

Public role in apprenticeship

British Columbia is simply not producing enough journeypersons to meet the mid-to-long-term needs of our economy.

Apprenticeship programs strengthen communities by providing career paths and job stability. They benefit industry by providing a motivated and well-trained workforce, increasing their competitive advantage, enhancing workplace safety, and reducing turnover.

Interest in skilled and trades training is on the rise and BC's public and private training providers have the capacity to increase enrolment in apprenticeship programs. So what's the problem? Lack of job placements.

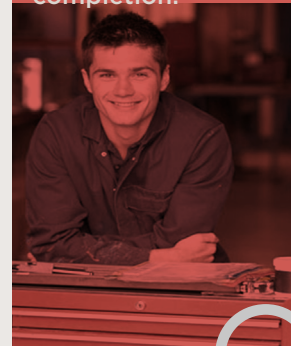
In most skilled and trades apprenticeships, 75 to 80 per cent of training takes place on the job. Yet in BC finding job placements for apprentices is the number one barrier to successful completion.

According to the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF) employer participation in apprenticeship programs across Canada is shockingly low at only 19 per cent. Worse, BC falls below this average.

This is difficult to understand. The advantages to employers who take on apprentices are numerous and well-documented. A 2009 CAF study found that for every \$1 spent on apprenticeship training, an employer receives a benefit, on average, of \$1.47 or a net return of \$0.47.

JOB PLACEMENTS

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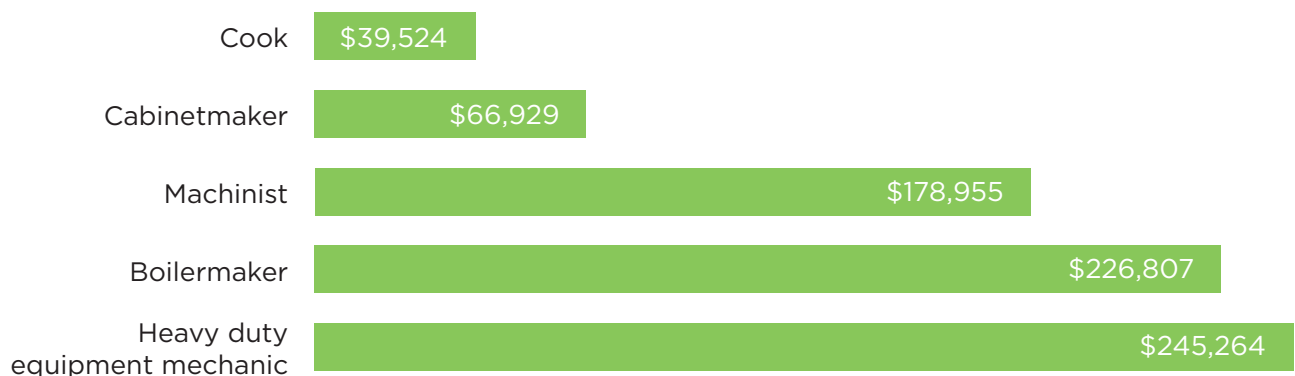


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Advantages for employers

- Increase workplace and public safety;
- Develop and retain highly-skilled workers trained to provincial industry standards who also understand employers' unique workplace conditions;
- Become more competitive by increasing product quality and improving company efficiency;
- Ensures a steady supply of skilled employees of different ages so that you will be better able to meet future workforce needs increase customer satisfaction;
- Access federal and provincial tax credits; and
- Earning a return on training investments (\$1.47 per \$1 spent, on average).

Total return on a 4-year apprenticeship



THE BOTTOM LINE, from the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum: “We’ve surveyed almost 1,000 employers across Canada, and they tell us that investing in apprenticeship delivers real returns to their company’s bottom line.” (2009)

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Government's role in bridging the gap

As the largest employer in BC, government can play a direct role in providing apprentices with jobs on publicly-funded infrastructure projects by making apprenticeship quotas a mandatory condition of project tenders.

In the private sector, labour and employers have a long tradition of partnering to train future generations of workers. These joint training boards' programs have demonstrated consistently high completion rates as a result of the strong relationship and commitment built between unions and employers.

This model, linking apprenticeship training with jobs from the outset, should be replicated by government and the Industry Training Authority (ITA) to create a healthy, productive, and sustainable apprenticeship system for BC.

Government is uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between training and apprenticeship placements and create real opportunity for working people. On the one hand, post-secondary institutions are the largest provider of skills training. On the other hand, the government is continuously investing in public infrastructure projects that have the ability to create a large number of needed job placements for apprentices.

Post-Secondary funding crisis

Post-secondary education is critical to the long term success of BC and needs to be a priority investment for the provincial government. However, the single most important investment made by the province—the provincial operating grant—has dropped by 20 per cent since 2001 when adjusted for inflation and student enrolments.

Public post-secondary institutions deliver over 90 per cent of the trades training and apprenticeship programs in BC, but because of chronic under-funding of the public system, colleges, special purpose teaching universities and institutes are unable to use the most current technology in those training programs. Better funding from ITA for the most current technology is critical to making BC's Jobs Plan effective.

Further, deep budget cuts and the introduction of tuition fees to ESL and ABE programs are another barrier to people looking to build a career in the trades.

JOINT TRAINING

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Recommendations for BC

To create much needed employment opportunities for apprentices, the BC government should:

- Institute quotas on publicly-funded infrastructure projects; and
- Partner with public sector unions on apprenticeship training so that hospitals, schools, universities, colleges, and Crown corporations provide apprenticeship employment to the maximum possible.

To sustain quality skills and trades training from public post-secondary institutions and improve apprenticeship completion rates, the BC government should:

- Increase the provincial operating grant for post-secondary institutions;
- Direct the ITA to provide more funding to post-secondary institutions for up-to-date technology; and
- Restore provincial funding for ESL and ABE programs to ensure there are no barriers to entering or completing a skills or trades training certificate.

The British Columbia Federation of Labour speaks for the over 500,000 members of our affiliated unions, from more than 1,100 locals, working in every aspect of the BC economy.

The BCFED, as it is most commonly known, has a long and proud history of fighting for the rights of all working people.

The goals of the BCFED are best exemplified by its slogan: *“What we desire for ourselves, we wish for all.”*

www.bcfed.ca