

Small business hit hard by labour crunch

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VANCOUVER -- Thousands of B.C. small and medium businesses are facing a "perfect storm" in finding skilled workers.

The Coalition of B.C. Businesses yesterday released a strongly-worded report saying that labour and skill shortages are hammering small businesses and communities, the backbone of the provincial economy.

"The perfect storm of an aging workforce, a declining pool of younger workers, stiff international competition for talent and strong economic growth has increased skills gaps in B.C.," said coalition chairman John Winter.

"Without pre-emptive action, the negative impact of the skills and labour shortage on individual small businesses will continue to take its toll on B.C.'s economy and communities," he warned.

The report says current provincial policies and programs designed to support labour strategies are not working sufficiently well.

He said the coalition, which represents more than 50,000 businesses, has fingered skill shortages as its leading issue.

Key recommendations include expanding immigration to help fill the shortfall, better utilization of existing and emerging labour-force groups, and spreading the training tax credit to non-apprenticeship occupations.

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