
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Economic Development

50 WORKBC ACHIEVEMENTS IN ONLY ONE YEAR

VANCOUVER – Since its creation one year ago, the Province’s WorkBC Action Plan has achieved considerable success in providing both short- and long-term solutions to the labour and skills shortage challenges in B.C., announced Economic Development Minister Colin Hansen.

“The WorkBC Action Plan sets out a comprehensive approach for ministries from across government to work with business and industry to help address B.C.’s labour and skills shortages today, and in the future,” said Hansen. “In just one year, through the steps put in place under WorkBC, we have achieved a number of temporary and permanent solutions to help meet the labour market demands in the province.”

Launched on April 27, 2007, WorkBC addresses five strategic areas: keep the workforce we have; develop the skills of the existing workforce; increase Aboriginal participation and labour market success; find and attract more workers to B.C.; and address regional skills shortages.

“Every day, I see young and Aboriginal apprentices who are enthusiastic about finding a job in B.C.’s hospitality industry,” said Andrew George, Red Seal-certified cook at the Klahoweya Aboriginal Centre. “To meet the current and future skills shortages in our sector, it is essential that WorkBC and other initiatives continue to be successful in encouraging career development and training, and inspiring people to pursue their dreams of building a career in B.C.”

In the past year, 13 government ministries have seen achievements under WorkBC. These accomplishments include:

- Two labour market agreements signed with the federal government;
- Provincial Nominee Program and Skills Connect program exceeding fiscal targets;
- Creation of nine regional skills councils to address regional skills shortage issues;
- Contracts signed for delivery of 12 Targeted Initiative for Older Workers programs in communities experiencing an economic transition;
- \$300,000 for Aboriginal student bursaries and 3,000 new apprenticeship training spaces funded through the Industry Training Authority;
- The BladeRunners Program expanding from seven to 10 communities around B.C., working to connect 270 youth-at-risk with jobs in high demand sectors; and
- Four WorkBC Job Fairs held in Ontario that attracted 2,500 job seekers.

“The construction industry is facing an estimated skills shortage of 38,000 people by 2014 and, with a large number of major projects underway all around the province, our need for workers has never been greater,” said Keith Sashaw, Vancouver Regional Construction Association president. “With the continued assistance of the Province and initiatives such as WorkBC, I am confident we will see more young people pursue careers in the trades and more people move to our province to find work.”

Since December 2001, B.C.'s economy has created 423,900 new jobs and, in the next 10 years, it's anticipated there will be an additional one million new job openings in the province. With only 650,000 students currently in B.C.'s K-12 school system, even if every student stayed to work in the province, there would still be a shortage of 350,000 workers. The WorkBC Action Plan helps to address this and other labour market challenges.

For more information on the WorkBC Action Plan, visit www.WorkBC.ca.

1 background(s) attached.

Media Jeff Groot
contact: Public Affairs Officer
 250 952-0509

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