs using labour market forecasting information.
- » In collaboration with Industry Training Organizations and employers, implement best practice approaches to increase the number of employers sponsoring apprentices, including the public sector.
- » Develop multiple assessment tools to increase the entry of individuals with appropriate skills into trade occupations.
- » Continue to expand and develop apprenticeship training initiatives that encourage underrepresented populations to enter trades training.



PRIORITY AREA 1: ACTIONS

OBJECTIVE 4: British Columbia's K-12 education system prepares youth – from early-learning to high school – for successful post-secondary training and entry into the labour market

- » Support early-learning development in every region of the province through the expansion of StrongStart BC⁶.
- » Implement full-day kindergarten with future plans to introduce pre-kindergarten options for younger children.
- » Create Neighbourhood Learning Centres where people have better access to educational and community services, including extended day learning programs and out-of-school activities.
- » Introduce personalized learning strategies to enable students to meet their individual needs and employment aspirations.
- » Expand opportunities for students to get a head-start and transition to post-secondary studies and training through dual-credit, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate programs, and youth apprenticeship programs.
- » Allow students to use practical work experience and other out-of-school activities for graduation credits in fields such as computer certification, occupational health and safety, and additional languages.

⁶For more information, see www.bced.gov.bc.ca

- » Introduce Apprenticeship and Workplace Mathematics for grades 10, 11, and 12 to prepare students for apprenticeship and trades training and work experience.
- » Engage and educate youth about careers in high growth opportunity occupations, such as science and technology-related jobs and the trades through innovative online resources and social media.

OBJECTIVE 5: British Columbia's post-secondary education and training system is responsive to student, employer, and regional economic needs

- » Build on best practices used by post-secondary institutions to assess and improve community and employer engagement in all regions.
- » Align student financial supports to regionally forecasted occupations under pressure.
- » Inform development and delivery of programs at institutions, including the number of student spaces, using regional labour market demand forecast information and stakeholder consultation.
- » Continue to expand collaborative centres of specialization within the post-secondary system to support targeted training for regional economic development.
- » Leverage the Year of Science initiative to increase awareness of the importance of science education to meet forecasted demand in science and technology industries.



Priority 2: Attract Workers and Entrepreneurs from Outside the Province Who Meet British Columbia's Regional Economic Needs

British Columbia has one of the strongest records among Canadian provinces for attracting skilled workers from other countries. Every year, British Columbia welcomes approximately 40,000 permanent residents (economic immigrants and other classes along with their family members), and approximately 68,000 temporary workers and international students.

However, the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development has noted that the global competition for highly skilled workers is rising. With one-third of all job openings forecasted to be filled by new immigrants over the next 10 years, British Columbia needs to continue to build upon its solid record as a destination of choice and expand efforts to welcome internationally trained workers and their families.

Welcoming entrepreneurs and investors to create new businesses and employment opportunities will be pivotal to further developing British Columbia's knowledge economy. According to the Conference Board of Canada, immigrants are drivers of innovation – bringing new ideas, global connections, and skills to advance inward investment, new patents, and higher value exports.

Continuing to build on its success as a destination of choice for international students will also be critical to meeting skill needs in specific sectors. Attracting and retaining more students will help meet the need of sectors in all regions and further develop global links that come with a multicultural and diverse workforce.

In the last few years, British Columbia has seen many changes in the profile and numbers of newcomers, including a decline in the proportion of Canada's permanent immigrants and an increase in temporary workers. A priority for British Columbia is to work with the federal immigration system to ensure the inflow of skilled workers, permanent or temporary, is responsive to the needs of the Province. British Columbia's Provincial Nominee Program provides an example of a more responsive approach to economic immigration, where employers sponsor workers in occupations experiencing confirmed shortages and receive expedited immigration processing.



PRIORITY AREA 2: KEY OUTCOMES

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| <p>Short-Term Results by 2012</p> | <p>Employers have access to information to attract and hire internationally trained workers</p> | <p>5,000 economic immigrants enter British Columbia annually through provincial economic immigration programs (from 3,500 in 2010)</p> | <p>Newcomers have information on certification requirements prior to their arrival in British Columbia</p> |
| <p>Medium-Term Results by 2015</p> | <p>British Columbia has immigration processes and initiatives that expedite the entry of temporary and permanent immigrants into job openings</p> | <p>10,000 economic immigrants enter British Columbia annually through provincial economic immigration programs</p> | <p>Internationally trained workers receive timely and transparent assessment of credentials by all regulatory authorities</p> |
| <p>Long-Term Outcome by 2020</p> | <p>Employers can readily access and hire internationally trained workers where there is confirmed insufficient regional supply</p> | <p>Immigration processes support the entry of economic immigrants on a timely basis in all regions</p> | <p>Internationally trained workers are employed in occupations that match their training and experience</p> |



PRIORITY AREA 2: ACTIONS

OBJECTIVE 1: Employers can readily access trained workers from outside of British Columbia with skills not available in their region

- » Expedite the entry of temporary foreign workers by implementing new pilot projects in collaboration with the Federal Government which may include:
 - Eliminate the need for employers to complete a labour market opinion process for occupations confirmed in high-demand.
 - Allow foreign workers to be employed by more than one employer.
 - Allow foreign workers to complete the provisional licensing requirements while working and gaining experience in British Columbia.
 - Expand eligibility for open work permits to eligible spouses and working-aged dependents aged 18-22.
- » Develop web-based navigation guide for employer's to identify options for recruitment of internationally trained workers.
- » Increase the number of workers and entrepreneurs coming to British Columbia through provincial economic immigration programs from approximately 3,500 per year currently to 10,000 by 2015.

- » In collaboration with the federal government, expand the youth working holiday program to include additional countries such as the United States.
- » Maintain commitment to full national labour mobility by ensuring occupational requirements established by provincial regulatory bodies do not create mobility barriers.

OBJECTIVE 2: Provincial settlement and immigration programs position British Columbia as a destination of choice for international workers

- » Develop and implement a British Columbia immigrant employment framework that improves connections between employers and immigrants and labour market success for immigrants.
- » Increase access to workplace focused English language training so immigrants can work in occupations that match their training and experience.
- » In partnership with the Immigrant Employment Council of British Columbia create a job matching resource for employers and an employment mentorship program for immigrants.
- » Expand initiatives that enable local governments, industries, business and community organizations to increase the number of immigrants being hired in British Columbia workplaces.



PRIORITY AREA 2: ACTIONS

- » Continue to ensure that internationally trained workers are aware of their employment standard rights and employers support high quality working conditions.

OBJECTIVE 3: British Columbia has recruitment agreements with countries that support the flow of workers in occupations under pressure

- » Identify source countries based on employers' needs and implement recruitment mechanisms that will bring internationally trained workers to British Columbia.
- » In collaboration with post-secondary institutions, regulatory bodies, and sector associations export British Columbia curriculum to foreign institutions so that foreign trained workers are fully qualified to work upon arrival.
- » Expand international mobility agreements with jurisdictions around the world to further support the expedited flow of internationally trained workers.

OBJECTIVE 4: Improve the labour market attachment and employment outcomes for newcomers

- » Establish new on-line tools and information that will prepare internationally trained workers for employment in British Columbia.
- » Further support the capacity of regulatory bodies and the ability of employers to assess and recognize foreign qualifications.

- » In collaboration with regulatory bodies, develop and implement annual reporting of qualifications processes and outcomes.
- » Expand opportunities available through post-secondary institutions and community service providers for immigrants to upgrade their qualifications and language skills when needed.

OBJECTIVE 5: British Columbia is an international choice for international students

- » Increase awareness of British Columbia as a high quality destination for international students through initiatives such as British Columbia's Education Quality Assurance (EQA) brand for quality post-secondary education.
- » In collaboration with post-secondary institutions and the British Columbia Council of International Education, attract international students in academic disciplines aligned with regional labour market needs.
- » Increase regional attraction and retention of international students with enhanced information and supports through WelcomeBC.ca, welcoming community initiatives, and post-secondary institutions.
- » Work with the federal government to expand criteria under which international students can work in British Columbia and the length of time they can remain post-graduation.



Priority 3: Improve Workplace Productivity

Productivity is about maximizing the economic output of a business, an industry sector, or a jurisdiction. In addition to investments in technology and innovation, the skill level of the workforce is a critical driver of productivity. Currently, British Columbia ranks 6th in Canada in productivity and Canada lags internationally in this area. Through improving productivity, employers can increase economic output with fewer workers – a key objective as British Columbia faces increasing skill shortages.

Developing human capital – the skills, creativity, and knowledge of the workforce – is central to achieving gains in productivity and growing a knowledge-based economy. Human capital generates new ideas and innovation, and maximizes investments in physical capital, such as new technology. Effective workplace regulations are an important aspect of developing human capital, as they serve to maximize workers' potential by creating quality working conditions.

Workplace training and increasing literacy are important priorities for British Columbia to develop the skills and knowledge of its workforce. Approximately 600,000 of British Columbia's 2.3 million workforce have literacy or numeracy challenges – a one percent improvement in

literacy can increase economic output by 1.5 percent. This improvement in literacy would potentially increase national economic output by \$32 billion, or approximately \$4 billion for British Columbia.⁷

For businesses to compete and be successful in a global economy, employers need to provide ongoing training for employees. Programs, such as the Workplace Training for Innovation Program, have supported workplace based training for over 2,000 small businesses, and are making inroads into addressing lagging workplace productivity.

In a knowledge economy innovation and technology are key drivers for improving productivity and it is entrepreneurs who put these together to drive innovation. In addition to supporting workforce skill development, creating an environment that supports the development and attraction of entrepreneurs is also critical to making significant gains in productivity.

⁷TD Economics (2007): Literacy Matters: A Call for Action



PRIORITY AREA 3: KEY OUTCOMES

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| <p>Short-Term Results by 2012</p> | <p>Employers across the province are informed by British Columbia's productivity agenda</p> | <p>Employers in all regions have access to productivity diagnostic services</p> | <p>Entrepreneurial skills development is supported in all sectors through mentoring programs and training initiatives</p> |
| <p>Medium-Term Results by 2015</p> | <p>Productivity is embedded in all regional economic development strategies</p> | <p>Employers in all regions have access to support to develop and implement productivity action plans</p> | <p>Entrepreneurial skills training is accessible to all regions of the province</p> |
| <p>Long-Term Outcomes by 2020</p> | <p>Economic activity in all regions is driven by high productivity</p> | <p>Workplaces in all regions have the skills and the literacy levels required to support productivity</p> | <p>British Columbia is Canada's leader in entrepreneurship, innovation, and creativity</p> |



PRIORITY AREA 3: ACTIONS

OBJECTIVE 1: British Columbia employers and workers are aware of the benefits of increasing productivity

- » Working with industry and sector associations and other stakeholders, launch an employer awareness program profiling the benefits of improving productivity.
- » Create and disseminate productivity tools, including best practice guidelines, for employers to take immediate action to increase productivity.

OBJECTIVE 2: Productivity assessments and funding to support workforce training for employees are available

- » Assess small business productivity in partnership with the Business Development Bank of Canada, and support implementation of customized action plans for employers and their workers so that they are aware of and have access to workplace focused training programs.
- » Consider initiatives to complement existing programs and to increase ongoing workplace training, such as the apprenticeship training tax credit.

OBJECTIVE 3: Development of entrepreneurs is supported

- » Build on best practice sector programs to develop entrepreneurial business development skills across the province.
- » Expand support for research, scientific discovery and commercialization through science scholarships, a provincial Science Olympiad, and trade fairs.
- » Through the British Columbia Innovation Council, support entrepreneurship awareness and training through initiatives such as the CONNECT Conference and the New Ventures Competition.⁸

OBJECTIVE 4: Expand essential skills programs to accelerate the participation of British Columbians in the knowledge economy

- » Target labour market programming investments in sectors with high percentages of workers who have low literacy and essential skills, including digital literacy.
- » Embed essential skills training in specific skills training as a prerequisite for employment, such as WorkSafeBC certification.
- » Collaborate with sector associations and other partners to implement literacy and workplace training programs that target small employers with limited human resource capacity.

⁸For more information, see www.bccic.ca



Skills for Growth – Priority Actions

OBJECTIVE 5: Government of British Columbia is a public sector productivity leader

- » Conduct productivity reviews of provincial government processes to streamline business practices.
- » Implement productivity assessments as a criterion in development of new public policies and initiatives that impact British Columbia employers.
- » Implement a Technology Transformation Agenda to enhance productivity by transforming the way government delivers services, utilizes technology, and shares information.
- » Further develop partnerships with private sector productivity leaders to maximize awareness of best practices across the province.
- » Support continuous training and up-skilling of public sector workers in communities across the province to ensure public sector workforce is responsive to social and economic needs.

Investments in human infrastructure can offer even more powerful and lasting benefits than investment in physical capital (e.g. roads, building and equipment): in fact, it is three times as important to economic growth over the long run.⁹

⁹Canadian Council on Learning (2009). *Securing Prosperity through Canada's Human Infrastructure: The State of Adult Learning and Workplace Learning in Canada*. Ottawa, Canada.



Moving Forward

Skills for Growth: British Columbia's Labour Market Strategy to 2020, is British Columbia's plan to drive the economic and social prosperity of communities and families in all regions. The strategy sets out an ambitious vision that by 2020 British Columbia's highly skilled and globally competitive workforce will drive innovation and economic growth across the province.

Action must be taken today to advance British Columbia's quality of life for the future. Addressing the province's workforce challenges and building the skills for a 21st century economy will take dedicated long-term action and commitment by all labour market participants. Each region in the province has unique economic opportunities and associated workforce challenges. Successful implementation of this strategy will depend on regional collaboration and engagement of all organizations with labour market interests.

Skills for Growth is a living strategy that balances the need to address short-term challenges while positioning British Columbia's workforce for long-term success. Strategy actions will need to evolve in response to changing regional economic and workforce needs. The Province will sponsor forums on a regular basis to support ongoing dialogue and gather feedback on the state of British Columbia's labour market. Regular reporting will be provided on progress and successes, and actions will be evaluated over time.

Skills for Growth is a provincial strategy. Next steps include regional focused labour market strategies that reflect British Columbia's diverse regional economies. Through collaboration with employers, post-secondary institutions, local governments, regional economic development agencies, and other stakeholders, plans containing regionally tailored actions will be developed and implemented.

For further information on *Skills for Growth* and labour market programs contact:

Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development

Email: SkillsforGrowth@gov.bc.ca

Summary of *Skills For Growth*: Strategic Priorities, Objectives, and Outcomes

| STRATEGIC PRIORITIES | OBJECTIVES | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p>Increase the skill level and labour market success of British Columbians</p> | <p>Responsive labour market programs that meet the needs of workers, employers, and communities are available in every region</p> | <p>Workforce development plans that support economic growth are in place in each region of the province</p> | <p>British Columbia's apprenticeship system meets the short- and long-term needs of employers and communities</p> |
| <p>Attract workers and entrepreneurs from outside the province who meet British Columbia's regional economic needs</p> | <p>Employers can readily access trained workers from outside of British Columbia with skills not available in their region</p> | <p>Provincial settlement and immigration programs position British Columbia as a destination of choice for international workers</p> | <p>British Columbia has recruitment agreements with countries that support the flow of workers in occupations under pressure</p> |
| <p>Improve workplace productivity</p> | <p>British Columbia employers and workers are aware of the benefits of increasing productivity</p> | <p>Productivity assessments and funding to support workforce training for employees are available</p> | <p>Development of entrepreneurs is supported</p> |

KEY OUTCOMES BY 2020

British Columbia's K-12 education system prepares youth – from early-learning to high school – for successful post-secondary training and entry into the labour market

British Columbia's post-secondary education and training system is responsive to student, employer, and regional economic needs

Ninety percent of youth transition from K-12 to post-secondary training

Eighty percent of the working adult population has post-secondary education aligned with British Columbia's economic needs

British Columbia's workforce is a global leader in advanced skills and knowledge through continuous training and up-skilling

Improve the labour market attachment and employment outcomes for newcomers

British Columbia is an international choice for international students

Employers can readily access and hire internationally trained workers where there is confirmed insufficient regional supply

Immigration processes support the entry of economic immigrants on a timely basis in all regions

Internationally trained workers are employed in occupations that match their training and experience

Expand essential skills and digital literacy programs to accelerate the participation of British Columbians in the knowledge economy

Government of British Columbia is a public sector productivity leader

Economic activity in all regions is driven by high productivity

Workplaces in all regions have the skills and the literacy levels required to support productivity

British Columbia is Canada's leader in entrepreneurship, innovation and creativity

Canada



Funding provided through the Canada / British Columbia Labour Market Agreement.

Skills for Growth

British Columbia's Labour Market Strategy to **2020**

