

# Introduction

As we move forward in this century of change, B.C. must move beyond its traditional "status quo" way of thinking to become a leader in skills and workforce development. In an increasingly globalized marketplace where competition is tighter and competitive advantages more crucial, our provincial and regional economies must be defined by a culture of increasing knowledge and innovation.

It's no overstatement to say that B.C.'s future economy, productivity and prosperity will depend on how well we can equip our workforce with the skills and knowledge to succeed – as will all the health, education and other public services that rely on a healthy economy. That means building a workforce whose skills come as much from their heads as they do from their hands – who can solve problems, adapt to and even lead the process of change, and use technology to work smarter and more productively.

Essentially, it's fostering – through a public/private commitment – a new kind of workforce, with a results-oriented, entrepreneurial mindset.

How boldly and effectively have we begun moving down that path? B.C. has made some progress – government, industry groups and individual employers recognize the challenges ahead and the need to act.

However, we're only just setting out on the road – this isn't a challenge that has fixed start and end dates. While our collective focus is naturally around meeting our 2010 obligations, the real skills crunch will happen after that, as the majority of baby boomers begin retiring. In other cases, such as construction, significant shortages are starting to appear now.

This booklet outlines some of the work already undertaken by the provincial government. It highlights key labour market information and many of the issues that employers and industry groups have talked to us about. It also provides an overview of programs and policies across government that will deliver a positive impact on the skills agenda.

Finally, you'll also find some current and suggested activities that B.C. employers can use to help with their workforce needs. These ideas came directly from employers and sector groups, through a series of detailed discussions over the past two years.

At this stage, this represents a work-in-progress – the beginnings of a provincial human resources strategy that will evolve over the coming years as the public and private sectors continue the work of delivering a skilled workforce for our growing economy.

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