

ASPECT BC Presentation to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services

Presented by Janet Morris-Reade, CEO

Via Video Conference: Tuesday, June 2, 2020, at 11:15 am



Thank you to the Committee on behalf of the Association of Service Providers for Employability and Career Training, known as ASPECT BC, for giving me this opportunity to contribute to the consultations. I speak on behalf of our 100-member organizations that deliver employment services and supports to over 190 communities throughout BC. I am speaking to you today from Oak Bay, which is on the traditional lands of the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ people.

About ASPECT BC

ASPECT members play an essential role in up-skilling individuals and providing them with the best opportunities to find and maintain success in the workplace. They also work with employers within their communities to provide a bridge to a trained workforce, and to provide training in response to their business needs.

ASPECT is made up of community organizations such as Mission Community Skills Centre Society, Horton Ventures in 100 Mile House and Williams Lake, Langley Community Services Society, Worklink Employment Society in Victoria, and Lift Community Resources in Powell River. If some of these organization names seem familiar to you, I've highlighted an ASPECT member in your electoral ridings. Our member organizations are a mix between non-profit societies and private businesses that provide employment services and supports largely through contracts with the provincial and federal governments.

Recommendation 1: Further Investment in Province-Wide Tech Connectivity

Employment service providers have responded quickly by redesigning their workshops and training sessions to go online and created virtual resource rooms and one-on-one supports for those looking for work. With the COVID-19 crisis, we expect to see a massive career migration as many reflect on the jobs they have done in the past and what is available to them now. Collectively, ASPECT members have the infrastructure and the expertise to be a partner in the province's re-start initiative.

With the move to online services, we have seen the gap between the haves and the have nots widening at a staggering level.



Rural, remote, and Indigenous communities need better and more affordable internet connections to be able to compete and be resilient in the current economy. If our new world will become a more virtual one, we need to make sure that everyone has equal access regardless of where they live.

I draw your attention to a report from the Northern Development Initiative Trust that was released earlier this year. Broadband connectivity provides employment training, business development, and can help keep young workers in their communities while at the same time providing connections to outside their communities. ASPECT members have done a stellar job of moving employment services online but can only do so much with limited connectivity.

Investments by both the federal and provincial governments in the past have been appreciated but I am asking you today to make a significant investment to provide rural, remote and Indigenous communities with affordable high-speed access.

Recommendation 2: Investment in Providing Technology and Tech Training to BC's Most Vulnerable

ASPECT members are concerned that those most vulnerable are slipping further through the cracks during the COVID-19 crisis because they do not have access to technology nor the ability to use technology. Throughout the province, I have seen service providers beg and borrow smart phones, tablets, and inexpensive laptops to get them into the hands of their vulnerable clients. Without access, these clients are further disconnecting from the job market and the skills development programs they need.

Recommendation 3: Further Investment in Daycare

Recent announcements for increased funding to daycare spaces, early childhood education training and supports are encouraging; however, still more public investment is needed so that workers at all income levels have access. This is a challenge that affects families and employers alike.

Conclusion



In conclusion, we anticipate that the world of work will look very different in the following year or two and will have a long-term impact on all our work environments. If BC is to recover and thrive moving forward, further investments into better connectivity for rural and remote communities, access to technology for those most vulnerable, and safe and affordable daycare must be addressed. We recommend that the provincial government increase its funding in all these areas over and above what has already been committed.

Because ASPECT members are located in almost every community delivering crucial employment supports and services, quickly responding to market conditions, and employing experts in their fields, the provincial government can depend on us to help you attain the goal for a resilient and healthy provincial economy.

Thank you for your time today. I have included some references in the submitted version of my presentation with what is known and anticipated for the future of work. I welcome your questions.

References

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