



TOP 10

Barriers to Competitiveness

CLOSING THE SKILLS GAP: MAPPING A PATH FOR SMALL BUSINESS

February 2013

Report of the Symposium on Skills and Small Business held on
November 14, 2012 in Toronto

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INTRODUCTION

Symposium project

With declining labour force growth, low productivity growth, and a mismatch between the skills required and those available, Canada must close its skills gap if it is to maintain and grow its economy.

From the outset of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's skills initiative, it has been clear Canada must upgrade the skills in its domestic workforce, even as employers leverage the necessary role of immigrant workers in filling skills and labour gaps.

Small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) constitute the largest number of businesses in the economy and half of private-sector employment. SMEs also make up the majority of the membership within the national network of local chambers of commerce and boards of trade. The breadth of the SME membership and their engagement through local chambers is one of the defining features of the Canadian Chamber.

Clearly, a plan for upskilling the domestic workforce must include a focus on SMEs. SMEs need to share their skills and training challenges, learn about best practices, and work with other stakeholders to identify solutions to overcome human resource issues and improve their competitiveness.

A symposium on skills and small business offered a singular opportunity to examine SMEs' upskilling and training issues. In partnership with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) and with funding from the Department's Office of Literacy and Essential Skills, the Canadian Chamber organized and hosted a one-day forum, bringing together and connecting various stakeholders face-to-face—from small businesses, industry and sector associations, and the learning and training communities.



The Hon. Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, delivering remarks.

The symposium was held on November 14, 2012 in downtown Toronto. Among the 75 participants were 40 SME owners or managers from seven provinces; 25 stakeholder representatives including two provincial deputy ministers, four officials from HRSDC (in addition to the speakers), four representatives from training and human resource organizations, and 15 from industry associations, sector councils and other skills and literacy organizations; and 10 speakers with subject matter expertise. See Appendix B for a list of the participants.

Symposium objectives

The symposium was planned to meet the following objectives:

- **Establish connections:** To establish connections between SMEs, the learning communities, and other stakeholders including HRSDC and other experts from the field.
- **Information sharing among stakeholders:** To facilitate a policy discussion among key stakeholders on the proposed actions to resolve the skills challenges, drawing on Canadian and international best practices and innovation, and leveraging findings from research projects.
- **SME employees' training:** To stimulate the opportunities for increased training of employees, especially at SMEs, including by highlighting innovative and best practices.
- **Essential skills focus:** To include a focus on literacy and essential skills, recognizing that some employees may lack sufficient levels of those skills.

Symposium agenda and format

The symposium combined a formal agenda with opportunities for small-table discussions and written input via worksheets at each table. The results of the individual roundtable discussions and participants' worksheet responses have been woven into this report.

The formal agenda for the symposium included keynote presentations by the Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, and Craig Wright, Senior Vice-President and Chief Economist, RBC Financial

Group, and three panel sessions on the following topics: 1) Making the case for investing in training and skills development; 2) Best practices and innovation in training and skills development; and 3) Moving forward and exploring options. See Appendix A for the complete agenda of the symposium.

This report draws on the presentations and keynote speeches as well as the participants' comments throughout the day and their written worksheets.

Objectives of this report

This report presents recommendations to help close the skills gap for small businesses in Canada. The guiding objectives were developed as a result of previous consultations where gaps were identified. Those objectives are as follows:

1. Propose actions to encourage increased training or upgrading of employee skills in small and medium-sized enterprises.
2. Make policy recommendations to support the goal of encouraging SMEs to focus on training.
3. Highlight best practices in alleviating skills pressures, especially by means of training.

The symposium was intended to be the building block of collaborative and individual actions to address the skills issues among Canada's SMEs.

During this year and beyond, the Canadian Chamber will work with its corporate and association members, the chamber network, government and other stakeholders to resolve the skills gap. Given the importance of small business to Canada's economy, it is vital that SMEs increase their training and skills upgrading of employees.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Canada's growing skills shortfall presents a serious threat to our country's prosperity. In 2012 and again in 2013, the skills crisis heads the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's list of *Top 10 Barriers to Competitiveness*.

When I speak with members across the country, I hear first-hand accounts of how the skills gap is hurting their ability to remain competitive and grow. Although almost every business is affected by human resources challenges, the needs of small- and medium-sized businesses are different from larger firms.

Small business *is* the Canadian economy, to paraphrase Craig Wright, Senior Vice-President and Chief Economist, RBC Financial Group. SMEs with fewer than 100 employees make up almost 98 per cent of the firms in Canada.¹

This symposium provided us with the chance to spotlight small and medium-size business and explore their challenges and needs. More importantly, with financial assistance from the government of Canada, it allowed us to invite SMEs to participate in a dialogue with stakeholders and government.

The federal government has signalled the skills shortage is a critical issue. At the symposium, the Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Human

Resources and Skills Development, said it is not the sole responsibility of government to fix the skills gap. I agree entirely.

No one owns the skills issue and likewise no one player – be it government or business or the education sector – can resolve it alone. Associate Deputy Minister Ron Parker said the key to making further progress on skills-related challenges is to bring together business, educational and training institutions, workers and policy people, both inside and outside of government.

The symposium offered a host of experts with evidence on why training matters and how best to offer and deliver it to small business to make an impact. For example, one speaker demonstrated that investing in training increases employee retention, rather than opening up employees for poaching.

Investment in training is not an end in itself; it's a tool to strengthen business success. When companies are fighting to increase their productivity or innovate, training becomes a critical tool. That view is based on the findings of an international report of the OECD's Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED) Programme. Professor Paul Bélanger stressed that SMEs need to innovate to be competitive and grow, which in turn creates demand for skills development.

With the advent of online training, we heard about the growing digital learning divide between large and small business from Emad Rizkalla, President of Bluedrop Performance Learning. He argued this divide harms the productivity of small businesses

¹ Government of Canada. *Key Small Business Statistics - July 2012 – Highlights*. www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/061.nsf/eng/02713.html

by affecting their ability to hire, keep and develop people. He was among the speakers who shared innovative and inspiring approaches to training in small business.

The overarching message of the symposium was that it's not easy for small business to organize and finance training of existing employees. The great challenge for government, and for the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, is to decide how to help small business take on this task.

During the symposium, we asked SME participants to recommend what they need to address the skills gaps and what will enable them to provide employee training and to support their business goals.

The recommendations stemming from the symposium give the Canadian Chamber a focus for our advocacy on behalf of small businesses as they address their training needs. This report includes a roadmap for member SMEs and chambers of commerce to address skills and training challenges.

Think of it as part of a toolkit for action to upgrade the skills of the existing labour force, especially in small business.

As a country, we are falling short of our needs – today and in the future. Yet, as businesses and stakeholders, if we listen to one another and learn the best practices and the outcomes of past initiatives, we can build a better toolbox together. The next step is to move forward and act on the roadmap in hand.

I welcome your collaboration as Canadian Chamber members, businesses and other stakeholders who want to close the skills gap in small business and create greater prosperity for all Canadians.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Perrin Beatty". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'P'.

*The Hon. Perrin Beatty,
President and CEO, The Canadian Chamber of Commerce*

SETTING THE SCENE

Canada's skills challenges are the leading economic issues confronting the country, and will be for years to come. Among the Canadian Chamber's *Top 10 Barriers to Competitiveness*, the skills crisis is at the top of the list as the highest priority for the membership. Two major trends are creating skills shortages. The first is the aging of the population and the departure of baby boomers from the workforce. The Conference Board of Canada's long-term economic outlook projects that by 2025, one in five Canadians will be 65 or older.² The second trend is that jobs are becoming increasingly specialized, which in turn demands more educated and skilled workers.

The evidence is clear that the rising shortfall of skilled workers and the growing mismatch between the skills required and those available has evolved into a skills crisis affecting the Canadian economy. When the Canadian Chamber set its priorities for addressing the skills gap, upskilling the domestic workforce was a key concern. The symposium project offered the chance to focus on the skills and training needs of small business.

The importance of SMEs

Small businesses are the backbone of communities across Canada and are an integral part of the country's economic and social fabric. In Canada, almost 98 per cent of businesses, or just over one million, are small with fewer than 100 employees.³ (Medium-sized firms are defined by Industry Canada as having less than 500 employees.) Approximately five million people work in small enterprises, or almost half of the private sector labour force.⁴



² Conference Board of Canada. *Canadian Outlook Long-Term Economic Forecast: 2010*. March 2010.

³ Government of Canada. *Key Small Business Statistics - July 2012 - Highlights*. www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/061.nsf/eng/02713.html

⁴ Ibid.

Addressing the skills challenge

No nationwide skills strategy would be complete without addressing the skills gaps felt keenly by SMEs. Not only do they employ a sizeable proportion of the population, they contribute to innovation and the competitiveness of the economy overall. They would also be amongst the biggest beneficiaries of skills investment. Companies with less than 20 employees could see a rate of return of 2078 per cent over five years through an investment in adult literacy levels up to a globally competitive standard.⁵

While the consequences of inaction are stark, the economic and societal returns of investment in skills are impressive. Statistics Canada estimates that 55 per cent of the differences in economic growth between OECD countries can be explained by differences in the average skill levels between countries.⁶

Canada's investment in training has slipped in recent years. Not only does Canada only invest 64 per cent of the U.S. total on training per employee, it has also dropped by 38 per cent in current dollar value since 1993.⁷

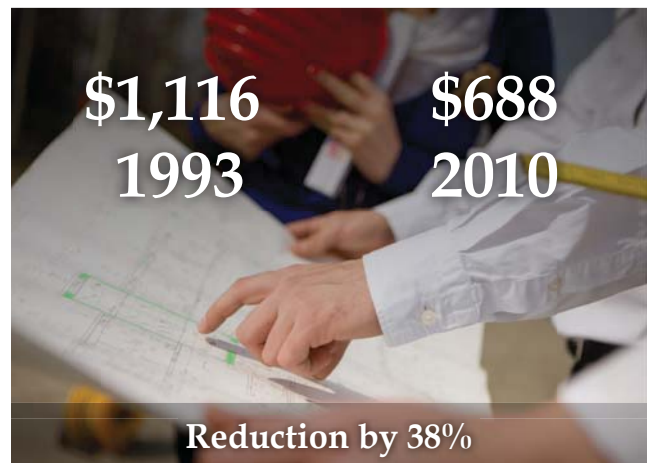
Skills shortages in Canada mean that more low-skilled workers may need to be hired to fill skills gaps. At the symposium, DataAngel's Scott Murray shared the calculation that it would cost \$29.34 billion to bring all adults up to the literacy level needed to compete in the global market. The annual return on this investment in people is estimated at \$86.8 billion, or \$3,244 per worker.⁸

This economic benefit would come mainly from the increased earnings of people at that higher skill level. It would be accompanied by savings in Employment Insurance, social assistance and workers compensation payments. As these estimates illustrate, developing domestic skills is vital to the continued success of Canadian businesses and our economy.

Canada v. United States (per employee investment in training 2010)



Canada Investment Trends (training investment per employee, current dollars)



Source: Conference Board of Canada. *Learning and Development Outlook 2011: Are Organizations Ready for Learning 2.0?* October 2011

- 5 Murray, Scott and Richard Shillington. *Investing in Upskilling: Gains for Individuals, Employers and Government*. A research report prepared for Canadian Literacy and Learning Network. July 2012. Available online at: www.dataangel.ca/en/CLLRNet%20final%20Benefits%20of%20Literacy.pdf
- 6 Bailey, Allan. *Connecting the Dots...Linking Training Investment to Business Outcomes and the Economy*. Canadian Council on Learning. April 2007. Available online at: www.ccl-cca.ca/NR/rdonlyres/F6226BEA-0502-4A2D-A2E0-6A7C450C5212/0/connecting_dots_EN.pdf
- 7 Conference Board of Canada. *Learning and Development Outlook 2011: Are Organizations Ready for Learning 2.0?* October 2011.
- 8 Murray and Shillington. *Investing in Upskilling*.

Symposium Presentations: Making the Case for Investing in Training and Skills Development

Scott Murray, President, DataAngel Policy Research

“To maintain our competitiveness in global markets, we need at least Level 3 literacy. That allows people to be efficient problem solvers in information-rich environments. This level of literacy is the equivalent of the chainsaw of the knowledge economy.”

Why are skills important?

- Globalization of markets for capital and technology means the competitive pressure is rising.
- Rising skill levels in the developing world enables them to compete head on.
- Diffusion of information and communication technology increases productivity and amplifies skill-based inequalities.

Policy prescriptions include reducing the flow of low-skilled youth who are leaving education; increasing the skills of the adult population through instruction supported by government incentives; and increasing the demand for skills through job and process redesign.

Return on Investment on Skills

Cost
\$29.3 billion

to bring all adults to the skills level needed to compete in global markets



Benefits
\$86.8 billion

Estimated annual earnings increase of \$3244 per worker

Source: DataAngel

Allan Bailey, President, Centre for Learning Impact

“In seven of 12 training cases (in the Centre’s Investing in People project), we were unable to identify positive ROIs. We did, however, discover some very important insights in that training mostly failed for the same reason.”

Top barriers to achieving ROI on training:

1. Lack of alignment with the metrics that matter.
2. Transferring skills learned to the job.
3. Targeting training at the wrong audience.

Evidence shows that investment in skills brings huge benefits to the economy, with the biggest payoffs coming from investing in lower-skilled workers. The OECD estimates that 55 per cent of the differences in economic growth between countries can be explained by the differences in skill levels.⁹ For companies, the return can be even greater if training is designed appropriately.

Three success factors for investing in people:

1. Demonstrate the value
2. Identify exemplary practice
3. Share the know-how

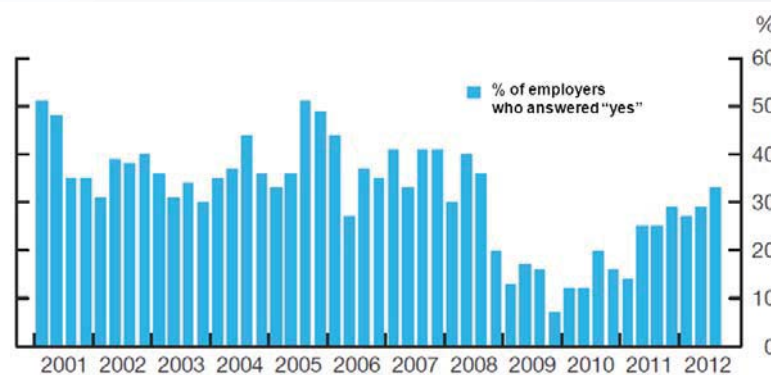
⁹ Coulombe, Serge and Jean-François Tremblay. *International Adult Literacy Survey - Human Capital and Canadian Provincial Standards of Living*. Statistics Canada. 2006.

Symposium Presentation: The Data Skills shortages: Government responses

Selected data from the presentation by Silvano Tocchi, Director General, Workplace Partnerships Directorate, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada:

Skills Shortages in some Regions and Sectors

Does your firm face any shortages of labour that restrict your ability to meet demand?

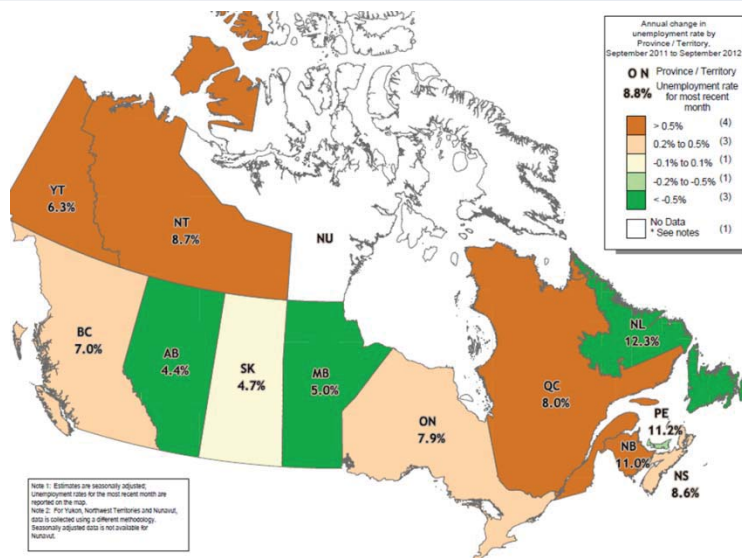


Source: Bank of Canada, Business Outlook (Fall 2012)

Industries with below average projected employment growth

1. Other Manufacturing	-24.0%
2. Rubber, plastics and chemicals	-2.0%
3. Pulp and paper	-0.5%
4. Agriculture	-0.3%
5. Computer and electronic products	1.1%
6. Fishing and trapping	4.0%
7. Transportation and storage	4.2%
8. Education	4.6%
9. Public administration and defence	4.6%
10. Finance, insurance & real estate	4.6%

Unemployment Rates Across Canada



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (September 2012)

Industries with above average projected employment growth

1. Computer system design services	28.4%
2. Mineral fuels (oil and gas)	24.9%
3. Mining services	22.1%
4. Forestry	20.5%
5. Other transportation equipment	20.2%
6. Other professional services	19.2%
7. Mining	17.6%
8. Professional business services	15.7%
9. Health	15.6%
10. Wholesale trade	15.4%

Source: Conference Board of Canada Projections

MOTIVATIONS FOR TRAINING

This summary is based on participants' written responses and verbal comments during the symposium.

Harnessing the motivation of firms to invest in training is a critical success factor in driving future investment. The weight of these motivations is usually factored against the greatest concern, the return on investment. In particular, small businesses fear that employees will leave shortly after an investment in developing their skills has been made.

For small business, it also seems to be a matter of weighing short-term cost against long-term gain. However, there are examples of short-term needs that must be addressed through training, such as compliance, safety and liability concerns. Major longer-term motivations included succession planning, competitiveness, growth and increased business efficiency. A number of companies also voiced their desire to develop learning cultures, whereby staff can constantly learn from each other in what can become a constant cycle of improvement.

Main motivations listed fall into a few brackets:

Compliance and risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal or sector association compliance • Liability concerns, staff safety and risk management
Staffing considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retention and job satisfaction of staff • Succession planning • Versatility and competence of staff
Market opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitiveness, customer service • Growth, changing business landscape and new business opportunities
Internal efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productivity and profitability • Reduced management time and increased delegation • Improved communication
Culture shift	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a learning culture within the business

SME Responses:

"When employees see that we invest in them, that there is the possibility for career development, they stay. And even if they leave, they come back."

"We have an aging employee base with an incredible amount of experience that needs to be maintained and replaced."

"We invest to keep staff safe. This avoids any negative impacts on their personal lives, increases productivity through less incidents and accidents."

"It increases productivity by enabling existing workers to get more from the tools and improves the processes we have in place."

"Business service requests are changing and in order to respond to these requests we need to upgrade our skills."

"By investing in skills, it increases the ability of staff to think outside the box and find innovative solutions to issues."

"It is important for an SME to have no single point of failure. If one person is away, things cannot grind to a halt."

"We invest in training to create a learning culture within our small company."



CHALLENGES TO TRAINING

This summary is based on participants' written responses and verbal comments during the symposium.

Despite a strong understanding of why training is good for their business in the long-term, there were still a number of challenges highlighted by small businesses and experts that act as hurdles to skills development. Despite the persistent concern that through providing training, staff may develop the skills to find a job elsewhere, the range of responses as to why developing skills is important for small businesses demonstrates a strong recognition that the benefits can outweigh the risks.

According to the experience in Quebec, the challenge in promoting the development and uptake of skills programs in small businesses is fundamentally a

logistical one. Companies want to invest in training for the long list of reasons above, but it has to be easy for them to roll out programs. Any challenge facing a large business is that much more intimidating for a small business that does not boast the same resources in terms of finance and know-how.

Before developing any recommendations, the symposium participants spent time identifying the main challenges faced by small businesses. Any recommendations for solutions should be developed with the intention to solve one or more of the challenges identified by small businesses listed below:

Time	Cost	Risk of staff departure	Regulatory burden
Program visibility	Program suitability	Employee attitudes	Employee skills base

Time: Time is a big factor that prevents small businesses from providing the required training to employees. This relates both to employers having sufficient time themselves to select the right training and to sparing employees from their roles for any period of training. For many, they simply do not have access to back-up staff. Many small businesses also cited the existing burden of mandatory training requirements as being the priority for training budgets. The time spent complying with regulations also prevents firms from actively developing other training programs for staff.

*“Taking the time to implement and execute in-house training from day-to-day lean operations and affording the time to conduct training outside operating hours is a major challenge.” **Food Service SME, Ontario***

Cost: Cost and cash flow are regularly cited as challenges to introducing any meaningful training programs that will have a real impact. Although budgets are set aside for training, these can often be swallowed up by legal requirements. There is also the question of measuring the value of the investment in training to help firms justify the up-front investment—a question that was raised multiple times.

*“It is expensive and it is difficult to guarantee return on investment, both in actual dollar terms and overall productivity.” **SME respondent***

Risk: There is a major overriding concern that any investment in training is wasted if the employee then leaves the company. Although small businesses recognize the myriad of benefits that come from investing in talent, the nagging concern about staff remaining long enough to see a return on that investment is the biggest counter-weight in the decision-making process. It will also affect the scope and scale of any training programs.

“Existing programs would be improved by adding protection for SMEs against risk of employees leaving after training.” SME respondent

Burden: Respondents felt the burden of regulation restricted them from becoming more active in rolling out training programs. Regarding government incentives and programs, there was a feeling that eligibility and reporting requirements were too stringent and either put firms off applying or restricted them altogether.

“The government puts out regulations and requirements but doesn’t play a role in training. The burden of compliance is solely on the employer. The government should provide more substance on how to comply – not just state the rules.” SME respondent

Visibility: A major challenge highlighted by respondents was finding good information about the available programs, incentives and requirements. There is a hesitation in committing staff time and resources to training when there is little visibility as to the quality of trainers. The HRSDC website was cited as logically being the first port of call for this information, but was deemed to be not particularly user-friendly. There was also a sense of inequality between government services and incentives available in different provinces/territories.

“The hardest thing currently is for an SME to find this information. This needs to be communicated more effectively. Government and SMEs need to develop an effective communication method, maybe a customer service line (i.e. a version of 311) where everything is merged into one phone number (grants, training and navigation).” SME respondent

Suitability: Many small companies felt that available training programs were too general for their needs. Although there was a broad choice, the programs that were more suited to their respective sectors tended to be targeted at large organizations. With no specific HR function in most of these small businesses, many respondents found it difficult to identify problems that needed solving and the appropriate training programs to meet their business needs and objectives. Firms also struggled to get employees to apply those new skills to the workplace.



“People like fresh food, not canned food. It is the same with training programs. Training should be based on the trainee’s internal problems, not stereotypical case studies from universities that they cannot relate back to their work environment.” Professional service SME, Ontario

Attitudes: Attitudes were regularly cited as a reason small business did not invest in training. This manifested itself differently across generations. There was a perceived lack of motivation amongst recent entrants to the workforce, and established workers were seen as being generally more resistant to change. In some cases, there was an expectation of higher wages following training. This is also linked to the lack of an HR function to provide clear career paths and incentives for employees to complete training.

“The attitude of staff sometimes is that they are in demand. It is an employee market, not an employer market.” Agricultural SME, Alberta

Skills base: Firms highlighted a disconnect between education and employment as a major issue, with firms expected to put in a large commitment upfront to get new hires up to the required level. While this is expected to a degree with technical work skills, for literacy and essential skills there is an expectation that this should be addressed in school.

“We need to start by addressing our children’s math and spelling. The old models of education based on the agrarian economy are no longer valid. This has to be replaced to make sure standards are reached prior to employment.” Service sector SME, Saskatchewan

RECOMMENDATIONS

This summary is based on participants' written responses and verbal comments during the symposium. Please also refer to the Roadmap following this section. The Roadmap provides best practice examples for each of the recommendations.

As with devising the training programs themselves, solutions must be developed to specifically address the challenges highlighted by the small businesses in the last section. The core of these recommendations must therefore:

- **Make it clear:** provide small businesses with a clear route into the world of skills development through relevant guidance and tools, in clear and simple language, housed in one area.
- **Make it easy:** help to reduce complexity for small businesses to free up more time to invest in skills development.
- **Make it relevant:** design courses around demand linked to real challenges faced by businesses in certain sectors and find ways to reduce costs of implementation.
- **Make it motivating:** motivate employees and companies by showing them the benefits of training and demonstrating the return on investment of developing skills.


Make it clear: clarity and visibility

The most common recommendation by small business participants at the symposium was to provide a greater degree of clarity on training resources and requirements in Canada. Designing training programs from scratch is a difficult prospect that can, in many cases, prevent companies from taking that initial step.

The problem is not a lack of information, it is too much. There is a bewildering choice of training incentives, programs and providers ready to step in to help companies nurture their talent. The Internet gives easy access to a wealth of information and resources, but there is no funnel to help bring the most relevant material together for small businesses. For many companies it is a case of not knowing where to start. A number of recommendations were put forward to help address that challenge:

Recommendations:

1. A step-by-step **training checklist** with recommended guidelines and actions would help provide a degree of confidence as companies look to take that first step. These actions, underpinned by basic principles for introducing a successful training program, would help prevent companies from making avoidable mistakes that could deter future investment in skills development.



Evidence put forward by the Centre for Learning Impact indicated that even large Canadian and international companies with large dedicated HR departments could make basic errors in introducing training for staff. By developing a concise and easy to understand list of universal guidelines, companies could at least proceed with some measure of confidence if they were looking to determine their training plans. This checklist, in clear and simple language, should cover both training specifics and some basic, related HR guidance to ensure that training is part of the bigger picture of skills development to meet the business objectives of the company.

2. The idea of a **one-stop-shop** resource available to all Canadian companies was also very popular amongst respondents. Such a resource for HR skills development is already available in Newfoundland and Labrador through the NL HR Manager, which was developed in conjunction with small businesses in the province. It provides access to a mixture of off-the-shelf and custom-designed courses, best practice examples, legal requirements, a corporate learning network, reporting and recording tools. The NL HR Manager also gives companies the ability to develop their own courses. A critical success factor for this platform is that it be constantly updated and designed together with the business community. Outdated and irrelevant resources quickly erode the credibility of such a resource. Chambers of commerce, boards of trade, industry associations and government should all share the

burden of increasing awareness of the one-stop-shop through a variety of channels in order to reach the widest possible audience.

3. The federal and provincial governments should sign a **commitment to transparency and clarity** for all materials intended for a small business audience. Incentives available to employers and employees should be clearly laid out. Where laws related to training requirements for a specific sector are complicated or unclear, they should be simplified or accompanied by guidelines designed for smaller businesses. These guidelines should be designed in collaboration with the small business audience for which they are intended. This process should begin with a simplified website for HRSDC and its provincial counterparts. The website should be the go-to place for small businesses and provide a prominent link to the one-stop-shop.
4. **Quality assurance** of trainers was a regular suggestion made by small businesses to help them pick good training providers. The demand for formal accreditation could run counter to the idea of cutting back on government requirements for small businesses. Popular alternatives put forward included a voluntary approach through a quality label for trainers, or through a transparent system of assessment or rating via an online nation-wide directory of training providers. This content and assessment could be similar to that available on popular travel websites, for example.

Symposium Presentation: Best Practices

Newfoundland and Labrador's Online Human Resources Manager and Learning Network

The NL HR Manager is an easy-to-use online human resources toolkit that provides information on recruitment and retaining employees for small and medium-sized employers in Newfoundland and Labrador. It is a comprehensive resource with practical guides, downloadable templates, forms and document samples for employers to use in their everyday operational practices. Users of the toolkit are supported one-on-one by regional-based labour market development officers and through a provincial Labour Market & Career Information Hotline.

The NL HR Manager's website was developed through a partnership between the government of Newfoundland and Labrador (Advanced Education and Skills), the NL Business Coalition (12 industry sector organizations) and Memorial University's Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE Memorial) to help small and medium-sized enterprises in the province find, keep and manage workers. The website contains information, resources and easy to use templates on a variety of HR-related topics. Complementary to the NL HR Manager website is SmartForceNL, an online learning network that delivers custom courseware specific to the needs of employers in the province for HR and social media-related topics as well as off-the-shelf content on professional job-related skills training such as project management, customer service and business software like Excel and Quickbooks. The purpose of SmartForceNL is to help position the province's workforce as the best trained in the global economy.

Impact:

The province of Newfoundland and Labrador has faced unprecedented economic growth in recent years. At the same time as the skill demands are increasing, the province's population has been decreasing and growing older. Opportunities continue to grow as a result of planned major project developments such as Hebron and Lower Churchill, expansion of the mining sector and continued growth in the service economy. In order to sustain this economic growth and improve employment outcomes, the provincial government recognized the importance of supporting small- to medium-sized enterprises in attracting, retaining and developing a skilled workforce.

The NL HR Manager platform has seen over 500,000 visitors to its website and has been so successful it has been mirrored in Nova Scotia, which has correspondingly implemented a program modeled on SmartForceNL. New Brunswick has also created a similar portal, with direct links to the NL HR Manager. Other jurisdictions around the globe have looked to SmartForceNL, including the United States and Peru.

Make it easy: freeing up resources

Time is precious for small businesses. A major impediment, highlighted by small business, to rolling out more training was the need to first satisfy requirements set by the government, or professional associations on training.

To free up resources for these small companies, the government should look to reduce requirements for mandatory training where possible and consider the impact of occupational regulations. The burden of complying with existing mandatory requirements can often prevent small businesses from engaging in the skills development of staff. Respondents put forward a set of recommendations to help reduce the burden for small business and free up resources to become more active in skills development.

1. To reduce the burden of mandatory training and legal requirements, there should be a focus on the impact of existing regulations on small firms across different sectors and provinces. HRSDC should ensure that training receives due consideration as part of the federal **government's overarching efforts to cut red tape** through the Red Tape Reduction Commission. The government should start by identifying requirements across sectors in each province and measuring the actual impact on business. While it would primarily focus on cumbersome training requirements, the review should look to flush out any regulations or requirements that are seriously preventing companies from further focusing on skills development directly or indirectly.¹⁰
2. The results of this research should be **displayed transparently**, comparing requirements and initiatives across sectors and provinces to provide examples of best practices. There was a feeling amongst respondents that there are disparities across the provinces on the requirements for business and the initiatives available. The data should be regularly updated to show improvements through something like a HR regulatory scorecard to encourage provinces to remove unnecessary requirements and emulate strong performers.
3. Where training cannot be cut, the delivery of that training should be **streamlined** as much as possible to reduce the time and costs incurred by small businesses. Where appropriate, modular training could be delivered in short bursts during slow periods of business activity in order to reduce time burdens on business. The online delivery of training to cut down on travel time and costs is another option; see recommendation 11, below.
4. **Simplified eligibility requirements** for government training programs and incentives were cited as a priority for small business. Where firms have an interest in training, it should be encouraged and a flexible approach should be adopted in both government training and incentive programs to be as inclusive as possible.

¹⁰ A 2005 survey of SMEs in Canada indicated that, as a result of a lower paperwork burden and the cash that was freed up, 40 per cent had hired people, invested in education and training for employees, and made pricing, purchasing and employee compensation changes. Source: Red Tape Reduction Commission, Final Report, 2012, p. 11, citing Statistics Canada's 2005 survey of SMEs for the Paperwork Burden Reduction Initiative.

Make it relevant: design and delivery

The majority of small businesses understand that training brings benefits, but there is still a hesitance to invest in the skills of employees. The evidence from the Centre for Learning Impact suggests that training did not meet expectations largely because of basic errors including not aligning the training to business needs; not transferring the skills learnt into the job; and targeting the wrong people within the company.

As mentioned previously, cost is a driving factor, but so is value. By properly designing and delivering programs, as well as finding ways of reducing costs, companies will be able to see greater value for their investment. These recommendations look to address the design and delivery of training to make it relevant and cost-effective:

1. **Sector-based design and delivery** of training tools and programs have proved successful. A pilot project conducted by the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) in cooperation with the tourism sector is a great example and provides a template for future efforts across a range of sectors. By working closely with the tourism sector, SRDC was able to perform an analysis based on industry needs and provide a platform to develop and deliver a training program that was much more attuned to the needs of the companies in the sector. The cooperation of sector councils and industry associations is the key success factor for this approach. Another major benefit of this approach is that during the design phase, it is possible to develop metrics to demonstrate the return on investment for training within the sector to help promote uptake.
2. Costs can be prohibitive for small companies but can be mitigated by encouraging **training cooperatives or training consortia** to share costs for delivery and even possibly creating a shared HR function. This can be done either through industry associations or through supply chains. A report by McKinsey, an international business consultancy, highlights an approach taken in South Korea, whereby the government subsidizes up to 80 per cent of the costs of training that large companies provide to their supply chain partners.¹¹ One small company present at the symposium said they have opened up staff training to suppliers and customers as a marketing tool.
3. One of the most cost-effective delivery channels for training is online. **E-learning** removes travel costs, is easily accessible and the knowledge may be retained longer than many other forms of training delivery.¹² To help reduce costs, particularly for mandatory training, the first reflex in designing courses should be to establish if it is feasible to provide such courses online. Consequently, of the essential skills, computer use must be emphasized as a top priority as it is a gateway to developing other skills through access to training online, as well as being increasingly critical for conducting business.
4. Where mandatory training cannot be cut, it should be **redesigned** with the aim of introducing elements to reinforce essential skills such as oral communication, working with others and document use.

¹¹ <http://mckinseysociety.com/education-to-employment/report>

¹² U.S. Department of Education, Centre for Technology in Learning. *Evaluation of Evidence-based Practices in Online Learning: A Meta-Analysis and Review of Online Learning Studies*. 2009.

Symposium Presentation: Moving Forward and Exploring Options

UPSKILL - an innovative sectoral approach

In February 2010, the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) implemented a pan-Canadian demonstration project targeting SMEs in the tourism and accommodations sector. The aim of the large-scale demonstration project is to evaluate workplace literacy and essential skills (LES) training with the most rigorous evaluation methods while establishing a business case for LES investments by measuring the return on investment through a cost-benefit study. The study, being conducted in eight provinces and targeting 1,300 workers in 100 establishments, uses a random assignment designed to provide the most reliable measures of impact of LES training on workers' skills, their job performance, and other outcomes relevant to workers and firm-level objectives. The study has determined a key innovation—*sectoral leveraging*—focusing on training based on industry needs analysis and consultations. However, training is ultimately customized to the needs of each individual firm.

Preliminary observations:

1. Multi-stakeholder **partnerships** are a key success factor. Partnerships with sector councils and industry associations were critical to success, especially in recruitment and maintaining employer engagement.
2. Integrate **training design** that will appeal to employers and employees and focuses on a problem they are specifically facing. The UPSKILL curriculum focuses on both essential skills gaps and performance needs and is highly relevant for employees as demonstrated by a very low withdrawal rate.
3. Using a **business-friendly** approach to training was key to the project's implementation. Additionally, employer involvement was necessary to increase participation in training in some areas.
4. Training must be **flexible** and respond to the business environment and its demands. Frequent delays and interruptions are common as business demands can affect workers' availability on a day-to-day basis. Depending on the business, delivery over different periods of time and lengths might lead to better results.

The project is set to conclude in the fall of 2013. It has been funded by the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES), a branch of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

Make it motivating: focus on the individual

Regular frustrations voiced by small businesses are that the skills available in the labour market do not match their needs and the base level of literacy and essential skills of new entrants to the workplace is not up to the required standard. Motivation of staff is also cited as a major challenge when it comes to improving the skills of employees.

While employers find it frustrating that employees do not have the right skills, new job market entrants also find it frustrating that their education does not easily open the door to work. When they do find employment in smaller firms, their future career path is not clear to them, which is in part due to a lack of HR expertise in small businesses. These recommendations look at ways to motivate staff:

1. An **annual skills report** would highlight where shortages exist and address future needs for individuals, employers, educators and the government. If used correctly, this would help students make more informed choices, and allow employers, educators and the government to better address future skills gaps. The results of this report should be widely publicized and used to guide policy development for education and address future skills development at a national and local level.
2. Using this report as a basis, a **skills task force** should be set up, bringing together stakeholders from education, small business and government to align education, skills development and economic policy. This should be done on the provincial and federal level to guide overall policy. The main focus of such a group would be to examine how to further embed the essential skills required by business into the delivery and assessment of education.
3. At the local level, pilot projects for **local business or skills groups** should be established bringing together local high schools, colleges, universities, and businesses to develop innovative education programs that address real local needs and better prepare students for employment. The same local approach could be taken with employers and local employment services.
4. A number of respondents suggested that the absence of staff while on training could be offset by **temporary work experience** for local students. This would both address the short-term need of businesses lacking staff when they are away at training and provide a chance for students to experience a business environment.
5. To help incent individuals, small businesses with the help of local chambers of commerce should be provided with **basic HR training**. This would help them to spell out expectations through job descriptions and lay out basic, but clear, career plans dependent on staff meeting certain expectations in terms of skill development.
6. Future plans should recognize formal and informal training and **provide a route to formal qualifications**. This would help individual employees take greater responsibility in furthering their own skills. The government should also look to provide incentives to informal training.

Learning from past initiatives

A final point is to look at initiatives that have been previously introduced in order to make an informed choice on the best route forward. This applies to cautionary tales where initiatives have not brought about the desired results (see the following table for some examples), as well identifying best practices, where programs have been successful (see the Roadmap section that follows).

Symposium Presentation: Moving Forward and Exploring Options

The Quebec experience

At the symposium, Yvon Boudreau, a consultant to the Quebec provincial chamber of commerce, the Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec (FCCQ), provided a lengthy list of tactics that have been tried in the province over the past 25 years. The lessons learned through that process, and elsewhere, may serve to guide future efforts.

Tactic	Outcome
Financial incentives: From 1990 to 1995, SMEs benefited from generous tax credits for training. The financial support amounted to a 50 per cent grant.	The results were disappointing; over the five years, no real increase was evident in SME training.
Compulsory approach: In 1994, legislation was introduced to require employers to invest at least one per cent of their payroll into their company's training.	Comparisons with other provinces show that employers in Quebec did not invest more in training than other provinces.
Mutual training organizations: SMEs from the same sector or region were invited to create a group to meet common training needs. This came with generous financial support, with a 100 per cent reimbursement covering most training expenses.	After 15 years in operation, very few private companies are participating in these groups. This is largely attributed to culture.
Apprenticeships: Apprenticeship programs were set up by some 40 sectoral labour force committees. The programs were 100 per cent subsidized by Emploi-Québec, a provincial government agency mandated to help Quebecers find employment, and offered tax credits to participating businesses.	Despite extensive advertising, very few businesses participated. There was also a high dropout rate of over 75 per cent amongst workers who signed up for apprenticeships.

ROADMAP

Below is an overview of the recommendations stemming from this symposium, together with examples of best practices. As a next step in this process, stakeholders are encouraged to develop their plans using the recommendations below, nominate project leads, and set timeframes to report back. As described above, each action should look to draw out

lessons from previous initiatives, either successful or otherwise, to increase their success rate. There will be some areas where initiatives are already underway; in those cases, the initiatives should be revisited through the lens of these recommendations or should be communicated more extensively.

Make it clear: clarity and visibility

Recommendation	Description	Best Practice Examples
1. Training checklist	A concise and easy-to-understand list of guidelines and actions to develop a training program.	Canada/Manitoba Business Service Centre ¹³
2. One-stop-shop resource	An online resource home to all the up-to-date tools and information needed by small businesses. This should be promoted by a multi-channel awareness campaign involving government and business.	NL HR Manager ¹⁴ (for HR skills only)
3. Commitment to transparency and clarity	A signed commitment by federal and provincial governments to simplify the language used in materials aimed at small businesses and to improve their websites.	Employment Standards (Manitoba) ¹⁵ Small Business BC ¹⁶
4. Quality assurance	Find a system to offer greater assurances on vendor skills through accreditation or online ratings of training providers.	[Example of certification of trainers: Canadian Society for Training and Development (CSTD) ¹⁷]

¹³ http://v1.canadabusiness.mb.ca/home_page/business_grow_it/checklist_for_developing_a_training_program

¹⁴ www.nlhrmanager.ca

¹⁵ www.gov.mb.ca/labour/standards/factsheet.html

¹⁶ www.smallbusinessbc.ca/industry-regulations

¹⁷ www.cstd.ca

Make it easy: freeing up resources

Recommendation	Description	Best Practice Examples
1. Red tape reduction	Focus on small firms as part of the federal government's work to cut red tape to free up more time and money for training.	UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UK) ¹⁸
2. Increase transparency	Provide an online resource comparing the legal requirements and incentives available around HR and training across provinces.	Internal Market Scoreboard (European Union) ¹⁹
3. Streamline training requirements	Reduce the time required to complete training or look to online delivery.	National Quality Council (Australia) ²⁰
4. Simplify eligibility requirements	Make training available to a wider audience by making eligibility requirements more flexible.	[Note: see SRDC research projects ²¹]



18 www.ukces.org.uk/assets/ukces/docs/publications/evidence-report-40-occupational-regulation-impact.pdf

19 http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/score/docs/score25_en.pdf

20 www.nssc.natese.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/54979/Design_Model_for_Streamlined_Training_Package_Material.pdf

21 www.srdc.org/en_policy_area_item.asp?category=685&id=28322

Make it relevant: design and delivery

Recommendation	Description	Best Practice Examples
1. Sector-based design and delivery	Make training more relevant for small businesses by working with sectors to develop and deliver programs.	SRDC Tourism Pilot ²² CARS OnDemand ²³ Canadian Manufacturing Network ²⁴ Note: See individual sector councils for details ²⁵
2. Training cooperatives	Reduce costs by encouraging the development of cooperatives on a local, sectoral or supply chain basis.	Skillnets (Ireland) ²⁶ Consortia: Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters (Manitoba) ²⁷
3. Focus on e-learning	Provide courses online and focus on the development of computer skills.	SmartForceNL ²⁸ (for HR skills and social media training)
4. Mandatory course redesign	Redesign mandatory training to incorporate elements of essential skills training.	Institute for Work and Health/SRDC ²⁹ Essential Skills through Safety and Health ³⁰

²² www.srdc.org/en_what_we_do_item.asp?category=623&id=28185

²³ www.conferenceboard.ca/temp/42f9ff85-0692-4ac1-b367-3cd3a2711378/11-222_CARSONDemandv2.pdf

²⁴ www.CanadianManufacturingNetwork.ca

²⁵ www.councils.org/sector-councils/list-of-canadas-sector-councils

²⁶ <http://skillnets.ie>

²⁷ <http://mb.cme-mec.ca/manitoba/main/people---skills.html>

²⁸ www.coursepark.com/nl

²⁹ www.srdc.org/en_what_we_do_item.asp?category=626

³⁰ www.essh.ca

Make it motivating: focus on the individual

Recommendation	Description	Best Practice Examples
1. Annual skills report	Produce a highly visible skills report to highlight where skills shortages exist down to the local level.	National Strategic Skills Audit (UK) ³¹ Oivallus Project (Finland) ³²
2. Skills task force	Bring together business, government and educators to develop a plan to bridge the gap between education and employment.	Connecting Learning and Work (Alberta) ³³
3. Local skills groups	Form local groups of businesses and academia to address problems and future needs and develop innovative educational programs based on the skills needed.	Community and Employer Partnerships (BC) ³⁴ Mackay Area Industry Network (Australia) ³⁵ Workforce Planning Boards (Ontario) ³⁶
4. Temporary work experience for students	Develop a plan to enable students to fill in for permanent staff when they are away on training as part of wider look at work experience offerings.	Career and Work Exploration 10 (Saskatchewan) ³⁷
5. Developing basic HR skills	Focus on developing basic HR skills to enable companies to provide clear job descriptions and career plans for employees.	Work BC (BC) ³⁸ NL HR Manager ³⁹
6. Provide a route to formal qualifications	Recognizing the importance of informal experience, educational establishments should develop courses to encourage more experienced workers to obtain qualifications.	National Workforce Development Fund (Australia) ⁴⁰

³¹ www.ukces.org.uk/ourwork/nssa

³² <http://ek.multiedition.fi/oivallus/fi/liitetiedostot/arkisto/Oivallus-Final-Report.pdf>

³³ <http://humanservices.alberta.ca/documents/connecting-learning-and-work.pdf>

³⁴ www.workbc.ca/Workplace-Resources/Community-Employer-Partnerships/Pages/Community-Employer-Partnerships.aspx

³⁵ www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/education/designing-local-skills-strategies/addressing-skills-shortfalls-in-mackay-australia_9789264066649-7-en

³⁶ www.workforceplanningontario.ca

³⁷ www.education.gov.sk.ca/Default.aspx?DN=0a0dd21f-7fa4-410c-a3f4-7ccfaad3ae3d&Anc=db007977-6d9d-4268-9450-c83303bda5a5&Pa=ea3293f3-382e-49af-becb-77a053bbcc53

³⁸ www.workbc.ca/Workplace-Resources/Human-Resources/Pages/Human-Resources.aspx

³⁹ www.nlhrmanager.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=166&Itemid=28#Basics

⁴⁰ <http://skillsconnect.gov.au/faqs-case-studies-and-news/quick-reference-guides/quick-reference-guide-national-workforce-development-fund>

APPENDIX A: SYMPOSIUM AGENDA

Closing the Skills Gap: Mapping a Path for Small Business

Wednesday, November 14, 2012 - Toronto, Ontario

Agenda

- 8:00 to 8:30 a.m. **Registration & Breakfast**
Master of Ceremonies
Warren Everson, Senior Vice President, Policy, The Canadian Chamber of Commerce
- 8:30 to 8:45 a.m. **Welcome Greetings**
Perrin Beatty, President & CEO, The Canadian Chamber of Commerce
Ron Parker, Associate Deputy Minister, Human Resources and Skills
Development Canada
- 8:45 to 9:00 a.m. **Keynote Speaker**
Craig Wright, Senior Vice-President Chief Economist, RBC Financial Group
- 9:00 to 9:45 a.m. **Panel 1 | Making the Case for Investing in Training & Skills Development**
- Training issues identified in recent Canadian Chamber of Commerce consultations**
Perrin Beatty, President & CEO, The Canadian Chamber of Commerce
- Diagnostic pertaining to literacy and essential skills**
Scott Murray, President, DataAngel Policy Research
- Evidence from research on return on training investment**
Allan Bailey, President, Centre for Learning Impact
- Moderator**
Warren Everson, Senior Vice President, Policy, The Canadian Chamber of Commerce
- 9:45 to 10:00 a.m. **Assignment | Training Motives**
Attendees are asked to write down on Post-it notes their top reasons for investing in training and place them on the 'Training Motives' wall.
Please refer to Worksheet #1 for instructions
- 10:00 to 10:15 a.m. **Networking Refreshment Break**



Minister Finley speaks with Perrin Beatty, President & CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

10:15 to 11:00 a.m.

Panel 2 | Best Practices and Innovation in Training & Skills Development

International innovations/best practices

Paul Bélanger, Professor, Université du Québec à Montréal; researcher, LEED Programme, OECD

Government initiatives featuring innovations

Lorelei Roberts-Loder, Manager, Employer Services, Advanced Education and Skills, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

Private-sector best practices with real examples

Emad Rizkalla, President & CEO, BlueDrop Performance Learning

Moderator

Warren Everson, Senior Vice President, Policy, The Canadian Chamber of Commerce

11:00 to 11:45 a.m.

Roundtable discussion | Focus on Challenges

Attendees work at their tables in small groups to discuss and answer questions using work sheets based on panels 1 and 2.

Please refer to the Worksheet #2 for instructions

11:45 to 12:00 p.m.

Networking Break

12:05 to 1:00 p.m.

Lunch with Keynote Speaker

Hon. Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development

- 1:00 to 1:15 p.m. **Networking Break**
- 1:15 to 1:30 p.m. **Assignment | Setting Your Priorities** *Attendees are asked to write down their priority items and then discuss at their tables.*
Please refer to the Worksheet #3 for instructions
- 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. **Panel 3 | Moving Forward and Exploring Options**
- Public policy options and role of stakeholders**
Karen Myers, Principal Research Associate, Social Research and Demonstration Corporation
- What do SMEs need to move forward and advance?**
Yvon Boudreau, Consultant, Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec
- Skills shortages: government perspectives**
Silvano Tocchi, Director General, Workplace Partnerships Directorate, Skills and Employment Branch, HRSDC
- Moderator**
Catharine Larkin, Director, Knightsbridge Human Capital Solutions
- 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. **Roundtable discussions | Focus on solutions**
Attendees work at their tables in small groups to discuss and answer questions using work sheets based on panel 3.
Please refer to the Worksheet #4 for instructions
- 3:30 to 4:00 p.m. **Room Discussion | Presenting Findings**
- Moderator**
Warren Everson, Senior Vice President, Policy, The Canadian Chamber of Commerce
- 4:00 to 4:15 p.m. **Concluding Remarks**
Perrin Beatty, President & CEO, The Canadian Chamber of Commerce
- 4:15 p.m. **Event conclusion**

APPENDIX B: SYMPOSIUM PARTICIPANTS

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Tim Young

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APPENDIX C: SYMPOSIUM SPEAKERS' BIOGRAPHIES

Allan Bailey

President, Centre for Learning Impact

Allan is an e-learning specialist and a documentary filmmaker whose work has earned numerous international awards. His e-learning focus is the effective use of media and instructional techniques to communicate complex ideas and promote learning.

Over the last decade, Allan has led efforts to help clients in business, government and education to develop interactive learning materials for CBT, CD ROM and Internet delivery. He has been the instructional design lead or project manager on a more than a dozen interactive learning projects petrochemical engineering to banking sales training titles. Clients include: CIBC, Royal Bank, Manulife, Scotiabank, Bank of Montreal, Bell Canada, BCE Corp., Nortel, Excite@Home, Industry Canada, the Toronto Stock Exchange and the Ontario Securities Commission (OSC).

Allan has played a leading role in workplace learning projects that have earned Centre for Learning Impact prestigious international awards: the Canadian Society for Training and Development 2004 Award for 'Canadian Training Excellence; the 2003 American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) Excellence in Practice Award and the 2002 Conference Board of Canada's National Award for Learning Technologies in the Workplace. Allan also contributed to the development and writing of the world's first quality standards for evaluating and developing multimedia learning materials: *Quality Standards for Evaluating Multimedia and Online Training* (McGraw-Hill 2000).

Allan is a graduate of the University of Toronto Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering (mechanical engineering).

Hon. Perrin Beatty

**President and Chief Executive Officer,
The Canadian Chamber of Commerce**

The Hon. Perrin Beatty is the President and CEO of the 192,000-member Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Canada's largest and most representative business association. Prior to joining the Canadian Chamber in August 2007, Perrin was the President and CEO of Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters (CME).

A descendant of one of Canada's most prominent manufacturing families, Perrin grew up in Fergus, Ontario and graduated from the University of Western Ontario in 1971.

Perrin was first elected to the House of Commons as a Progressive Conservative in 1972. During his 21 years in Parliament, he served as minister in seven different portfolios, including Treasury Board, National Revenue, Solicitor General, Defence, National Health and Welfare, Communications and External Affairs.

In 1994, Perrin joined a number of private sector boards and worked as a consultant in the field of communications. He was an honorary visiting professor with the Department of Political Science, University of Western Ontario. From 1995 to 1999, Perrin was President and CEO of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. In 2008, Perrin was named Chancellor of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology.

Perrin is a member of the advisory council of the Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute and is a member of the board of directors of the Canadian International Council and of Mitsui Canada.

Paul Bélanger

Professor, Université du Québec à Montréal

Paul Bélanger was born in Ville de Valleyfield, Canada, in 1939. He studied politics, sociology of education, art and literature, and took a PhD at the Sorbonne in Paris with a dissertation on the sociology of education. From 1972 to 1985, he was Director-General of the Canadian Institute for Adult Education, and from 1985 to 1987, President of the National Commission for the Evaluation of post-secondary institutions in Quebec. In the following two years, he was Director-General of the Institute of Applied Labour Research in Montreal. He was Director of the UNESCO Institute for Education (now the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning) in Hamburg from 1989 to 1999. Since then, he has been a professor in the Education Faculty at the Université du Québec à Montréal and director of CIRDEP, the university's centre for interdisciplinary research on continuing education.

Yvon Boudreau

Consultant, Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec

Yvon Boudreau is a consultant notably for the Quebec provincial chamber of commerce, la Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec.

He had a career in the Quebec government developing policies around employment, labour, training and economic development.

Yvon was a Deputy Minister of Emploi-Quebec, and held positions in the office of the Premier and the ministry of Economic Development, Innovation and Export Trade.

Warren Everson

**Senior Vice President, Policy,
The Canadian Chamber of Commerce**

Warren Everson is the Senior Vice President, Policy, of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. His responsibilities include the identification of priority issues and the development of Canadian Chamber policies toward them. Warren manages a multi-sectoral team of researchers and lobbyists, and coordinates the work of nine policy committees.

Warren joined the Canadian Chamber from StrategyCorp, a government relations consultancy based in Ottawa and Toronto. As a director of government relations at Bell Canada, Warren played a role in the company's vigorous campaign for regulatory reform and in the company's successful Cabinet appeal on Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP.)

Before joining Bell Canada, Warren was the Vice President for Policy and Strategic Planning for the Air Transport Association of Canada during a turbulent period that included the attacks of 9/11 and the outbreak of SARS in Canada. In addition to handling parliamentary relations, media and communications, he was responsible for subject areas such as taxation and immigration security.

Through the 1990s, Warren was President of Saramac Consulting Services, where his practice focused on privatization and public service management. During his decade-long career in government, Warren served on the staffs of various Ministers. In 1992, he was the Executive Director for the National Transportation Act Review Commission and also served as a Commissioner for the Transportation Safety Board Review. Warren holds a degree in history from Queen's University.

Hon. Diane Finley
Minister of Human Resources and
Skills Development
Member of Parliament – Haldimand – Norfolk
(Ontario)

Diane Finley was first elected to Parliament in 2004 and re-elected in 2006, 2008 and 2011. In February 2006, she was appointed Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, and in January 2007, she was named Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. She was appointed Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development in October 2008.

Ms. Finley began her professional career as an administrator at the University of Western Ontario's French Immersion School. Prior to her election, she held several senior positions in both the public and private sectors encompassing health care, transportation, agricultural equipment manufacturing, printing and publishing, and aviation.

In addition, Ms. Finley has been active with a number of organizations, including the Brant Community Care Access Centre, the National Standards Committee of the Paramedic Association of Canada, the Ambulance Service Alliance of Ontario, the Ontario Government Health Policy Advisory Council and the Thyroid Foundation of Canada. Ms. Finley has a bachelor's degree in administrative studies and a master's in business administration from the University of Western Ontario. She resides in Simcoe with her husband Doug.

Catharine Larkin
Director, Knightsbridge Human Capital Solutions

Catharine is Director at Knightsbridge MICA Learning in Toronto.

She has over 25 years of experience in executive development, leadership and team building. Her core expertise is in diagnosing key issues that enable or inhibit executives and their teams to maximize performance. In this context she leverages her deep proficiency in facilitation, coaching, performance management, succession planning, and team and individual assessment. She is a master trainer in several disciplines and utilizes these interdisciplinary approaches to enhance learning and development.

Catharine has worked in business and professional service firms throughout Canada, the United States, Asia and Europe. She counts among her clients leading organizations including: AVIVA, Cadillac Fairview, Centrica, Coca Cola, Deloitte, PCL Constructors, The Four Seasons, Whirlpool and University of Toronto (Rotman School of Management).

Catharine holds degrees from the University of Toronto in languages, education and drama, and pursued further studies at Laval University and Goethe Institute, Germany. She serves as an adjunct faculty member for non-degree HR and Leadership Development programs at the Rotman School of Business, University of Toronto. Catharine is a co-author of *"Type in Action"* (February 2002), a comprehensive trainer's guide designed as a multi-sensory approach to MBTI training in corporate and educational settings. She is recognized as one of Toronto's leading executive coaches, is a well-respected member of the business community and is frequently invited to facilitate and speak at industry events.

Karen Myers

Principal research associate, Social Research and Demonstration Corporation

Karen Myers brings over 10 years of experience in conducting policy relevant research in the areas of social policy, human capital investment and labour markets. She is the author of numerous reports on adult education and workforce development including *Too Many Left Behind: Canada's Adult Education and Training System*. Prior to joining SRDC, she was a senior policy advisor with the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. In addition to her research and policy skills, she has several years of applied experience as a training and development consultant in both the private and community sectors. She has a master's degree in public administration from Queen's University and a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Toronto. Her current projects at SRDC are focused on investigating and evaluating innovative approaches to helping low-skilled workers invest in human capital and research their economic potential.

Scott Murray

President, DataAngel Policy Research

For over two decades, Scott Murray has specialized in the design, conduct and analysis of large-scale surveys to meet emerging public policy issues in health, education, labour, social justice, poverty, women's issues and racism. Scott is a sought-after speaker and author on the policy topics of literacy, health and labour market participation.

Scott is currently a Senior Advisor, Human Resources in Science and Technology at Statistics Canada. Prior to November 2006, Scott held the post of Director, Learning Outcomes at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics (UIS), where he was responsible for their adult and student skill

assessment programs. Prior to joining UNESCO in 2005, Scott held the post of Director General, Social and Institutional Statistics, Statistics Canada. Before his appointment in 1999, he spent 23 years in the Special Surveys Division at Statistics Canada, including five years as Director.

Scott is the International Study Director for the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) and the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALL). Scott holds an honours BA in business administration from the University of Western Ontario.

Ron Parker

Associate Deputy Minister, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

Ron Parker was appointed Associate Deputy Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada on August 11, 2011. Prior to this, he served as Senior Assistant Deputy Minister of the Industry Sector at Industry Canada.

Ron began his career at the Bank of Canada. He then spent seven years at the Bank of Montreal working in its economics and trading sectors. He returned to the Bank of Canada in 1990 and served as Chief of Financial Markets and Advisor to the Governor. In 2003, Ron joined the Privy Council Office and was appointed Assistant Secretary, Liaison Secretariat for Macroeconomic Policy. In 2005, he was appointed Senior Assistant Deputy Minister at Industry Canada. Ron holds a bachelor of arts (honours) in economics from the University of Saskatchewan and a master of arts in economics from the University of Western Ontario.

Emad Rizkalla

President & CEO, Bluedrop Performance Learning

As President and CEO of Bluedrop Performance Learning (TSX-V: BPL), Emad is a pioneer in entrepreneurship, corporate leadership and e-Learning. He co-founded Bluedrop in 1992 as a young engineering graduate and has committed himself to changing the way people learn and train in the workplace -whether it's inside an office, a factory or a CH-147 helicopter.

Bluedrop is transforming workplace training through cloud-based learning that helps small business improve productivity, enables governments to transform their workforce, large enterprises to enhance client loyalty, and the defence and aerospace sector to increase safety and operational effectiveness.

Emad is a sought-after speaker around the world. He is an acclaimed author and columnist, and his views on leadership have been published in Aspatore Inside the Minds series of books featuring insights from global business leaders. He was featured in Time magazine as one of the young entrepreneurs who will create the 21st Century; named one of *The Globe and Mail's* Top 40 Under 40, and most recently, he was named Ernst & Young Information Technology Entrepreneur of The Year for Atlantic Canada. He has also appeared on CBC's *The National*, BBC News and in *Maclean's* magazine.

In addition to running a company with five offices in four provinces with over 100 employees, Emad serves on a federal task force with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, and the National Research Council. Emad also believes strongly in giving back. He has served on a number of not-for-profit boards and charitable foundations. The commitment to giving back became a corporate reality when Bluedrop launched the 'True Blue Initiative' which gives five per cent of Bluedrop's annual net profits to international development initiatives and local charities. Bluedrop was also recently selected by the Clinton Global Initiative

(CGI) as their technology partner and CoursePark was announced as the training delivery platform to provide for business skills training to over 3,400 women in Chile and Peru. He holds a bachelor of mechanical engineering from Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Lorelei Roberts-Loder

Manager, Employer Services, Advanced Education and Skills, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

Lorelei Roberts-Loder is the Provincial Manager of Employer Services with the Department of Advanced Education and Skills, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. In this role, she is responsible for the development and the implementation of a framework for employer services in support of the department's mandate to assist employers with recruitment and retention. Lorelei is the departmental lead for the NL HR Manager.ca website and the Smartforce NL Initiative.

Lorelei has an extensive background in human resources, working with business and community economic development. Prior to moving into the public sector, she was actively involved with regional economic development as a business representative. She was elected as the first female president of the Placentia Area Chamber of Commerce during the development and operational phase of the Inco demonstration plant. In this role she chaired the both the Regional Training Human Resources Committee and the Public Relations Committee for the Northeast Avalon Region.

Lorelei completed an undergraduate law degree at Carleton University in Ottawa and a master's degree in employment relations at Memorial University in St. John's, NL. She resides in Holyrood, NL, with her husband Dale and her sons, Benjamin and Evan.

Silvano Tocchi

**Director General, Workplace Partnerships
Directorate, Skills and Employment Branch, Human
Resources and Skills Development Canada**

Silvano Tocchi is the Director General of the Workplace Partnerships Directorate at Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. This includes leading the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills whose principal objective is to improve the literacy and essential skills of adult Canadians in the labour market by supporting systemic change. It also includes leading the Sectoral Initiatives Program, which is focused on ensuring that employers, educators and workers in Canada have the strategic knowledge to make sound labour market and skill decisions.

Silvano has previously held various positions related to labour market policy and programming within the federal government. Silvano holds a “Diplôme d’études supérieures” (masters) from the “Institut universitaire de hautes études internationales” in Geneva, Switzerland and a bachelor degree from the University of Ottawa.

Craig Wright

**Senior Vice-President and Chief Economist,
RBC Financial Group**

As chief economist, Craig is responsible for the analysis and forecasting of macroeconomic and financial market developments in Canada, the United States and key overseas economies and is a regular contributor to a number of RBC Financial Group publications. He is also a central figure in delivering economic analysis to clients and the media through the economics department’s regular briefings.

A graduate of Wilfrid Laurier University and the University of Toronto, Craig joined RBC Financial Group in 1994 after working for seven years at another major financial institution where he generated financial market forecasts, regional and national macroeconomic forecasts and country risk analyses.

Craig and his wife, Susan, live in Toronto with their three children, Emily, Bradley and Jacob.

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