

**Ministry of Economic Development**

Jan. 18, 2006

(580 words)

**FILLING THE DEMAND:  
SKILLED WORKERS FIND JOBS IN B.C.'S GROWING ECONOMY**

British Columbia's economy is booming – there's evidence of it every day in communities all across B.C. Local newspapers herald the latest statistics showing the province as a leader in economic growth and job creation. But, perhaps the clearest sign of economic confidence can be seen in the construction sector, where new residential, commercial and infrastructure projects are now underway at record levels.

This surge in construction is bringing with it an unrelenting need for skilled workers, like carpenters, joiners and machinists, as employers look for workers to help them keep pace.

“The demand for skilled trades people in B.C. is growing just as fast as our economy,” said B.C.'s Economic Development Minister Colin Hansen, pointing to stats showing a 70 per cent increase in the number of apprentices in B.C. since March 2004.

“There are now more than 24,000 active apprentices in the province,” Hansen added. “This phenomenal growth is due in part to the increased attention on skills shortages and the fact that more young people are getting interested in a career in the trades.”

In October 2005, the provincial government, through the Industry Training Authority (ITA), announced an additional \$2.2 million to provide 1,450 new apprenticeship spaces by this spring.

“It is expected this increase in funding will substantially alleviate waitlists for apprenticeship technical training,” said Hansen, whose government each year invests more than \$77 million in trades training. “This really is an investment in the future, ensuring we have sufficient capacity to meet the growing demand for skilled people, both now and in the long term.”

The Industry Training Authority is also working to promote trades careers to young people, helping them to get a head start on their apprenticeship training by acquiring job skills while they are still in high school.

Participation in youth programs is up from just over 800 students when the ITA was established in 2004. There are currently more than 3,000 students around the province participating in either the ACE IT program, which provides in-school technical training, or the Secondary School Apprenticeship program, providing work-based training.

Dusty Thomas, a grade 11 student at A.L. Fortune Secondary School in Enderby, says the ACE IT machinist millwright program has given him the chance to acquire skills and experiences he wasn't getting in his other high school classes.

“Because of ACE IT, I am already getting work experience,” said Thomas. “My plan for the future is to work as a millwright and earn a down payment for a house. I plan to get my life up and running right after high school.”

“In 2005, British Columbia posted the largest job growth of all of the Canadian provinces and there’s every indication that will continue,” Minister Colin Hansen said. “With recent projections suggesting British Columbia will experience more than one million job openings over the next 12 years, it means there’s a great opportunity for both apprentices and job ready workers to find the jobs they want, today.”

More B.C. employers are also recognizing that on-the-job training can help them recruit and retain the employees they need to allow their businesses to thrive. As a result, the number of employers offering apprenticeship placements has also grown by more than 25 per cent since March 2004.

To learn more about skills development and trades training in British Columbia, visit the Industry Training Authority’s website at [www.itabc.ca](http://www.itabc.ca) or the Ministry of Economic Development at [www.gov.bc.ca/ecdev](http://www.gov.bc.ca/ecdev) online.