

Skills Training for a Low Carbon Economy

Introduction:

Many Canadians are being laid off in various sectors across our country. To recover from this crisis the 2009 federal Budget has made provisions for additional Employment Insurance durations and training possibilities and allotted money for infrastructure and community projects to create more jobs. Job losses are mostly occurring as a result of the global economic crisis and are happening globally. This has brought communities, countries and heads of States together to find solution for a quick recovery of our economies. Most meetings, conventions and summits have concluded with financial solutions that include strategies of low carbon growth and green jobs.

Provincial and federal job creation plans:

We just have to look around us to find evidence of the effects of job losses due to the economic downturn. Employment Insurance (E.I.) claims are up and some companies are suggesting reduced salaries so people can weather these times without losing their jobs. As part of its Economic Action Plan (Budget 2009), the Government of Canada has passed legislation that increases the maximum number of weeks a claimant can receive EI benefits. This change provides nationally the benefits of the current Extended EI Benefits Pilot (Pilot Project 10) that until now has only been provided in regions with the highest unemployment rates.

Federal, provincial and global budgets are including funding for infrastructure and community projects attainable to many sectors so people have opportunities to work when companies are downsizing and workers are laid off. Budgets are also including incentives and grants for energy reducing activities and all governments are recognizing the new economy being focused on low carbon growth creating new green jobs and environmentally sustainable economies.

At the 2009 Economic Summit in Vancouver, Feb. 3-4, it was stated that clean technology could drive the economy for the next 30 years. Speakers from every sector spoke of the inevitability of business, society and the future economy being determined by sound environmental commitments. Details of the federal and provincial budgets contain funds for developing new green technology, environmental clean-up efforts, construction grants and tax incentives, developing carbon capture projects and creating green infrastructure. There was no mention of funding to assist and support the workers who will be implementing this new economy.

Global job creation plans:

The Leaders of the Group of Twenty's *Global Plan for Recovery and Reform* April, 2nd, 2009 urged that every country must join together to resolve today's challenges to the world economy. Some of the points in their Global Plan speak of job creation and continuing expansionary policies as long as needed to help the economy rebound. British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown said as part of the economic recovery plan "the G20 leaders were committed to continue to promote low carbon growth and to creating green jobs."

Conclusion:

If our leaders are promoting a future economy driven by low carbon growth and new green jobs, commitments could be made under many of the budgetary plans to include training, assistance and support for Canadians to gain skills in all aspects of green technology. Future industries, developments and infrastructure projects could also be assisted and supported to include as many green plans and technologies as possible. Since Canadians are oftentimes compelled to retrain in order to retain or re-enter the job force in our country, Canada has great opportunities to identify and plan for future low carbon industrial practices and the green jobs needed to support growth for those industries. Training programs may need to change quickly to keep up with the new green economy and by addressing this opportunity our federal government could lead the way for quick economic recovery.

Recommendations

That the federal government work with provincial and territorial governments to:

1. Develop a database of emerging green technologies and other technologies where Canada has a competitive advantage, and a clear strategy for ensuring sufficient, well trained workers are available with the needed skillsets; and
2. Ensure training funds and education programs support a training strategy for addressing any identified shortfalls.