

B.C. Federation of Labour
Moving Forward: Apprenticeship in the New Economy
April 18 – 19, 201

Guest Speaker

Hon. Minister Moira Stilwell

Minister of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development

Thank you for the opportunity to talk about the future of our labour market, skills training, and apprentices.

Future of Employment

- First of all, let me tell you a bit about what BC will look like in the future.
- By 2018, people age 65 and over will outnumber those aged 15 to 29 for the first time in provincial history.
- Also for the first time in our history we'll see more skilled labour leaving the labour market than entering it.
- If we do nothing, that will have a significant impact on all of us. How will we be able to afford the key services we depend on, like transportation and education, if less than half the population are working?
- As an aging population needs more and more acute care, where will the health care professionals come from?
- Failure to address these challenges means a diminished quality of life for all British Columbians.
- Around the same time, we expect to see about 950,000 job openings.
- What sort of jobs will these be? What skills will be in demand?
- Our labour market information is telling us about three quarters of those jobs will need at least some post-secondary education.
- Our knowledge-based sectors – like bio-technology, life sciences, digital media, and “green” technologies – will all see the demand for skilled labour rise.
- Professional, scientific, and technical services will likely be among the fastest growing industries in the years to come.
- So, to recap:
 - We're getting old;

- We're having fewer children to fill places in the workforce; and
- We're losing skilled labour to retirement faster than we can find replacements.
- Replacements will need more skills and training than ever before if they are to succeed in our global economy, and those who are working will need to improve their productivity.
- A few weeks ago, Sherri Cooper, Chief Economist with the Bank of Montreal, released a report that really helps to put our challenges into perspective. Here's what she said:

“Canada, like many other industrial countries, is disadvantaged by the aging of the population and the marked slowdown in labour force growth.

Innovation and a better educated workforce are drivers of productivity growth in the increasingly open global economy.”

- Cooper's comments on innovation are especially important for us.
- We need to improve both productivity and innovation, including Human Resource processes and training, to not only support skills development, but also to help create a culture of innovation.
- We need to look not only at what we're doing on the labour supply side, with training and education, but also on the demand side, identifying the sectors where growth takes place.
- Part of that growth must be fuelled by that culture of innovation, by the ability for British Columbians to translate their education, skills and experience into new jobs, and new industries.

The Way Forward

- So what are we going to do?
- Our labour market strategy is simply stated:
 1. We will continue to develop the skills of British Columbians;
 2. We will help to retain existing workers; and
 3. Just as importantly, we must attract new people with the skills and abilities we need.

Our Advantages

- As we face the skilled labour challenge, one of our advantages is the strength of our world-class, post-secondary system.
- Since 2001, more than 36,000 new, full-time, post-secondary students spaces have been created, our campus facilities have benefited from \$2 billion dollars in capital expansion, and another almost \$2 billion was invested in support of post-secondary education this year alone.
- We've created seven new universities and expanded post-secondary campuses to communities across the province, so our students can have more choices and more access to university degrees and trades training closer to home.
- Our universities, colleges and training institutions are among the best in the world, providing British Columbians and international students with the skills they need.
- And some of those international graduate students remain, using their newly-earned skills and education here in BC.
- We also created the Industry Training Authority (ITA) in 2004, where the number of apprentices and trainees more than doubled since that time to about 40,000.
- We've watched the number of employer-sponsors for apprentices rise to over 10,000.
- And we've seen the positive results.
- In the 2009 Apprenticeship Student Outcomes survey, 91 percent of apprentices were very satisfied or satisfied with their overall workplace training experience, and 93 percent were very satisfied or satisfied with their in-school training.
- Our institutions have a world class reputation, and have helped to make our province a top destination for more than 25,000 international students each year, in areas ranging from trades to post-graduate degrees.
- We are leaders and innovators, with unique partnerships that bring industry and education together.
- Like the auto trades training program at the University of the Fraser Valley, where Chrysler has partnered with the university, using their facilities to train both their master mechanics and the university's instructors in the latest products and service techniques; and

- Providing students with access to leading edge diagnostic equipment and vehicles so new they are not even in showrooms.

Sources of Labour

- These are some of the ways we are going to fill those 950,000 job openings I mentioned earlier.
- I want you to consider for a moment where the people to fill those openings will come from.
- As we look ahead to 2020, our provincial education system will contain about 470,000 future workers.
- Immigration, interprovincial migration and increasing the number of British Columbians actively in the labour force will add another 340,000.
- That leaves us with a gap of about 140,000 workers.
- While these are just forecasts, the story they tell is real.
- Without action, we face labour and skills shortages.
- Some of the steps we've taken so far will help, things like removing the age cap on retirement so people who can, and want, to continue working, can do so.
- And removing barriers to inter-provincial movement of labour with Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA); and the Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT).
- Give all Canadians the ability to practice their professions anywhere in the country.
- Our efforts around labour mobility closely mirror the advantages that the trades have enjoyed for many years through the Red Seal program.
- Skills training and education will also be critical elements for a strong economy.
- It is why we're investing over \$100 million this year in trades training programs through the Industry Training Authority (ITA).
- It is also one of the reasons why government combined Advanced Education with Immigration and Labour Market Development, so that the Ministry now has both the mandate and the mission to design, develop and deliver the programs and services.

- And to ensure our province is best prepared to cope with the looming labour shortage facing not only our province and our country, but many other countries as well.

Essential Skills

- For British Columbia to succeed, we need to acknowledge that the nature of work itself is changing.
- The first step towards having a highly-skilled population is literacy, the most vital of the nine essential skills.
- These are the “Velcro” to which all other learning sticks.
- There are about one million British Columbians with low literacy levels, including adults currently in the labour force.
- Improving literacy rates will lead to better performance on the job, and better outcomes in the classroom.
- Combined with improvements to other essential skills like numeracy, writing, oral communication and working with others, employees gain the tools to manage more complex tasks and become more effective in the workplace.

Participation

- Another key to our future labour market is improving participation in the workforce.
- Right now, our overall labour force participation rate in BC sits at about 66 percent.
- By 2031, that could fall to below 60 percent as our average age creeps upwards.
- So how do we get more people into our labour force, and where will they come from?
- One of the answers is to look at groups that are under-represented.

Women in the Workforce

- Last year, through the ITA, we launched a major campaign to encourage more women to consider a career in the trades.
- Since the Women in Trades Training program began in 2009, we’ve seen over 500 women show their interest in a trade, exploring options through pre-apprenticeship training.

- And through pilot projects we've also seen many of them succeed, people like Raven McMann, a single mom now earning a good wage as she completes her plumbing apprenticeship.
- Or Keri Cheevers, who gained the confidence to pursue her interest in becoming an electrician after many years out of the workforce.

Aboriginals in the Workforce

- When we look to the future of our labour market, BC's aboriginal population will be vital.
- It is the only segment of the labour pool - except for immigrants - that will proportionately expand over the next 10 years.
- With more than 62 percent of the aboriginal population in Canada residing in the west, no business, no employer, can afford to ignore the opportunities this young and vital group represents.
- Since 2008, government has invested over \$2 million for skills training programs designed and developed with the support and assistance of First Nations advisors.
- Thirteen demonstration projects were supported, enabling more aboriginal people to begin trades careers.
- Based on the success of these projects, I am very happy to let this group be the first to know that we're committing \$1 million continuing funding for programs ranging from heavy equipment operator to building maintenance.
- These ITA programs build on successful existing trades training programs, and provide an enhanced focus on the aboriginal learner.
- We also should acknowledge BladeRunners, a youth skills program with a trades focus...now with a 15-year record of success and an expanded budget of over \$14 million.
- While not specifically an aboriginal program, about two-thirds of the youth come from First Nations.
- Through BladeRunners at-risk youth gain the skills and confidence to succeed, with many continuing to careers in the trades.
- Together with our partners in industry and First Nations communities, we are working to help deliver on the promise, and great potential, of BC's aboriginal youth.

Older Workers

- I've already mentioned that the age of the average worker is rising.

- According to the February 2010 release from Statistics Canada, the average British Columbian can now anticipate living into their eighties.
- With such great life expectancies, we need to think about the possibilities and opportunities for employing people past the traditional retirement age.
- Older workers offer a rich resource of skills and experience, and though the physical demands of some trades, may occasionally be tough for some to match every day.
- The value of a master tradesperson as a mentor and trainer can be exceptional.
- In some cases, the changing nature of work has displaced workers before they are ready to retire.
- Our province has introduced a number of efforts to ensure these older workers have the skills they need, like expanding the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers programs... with almost \$21 million funded by the BC and federal governments.
- In communities across the province, our partners are assisting older workers to connect with meaningful employment through skills training.

Skills Training Partners

- I think we can all agree that skills' training is vital to the success of our province, of our industries and our residents.
- Delivering that training is an immense task, reliant on a number of key partners in all parts of the province.
- As I've already mentioned, our education system – both K to 12 and post-secondary - are critical elements.
- But these systems are not, by themselves, enough to meet the diverse needs across so many locations.
- To succeed in meeting our need for skilled workers, my Ministry has worked closely with many great partners, like:
 - **The United Food and Commercial Workers** in New Westminster, offering courses such as First Aid, Super Host and computer training;
 - And the **BC Construction Industry Skills Improvement Council** in Burnaby, increasing the on-the-job skills that workers need to be successful in technical training courses.

Conclusion

- I'm very proud of our many partners, and our post-secondary institutions.
- Together, we are doing a great job, finding innovative ways to improve the quality of education.
- Our task, helping to prepare the workforce of the future, is critical.
- And each of us here today also shares in that responsibility.
- I'd like to quote briefly from Sherri Cooper once more, because she sums up well not only the value of skills, but also the intense competition for people with those skills:

“The most sought-after workers, those with the essential knowledge-based skills, trade in a global market.”

- Employers, labour, government and educators – no one group holds the key to our labour market challenges.
- It is only through collaboration and cooperation that we can be sure we have the skilled tradespeople, the health professionals, pilots, engineers and technicians vital to our future economy.
- It is only by looking beyond our present boundaries that we will find the innovation and creativity that we need to succeed.

Thank you.