

Labour shortages are not a thing of the past, but an impending reality: Canadian Chamber

Ottawa, February 22, 2010: The Canadian Chamber of Commerce warned today that the recession and rising unemployment may have diverted attention from labour shortages, but the shortages that existed before the recession will resurface after the economy fully recovers.

In a report entitled: *Recession, Recovery and the Future Evolution of the Labour Market* which was released to coincide with the federal/provincial/territorial meeting of Ministers responsible for Labour, the Canadian Chamber cautioned that an aging population and low birth rate will exert significant strains on Canada's labour market.

"Canada will have too few workers to meet the needs of its economy and of society," says Perrin Beatty, President and CEO of the Canadian Chamber. "We need to expand Canada's labour force if we want the Canadian economy to continue to grow."

According to the report, demographic trends are not alone in exerting pressure on Canada's labour market. Globalization and technological advances are changing the composition of the workforce, transforming the nature of work, and reshaping the workplace. Our nation's competitiveness and continued prosperity will depend on maximizing the education and skill levels of Canadians, and on the ability of our workforce to create and apply ideas and knowledge.

To realize Canada's full potential and realize this country's promises, businesses of all sizes will need to tap Canada's pool of underutilized talent – older workers, Aboriginal peoples, the disabled and new immigrants to Canada. An affordable, accessible and high quality post-secondary education system will continue to be critical to ensuring a large and growing pool of skilled and knowledgeable workers to meet future labour market needs. For First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and the disabled, post-secondary education participation rates continue to be very low, and we need to do more to ensure affordable access to a high-quality education for them so they can effectively integrate and contribute in Canada's labour market.

"Looking to the future, Canada faces many skills-related challenges, but they also present opportunities," adds Beatty. "Addressing them and improving our nation's ability to compete is vital both to our businesses – small and large – and to Canadian workers."

Recession, Recovery and the Future Evolution of the Labour Market, authored by the Canadian Chamber's Chief Economist, Tina Kremmidas, can be viewed at www.chamber.ca

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Contact:
Kathryn Anderson
Director, Communications and Marketing
Office: 613.238.4000 ext. 231
Cell: 613.797.1860
kanderson@chamber.ca