

**B.C. Federation of Labour  
Moving Forward: Apprenticeships in the New Economy  
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**Ensuring a Skilled Workforce for Tomorrow  
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**Presentation by  
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the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters & the Canadian Labour Congress)**

John Hugh Edwards referred to the Rick Miner report which outlined his view that we are facing a demographic time bomb and a skills gap that threatens to create a skills paradox in which we are unable to fill skilled jobs while large numbers of workers are unemployed.

One of our key problems is the reality that Canadian employers are not training their workers. In recent decades, Canada has fallen behind other member nations of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) - including the US - in the level of workplace training provided to workers.

A large portion of those who do receive work-related training is people in management positions and those with high levels of education.

To build the high productivity, high-wage economy we desire for the future of our country, we need the following elements as starting points:

- A national strategy, built by the federal, provincial, and territorial governments with significant input from key labour market partners, which responds to the future needs of industry, workers and communities in the areas of economic and social development, skills development, and workplace education and training.
- Carrots and Sticks: The strategy must include incentives for employers to train workers and for workers to access training, as well as instruments such as the training levy currently in place in Quebec which sets a minimum floor for training as a percentage of payroll.
- Joint committees and programs in workplaces which engage employers and workers in the task of providing appropriate and high quality training in the workplace. Examples presented at this Conference (Highland Valley Copper and the Coast Mountain Bus Company) are models.

- Key to efforts to improve the provision and accessibility of workplace training is the engagement of representatives of employers, workers, and the social economy in developing policy and implementing strategies to ensure high quality education and training in workplaces. Again, Quebec provides an example of this type of engagement through its Commission des Partenaires du Marche du Travail.
- Current labour market agreements and labour market agreements between the federal and provincial and territorial governments need to be expanded to include more accessibility for currently employed workers to access work-related training.
- Labour relations, and specifically collective bargaining, can be a powerful tool for the development of effective workplace training programs. As one example among hundreds, I would point to the agreement the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) negotiated with Canada Post to provide apprenticeship positions to CUPW members on a gender equal basis.
- All pre-apprenticeship programs should be integrated with formal level 1 apprenticeship programs to ensure that learners do not meet dead ends in their training.
- Public post-secondary institutions (community colleges, polytechnics, university colleges, universities) and union training centres should be the deliverers of choice for work-related training.
- Literacy and basic skills should be built into all workplace training programs.
- Educational programs and courses should be designed to be worker centered. Learning should be designed to match how real people learn. Education should be viewed as human development rather than the absorption of task information. Worker/learners should be understood as people with multi-dimensional lives and aspirations rather than production inputs.

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