

SKILLED WORKER SHORTAGE COSTS B.C. BILLIONS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 13, 2016 VANCOUVER – A shortage of educated and skilled workers is costing British Columbia's economy \$7.9 billion in forgone GDP and governments \$1.8 billion in lost tax revenues, says a new report from the Conference Board of Canada.

The report, *Post-Secondary Education Skills for a Prosperous British Columbia – 2016*, says British Columbia's prosperity is being limited by a shortage of workers with the right education and skills to meet the needs of a growing economy.

"B.C.'s future rests on its ability to develop well-educated, skilled and adaptable citizens," said Prof. Jamie Cassels, President of the University of Victoria and Chair of the Research Universities' Council of British Columbia. "Our post-secondary system is among the best in the world, allowing students to choose their own pathways to personal and career success. And it is clear that in the coming years it must be even further positioned to provide the skilled workers who will fuel B.C.'s social and economic prosperity."

The report says a shortage of skilled labour could leave B.C. employers without the human capital to innovate, build their businesses and contribute tax revenues to the province.

"This report shows the direct link between education and prosperity," said Dr. Lane Trotter, President of Langara College and Chair of B.C. Colleges. "Supporting post-secondary education now will ensure that British Columbians have the opportunity to fill new job openings and that the economy reaches its full potential."

Other key findings in the report:

- There has been a rapid rise in demand for employees who have post-secondary credentials. Those employees earn, on average, 30 per cent more money than those who do not have post-secondary credentials.
- Employers are increasingly seeking employees with critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- B.C. must increase access to post-secondary education to ensure citizens have the right skills to meet the province's needs.
- More than 120,000 British Columbians were not working in 2015 because they did not access the post-secondary education system.

The study shows demand for workers with post-secondary education is rising rapidly. Today, 70 per cent of all jobs are filled by workers with post-secondary education while 30 per cent are unskilled. Twenty-five years ago, the workforce was evenly split between skilled and unskilled workers.

"The trend toward a more skilled workforce is going to continue," said Dr. Ron Burnett, President of Emily Carr University of Art and Design and Chair of the B.C. Association of Institutes and Universities. "The B.C. economy is making a shift toward key sectors such as knowledge, innovation, digital and clean technology."

The report also identifies the need to expand practical learning experiences in British Columbia, such as co-op education and internships.

"British Columbia needs more individuals to develop their skills, knowledge and abilities through the programs offered by the various post-secondary institutions in order to meet labour force needs," said Dr. Daniel Muzyka, President and CEO of The Conference Board of Canada. "If not, B.C. could find itself without the human capital required to fully realize its potential."