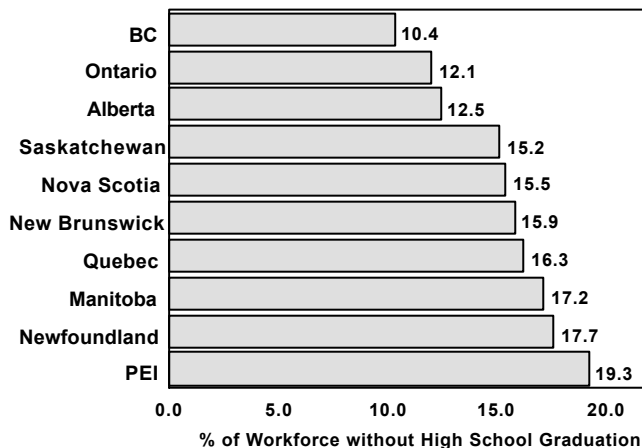


## Earnings and Employment Trends ♦ February 2000

### Education Levels of the Prime Age Workforce

BC is fortunate to have a relatively well educated workforce. Compared to other provinces, we have the lowest percentage of our prime age workforce<sup>1</sup> without high school completion.

#### *BC has the lowest proportion of its workforce without a high school graduation certificate - 1999*

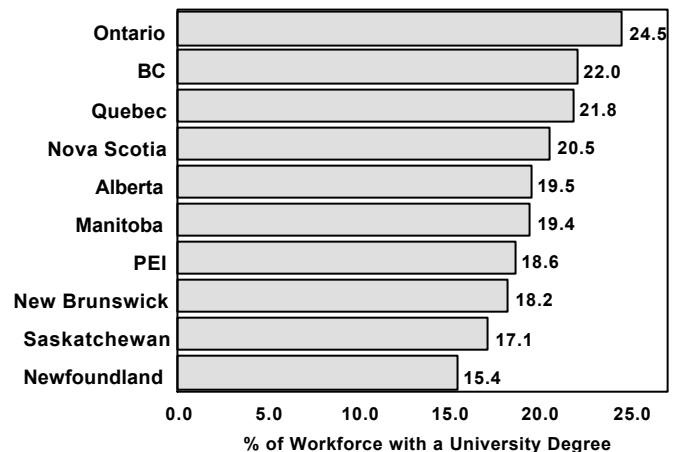


The differential between provinces is quite astounding, with PEI having close to double the incidence of their workforce without high school completion compared to BC.

At the other end of the education spectrum, Ontario prospers. Close to one-quarter of their prime age workforce has a university degree and one in twelve has a graduate degree. BC also does well in recruiting the university educated -- 7 per cent of the workforce have graduate degrees and a further 15 per cent have bachelor degrees. Quebec appears to have the most polarized workforce with a relatively large number

holding university degrees alongside a large component with out even high school. Saskatchewan is the least polarized with a relatively good standing with respect to high school graduates but a low incidence of workers with university degrees.

#### *Ontario outshines BC in the relative number of workers who have a university degree - 1999*

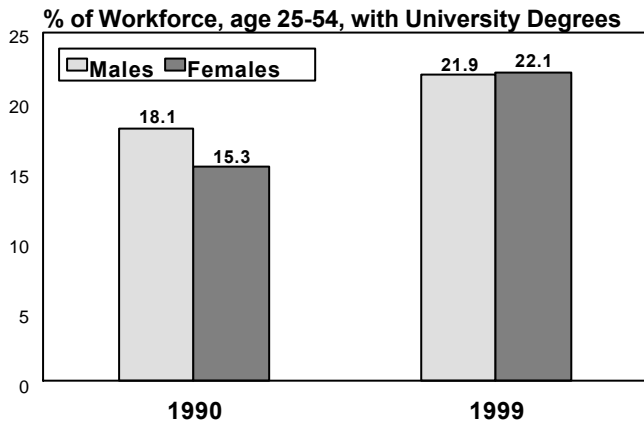


The whole country has seen an incredible increase in the educational standing of their workforce. For example, in BC, the proportion without high school has decreased by 6 percentage points over the last ten years and those 6 percentage points have almost all been shifted to an improvement in the number of persons with university degrees. In 1990, 16.8 per cent of the prime age BC workforce had a university degree compared to 22.0 per cent in 1999. That represents an increase of 5.2 percentage points. To put this improvement in historical perspective, over the previous decade, from 1980 to 1989, the increase in the relative number of university degrees rose by only 1.4 percentage points.

<sup>1</sup> The prime age workforce is defined as the employed, age 25 – 54.

All demographic groups seem to have participated in this educational upgrading. Of most interest is the relative achievement of the sexes. While both sexes have been improving their lot, the women of BC have been slowly catching up to their male counterparts. And by 1999, for the first time, the proportion of employed women with a university degree surpassed that of men.

**Currently, in the BC workforce, more women than men have university degrees .**



This is not surprising as the statistics on school participation among 20-24 year olds show that females now slightly outnumber males, whereas in 1990, for every 10 male students, there were only 7 females. However, males, age 25-29, are still slightly more inclined to attend school full-time than their female counterparts. That tendency shows up in the educational attainment figures -- males continue to outperform women in terms of holding the most university graduate degrees.

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