

COALITION OF BC BUSINESSES

C/O 2410 - 555 West Hastings St
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By email: ITA.Review@gov.bc.ca

18 October 2013

Dear Ms. McDonald,

Please accept this letter as a submission to the ITA Review Panel from the Coalition of BC Businesses on behalf of its members. The Coalition believes that the review is an important step in realigning employer and employee requirements for training in British Columbia, thus ensuring that future needs in the workforce are adequately met.

As you know, the Coalition of BC Businesses was formed in 1992 to represent the voice of small and medium-sized businesses in the development of British Columbia's labour and employment policies. The Coalition's focus is the development of labour and employment policies that will help foster a positive relationship between employers and employees and a climate for new economic growth, opportunities and jobs. The Coalition represents 13 business associations, which in turn represent approximately 50,000 small and medium sized businesses across British Columbia.

The Coalition created an "ITA Review Committee" to discuss what different industries felt about the current state of the ITA, and to consolidate an opinion of what issues need to be addressed. It was unfortunate that the Panel was unable to schedule a time with the Coalition's ITA Committee, but the Committee would still like to submit the following general points:

Administration / Role of ITA:

- 6-8 ITO's often cross paths with each other and also with ITA
 - There could be an opportunity streamline by combining resources / merging some ITO's and ITA
- ITA should have more direct interaction with employers with regards to needs / updating program / changes
- ITA should set standards - There needs to be a base level of training that employers can count on

Member Associations

Alliance of Beverage Licensees BC

BC Hotel Association

BC Chamber of Commerce

BC Trucking Association

Building Owners & Managers Association

Building Supply Industry Association

Canadian Home Builders' Association – BC

Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association

Independent

Contractors & Businesses Association

Insurance Brokers Association of BC

New Car Dealers Association of BC

Retail Council of Canada

Western Convenience Stores Association

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- Individual sectors have to be addressed and any reform needs to be industry led. This includes getting input on program requirements, and interacting with employers and industry leaders to have an open and frank ongoing dialogue.

Education:

A number of ideas were discussed at Committee meetings regarding education, methodology, effectiveness of training and how programs curriculums are determined. Due to the broad range of industries represented by the Coalition, not all ideas are applicable to every program or industry.

- **Modular Training :**
 - Investigate allowing students to complete sections of Red Seal certification and specialize in areas
 - This would get people trained quickly for specific tasks effectively getting them into the work force sooner
 - Full scope vs. modularization is good where employers think it would work
- **Completion Rates:**
 - Need to understand both why people complete and why they drop out. Perhaps an exit survey / follow-up for students / dropouts would be useful
 - Completion rates need to be improved to ensure that there are more people in the workforce
 - A vocational approach could be taken - provide training before getting the job, not have to have a job to get the training. This would add value to students, making them more desirable to employers from the start, and thus provide an incentive to employers to hire straight out of training program. Some hands on apprenticeship would still be required, but the employer would start to see immediate benefit, and the employee would be better able to transition into the system.
 - Some sort of credential advocacy campaign should be implemented to encourage people to get accredited, especially those who already have on the job skills. Furthermore this campaign should include a target market of “foreign workers” to inform them of the benefit of getting credentials.
 - There should be some sort of job facilitation included in apprenticeship training – perhaps a job board or similar forum where employers and apprentices could be put in touch with each other. This would facilitate getting apprentices into the workforce more quickly.

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- **General training concepts:**
 - Training needs to have more of a small business bent to it (this will help small business support it)
 - Change training methodology to be more flexible and take into account how people learn now (such as videos, short sound bites, hands on etc.)

- There has been concern expressed that unions are interfering with training / curriculum
- University and College methodologies do not currently support what local industry demands education to be
- Training should include a focus on where the jobs are
 - It should be clear in all courses that the majority of jobs are not in the lower mainland, and specifically that there will be a large number of jobs in the interior and north.
 - Part of training should include promoting jobs outside of lower mainland
 - Additionally, the profile of trades needs to be increased at the high school level

Summary:

In conclusion, the Coalition of BC Businesses believes that many of the ideas presented above will help to bring the ITA closer to its original intent: a body that, in conjunction with employers and industry associations, identifies labour needs and educational requirements. This realignment of the ITA to its core values will help to increase the number and the quality of new skilled trade's persons in the province.

The Coalition is encouraged that the BC Government recognizes that there are ways to improve the ITA, and appreciates being consulted in this review process.

Sincerely,



Mark von Schellwitz
Chair, Coalition of BC Businesses