

## NEWS RELEASE

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### Industry Training Authority Calls for Action to Remedy Skills Shortage Caused by Downturn

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**Richmond, B.C.** – Industry Training Authority (ITA) is calling for a collective mobilization of resources within BC's industry training system and the employer community to meet the challenge of looming skills shortages that could harm the economy.

ITA's recently released annual report, *Mobilizing to Meet the Challenge*, points to a decline in industry training participation caused by the recent economic downturn as an early warning of skills shortages that lie ahead due to retiring baby boomers.

The decline in registered training participants – from 44,000 to 42,000 – is the first since ITA was created in 2004. ITA CEO Kevin Evans says the decline is the result of the inability of some employers to retain or hire apprentices due to the downturn.

"We need to encourage employers to train the workers of today for the jobs of tomorrow by fostering a strong, genuine training culture in workplaces of all sizes," says Evans.

"Apprenticeship, with its combination of work-based and in-school training, is a proven pathway to do just that."

According to the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, only 18 per cent of employers in the skilled trades currently hire apprentices. Evans explains that "investing in apprenticeship training can provide employers with an average \$1.47 return on every dollar spent. It's a sound business decision and the best choice to help support our province's economic turnaround and growth."

ITA has had an action plan in place for the past year to minimize the downturn's effects on the training system. As part of that plan, ITA worked to relax the rules so that apprentices can continue to be eligible for in-school training after being laid off. It also shifted in-school training capacity to support laid off apprentices who are well into their apprenticeship programs, allowing them to finish and become certified.

Evans adds that going forward ITA is focusing on the mid to long term labour demand needs of the province and aligning in-school training capacity with those needs.

“Together with sector-specific Industry Training Organizations, we will be increasing efforts to encourage employers to commit to and invest in training,” says Evans. “Collaboration and innovation will be key to leading BC’s skills training and certification system to develop the skilled labour needed to secure BC’s future prosperity.”

In spite of the downturn, ITA has made significant progress in a number of areas. The number of apprentices earning certificates and becoming journeypersons has increased by 16 per cent. ITA has also seen increases in the number of Aboriginal people, immigrants, youth and women involved in apprenticeship training.

Established as a crown corporation in 2004 to oversee and expand BC’s industry training and apprenticeship system, ITA works with industry and employers, trainees and apprentices, labour unions and training providers to meet industry’s current and future training needs.

**For an ITA fact sheet or backgrounder or to download its annual report visit [www.itabc.ca](http://www.itabc.ca) or contact:**

Karen Zukas  
Lead, Communications  
Industry Training Authority  
Direct Dial: 604-214-8710  
Cell: 604-307-2122  
[kzukas@itabc.ca](mailto:kzukas@itabc.ca)

