



BC SURVEY POINTS TO SERIOUS SKILLS SHORTAGE

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VANCOUVER, BC – Small business owners and operators in British Columbia say it's getting tougher to do business because skilled labour is in short supply. The newly released BC Skills Force Initiative survey and report shows that the combination of a hot economy and high retirement rate is resulting in a serious shortage of workers for the small business sector.

The BC Skills Force Initiative surveyed over 1,800 small businesses in non-metropolitan British Columbia. This project is a joint initiative of the British Columbia Chamber of Commerce and Community Futures Development Association. The study reports that many small businesses believe that the education system is not providing the basic skills employers need from new workers. It also illustrates that that employers feel they don't have input to improve school curriculum and training programs.

"Unlike larger employers, small business owners don't have the same access to the resources needed to properly train employees", says BC Chamber of Commerce President John Winter. "We are looking for leadership from the Provincial government to create regional small business advisory groups across the province. This will enable small business owners to work closely with educational institutions, service providers and government to address this issue head-on", adds the BC Chamber President.

A round table discussion is taking place to review the BC Skills Force project and develop next-step strategies to address the skills shortage issue. Colin Hansen, the Minister of Economic Development is attending these meetings along with provincial and federal officials and representatives of the business community. The Government of Canada (Service Canada) and the Province of British Columbia (Ministry of Economic Development) both contributed to this initiative.

Small businesses – defined as having 50 employees or less – represent 98 per cent of all businesses operating in British Columbia and employ some 971,000 people. The majority of small businesses are owner-operated, having less than five employees. The BC Skills Force Initiative conducted a telephone survey along with a series of focus groups across British Columbia. The only regions excluded were Greater Vancouver and Greater Victoria.

A full copy of the BC Skills Force Initiative report is available at www.bcskillsforce.com

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