

October 1, 2007

Hon. Rick Thorpe  
 Minister of Small Business and Revenue  
 Government of British Columbia  
 Room 124 Parliament Buildings  
 Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Hon. Colin Hansen  
 Minister of Economic Development  
 Government of British Columbia  
 Room 301 Parliament Buildings  
 Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Messrs Thorpe and Hansen:

At the invitation of the Minister of Small Business and Revenue, the Coalition of BC Businesses met with the BC Government on July 30, 2007 to review the recommendations put forward by the Coalition in its report – *Labour Supply Strategies for Small Business in British Columbia*.

The Coalition was asked to distil its recommendations into three top priorities and to provide direction in attaining these goals. The Coalition's made-in-BC labour supply strategy for small businesses proposes: to increase provincial immigration of both skilled and non-skilled workers; to increase business productivity; and to better utilize underrepresented talent pools.

In terms of approach, the Coalition emphasizes that practical labour supply information should be made available to small businesses in a simple and accessible fashion.

The Coalition values the labour supply initiatives underway that are led by the BC Government and more specifically WorkBC. However, the Coalition's recommendations are targeted to small businesses that can be overlooked in the development of provincial employment strategies.

The following table outlines the Coalition's top three recommendations to complement the BC government's efforts to address BC's labour shortage. The table identifies the labour supply goal, the ministry involved and a process on how to achieve these goals.

<u>Member Associations</u>
BC & Yukon Hotels Assn
BC Chamber of Commerce
BC Real Estate Assn
BC Restaurant & Foodservices Assn
BC Trucking Association
Building Owners & Managers Assn
Building Supply Industry Assn of BC
Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors
Canadian Home Builders Assn – BC
Canadian Restaurant & Foodservices Assn
Council of Tourism Associations of BC
Go2 Tourism HR Association
Independent Contractors & Businesses Assn
Insurance Brokers Assn of BC
New Car Dealers Assn of BC
Retail Council of Canada
Retail BC
Vancouver Board of Trade
Western Silvicultural Contractors Assn

The Coalition views these recommendations as a multi-stakeholder project and call to action that includes educators and trainers as well as the BC government and business.

To view the Coalition's labour supply report, visit:

[www.coalitionbcbusiness.ca/pdf/LabourSupplyReport\\_Jun07.pdf](http://www.coalitionbcbusiness.ca/pdf/LabourSupplyReport_Jun07.pdf)

We will follow up with you shortly to request a meeting to review these recommendations and to answer any questions or concerns. In the meantime, I can be reached at 604.683.0700.

Yours truly,

*John Winter*

John Winter

Chair

CC:

Hon. Carole Taylor, Minister of Finance

Hon. Wally Oppal, Attorney General & Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism

Hon. John van Dongen, Minister of State for Intergovernmental Relations

Hon. Olga Ilich, Minister of Labour & Citizens' Services

Hon. Murray Coell, Minister of Advanced Education & Minister Responsible for Research and Technology

Hon. Shirley Bond, Minister of Education and Deputy Premier & Minister Responsible for Early Learning and Literacy

Hon. Claude Richmond, Minister of Employment and Income Assistance

Hon. Ida Chong, Minister of Community Services and Minister Responsible for Seniors' and Women's Issues

Hon. Mike de Jong, Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation

## A ‘Made-in-BC’ Labour Supply Strategy for Small Business

### Summary of Recommendations to the BC Government

<b>Goal #1</b>		
<b><i>INCREASE IMMIGRATION OF SKILLED AND NON-SKILLED WORKERS TO BRITISH COLUMBIA.</i></b>		
<b>Process:</b>		<b>Ministry involved</b>
<b>1.1</b>	<p>Expand the number of immigrants coming to BC to work in small businesses through the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making nominees in lower skill level occupations eligible under the PNP</li> <li>• Providing information and workshops to increase the small business PNP application success rates</li> <li>• Committing the financial resources needed to expand the PNP program</li> </ul>	Economic Development & Intergovernmental Relations
<b>1.2</b>	<p>Commit funding to hire more immigration officers to expedite B.C. immigration applications in foreign embassies and consulates.</p>	Economic Development & Small Business and Revenue
<b>1.3</b>	<p>Press the Federal Government to streamline the Temporary Foreign Worker Program by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating pools of pre-screened, qualified foreign workers that small business can easily access</li> <li>• Speeding up immigration processing</li> <li>• Broadening access among small businesses</li> <li>• Negotiating regional and sectoral bi-lateral agreements to assist small businesses in high skill shortage areas</li> <li>• Facilitating overseas testing to Canadian occupational standards</li> </ul>	Economic Development & Intergovernmental Relations
<b>1.4</b>	<p>Provide incentives and resources to help immigrants and Canadians to migrate to and work in BC regions experiencing labour shortages.</p>	Finance, Economic Development & Attorney General

<b>Goal #1</b>		
<b>1.5</b>	Ensure small business needs and participation are incorporated in national and international recruitment campaigns.	Economic Development & Small Business and Revenue
<b>1.6</b>	Revamp and simplify government web portals for potential immigrants to access information on working in BC and Canada.	Economic Development & Small Business and Revenue

<b>Goal #2</b>		
<b><i>INCREASE THE ECONOMIC PRODUCTIVITY OF SMALL BUSINESS.</i></b>		
	<b>Process:</b>	<b>Ministry involved</b>
<b>2.1</b>	Provide economic incentives such as provincial tax credits to encourage BC small businesses to invest in technology and equipment.	Finance
<b>2.2</b>	Make strategic non-apprenticeship occupations eligible for credit under the Training Tax Credit program.	Finance, Economic Development & Small Business and Revenue
<b>2.3</b>	Develop flexibility in post-secondary training institutions to provide an “on the job” learning culture.	Advanced Education
<b>2.4</b>	Ensure small business groups are directly involved in the development and distribution of a practical guide/tool kit for small businesses on ‘how to develop and implement practical recruitment and retention strategies’.	Small Business and Revenue & Economic Development
<b>2.5</b>	Develop a ‘one-stop shopping’ location/web portal where small businesses can easily identify and access existing support and education programs.	Economic Development
<b>2.6</b>	Expand the scope of career option information for high school students by educating career counselors on the full range of career paths open to students, including careers in small business.	Education

<b>Goal #3</b>		
<b><i>BETTER UTILIZE UNDERREPRESENTED TALENT POOLS.</i></b>		
	<b>Process:</b>	<b>Ministry involved</b>
<b>3.1</b>	Help businesses recruit and retain older workers and seniors by encouraging innovative engagement strategies and flexible workplace arrangements and by eliminating barriers to seniors' employment such as pension clawbacks.	Community Services & Economic Development
<b>3.2</b>	Promote employment of persons with disabilities. Coordinate across provincial and community agencies to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better promote the business case for recruiting persons with disabilities</li> <li>• Increase the understanding among small businesses of how to access resources for working with persons with disabilities</li> <li>• Educate small businesses to allay misconceptions with respect to the real costs of accommodating persons with disabilities</li> <li>• Promote business use of: <a href="http://www.workablesolutionsbc.ca">www.workablesolutionsbc.ca</a></li> </ul>	Economic Development, Employment and Income Assistance & Community Services
<b>3.3</b>	Enhance flexibility in work arrangements to accommodate the needs of single parents.	Community Services & Economic Development
<b>3.4</b>	Improve accessibility of program information to help small businesses become aware of opportunities to integrate Aboriginal groups into the workforce.	Economic Development & Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation