



For Immediate Release
2002SDL0016-000447
Oct. 29, 2001

Ministry of Skills Development and Labour

'FIRST-JOB' WAGE RATE TO ADDRESS YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

VICTORIA – The government is honouring another two of its election commitments by confirming an increase in B.C.'s minimum wage to \$8 per hour and by putting a new measure in place to reduce youth unemployment, Minister of Skills Development and Labour Graham Bruce said today.

"We committed in our New Era platform to focus on reducing B.C.'s youth unemployment, which is the highest in Western Canada," Bruce said. "We are honouring that commitment through a 'first-job' rate for new employees entering the workforce. The first-job rate will increase youth employment by giving employers a new incentive to hire young people without experience.

"We also said during the election we would not roll back the previous government's planned increase in the minimum wage to \$8 per hour," Bruce added. "B.C.'s minimum wage is by far the highest in Canada, and we have clearly heard from small businesses about the impact this increase could have on job creation. Nevertheless, workers have been counting on this increase, and we are following through on our election commitment to ensure they get it.

"By the same token, young workers are also expecting the government to focus on the challenge of youth unemployment. The first-job rate is a first step to help strengthen youth employment options."

The first-job rate of \$6 per hour will take effect Nov. 15 and will apply to the first 500 hours of employment, or roughly the first six months on a new part-time job. Employees will then move to the general minimum wage rate of \$8 per hour. The first-job rate will not apply to those already employed or to job-seekers who have been previously employed for more than 500 hours.

"The first-job rate recognizes the valuable service employers provide to new workers, and the fact that it can take several months before new workers are fully trained," Bruce said. "It will give new employees an important tool to find a first job, and we will work with employers to ensure the 500-hour threshold is applied fairly and equitably."

Nearly 90 per cent of teenage employment is concentrated in trade, tourism, retail and food services. The new wage rate will assist young people who are looking for jobs in the upcoming holiday season and beyond. More information is available at <http://www.labour.gov.bc.ca/first-job>.

-30-

Contact: Communications Branch, 250 356-1487

Visit the province's Web site at <http://www.gov.bc.ca/> for online information and services.