

MEDIA RELEASE

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Labour Shortages Could Hurt B.C.'s Green Economy

Vancouver, BC (October 27, 2010) – British Columbia is facing a looming shortage of skilled and qualified workers needed for building a greener economy in the province; one that could limit economic productivity and result in missed business opportunities over the next decade.

That is one of the main findings of a new independent report by the GLOBE Foundation of Canada on B.C.'s emerging green economy. The report, entitled "***British Columbia's Green Economy: Securing the Workforce of Tomorrow***", is the result of a year-long research and outreach initiative, conducted by the Foundation and funded in part by the *Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Agreement*.

Primary research for the study included an online survey of 104 green companies and employers in B.C., a series of nine regional focus groups held throughout the province, and key informant interviews with more than 70 CEOs and owners of leading green and clean energy companies in B.C., as well as the directors of major industry associations, government representatives, and presidents, deans, and instructors from many of B.C.'s post-secondary and trades training institutions.

The report stresses that B.C.'s abundant natural resources, clean energy choices, and advanced research and educational strengths, coupled with its strategic location as Canada's Pacific Gateway, position the province to realize significant economic and employment gains from the pursuit of low-carbon business opportunities.

Drawing on original research undertaken by the GLOBE Foundation, the report suggests that nearly 202,000 direct full-time equivalent (FTE) green jobs could exist in B.C.'s economy by 2020 – an increase of close to 85,000 jobs over the estimated 117,000 green jobs that existed in 2008. This is equivalent to an overall growth rate of 73 per cent.

However, B.C.'s green workforce will be impacted by attrition more so than the workforce as a whole. It is estimated that roughly 22 per cent of the existing green labour force will retire over the next six years. As a consequence, net growth in labour supply in six key green sectors is projected to increase by only 1.5 per cent annually to 2020. A significant gap between labour demand and supply could lead to a shortage of more than 60,000 green workers by 2020.

The green employer survey conducted as part of this project reveals that roughly a third of the companies surveyed were already having difficulty filling positions with qualified workers – particularly experienced engineers, technicians/technologists, business development professionals, and environmental consultants.

"From a North American perspective, B.C. is a leader – but there is much work to be done in order to realize a truly sustainable green economy here in the province," says John Wiebe, President and CEO of the GLOBE Foundation. *"Increased public and private sector investment in key green sectors, a focus on building the domestic market and low-carbon export opportunities with Asia, and a commitment to further developing B.C.'s green workforce are critical for a successful transition to a greener economy."*

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In order to address this potential worker shortage, the report recommends new policies to increase productivity levels within the labour force; to attract and retain existing workers and new graduates for the province's green industry sectors; to train and up-skill workers from traditional industries; and to increase the participation rates amongst under-employed segments of B.C.'s population – including women, immigrants, and First Nations youth.

The study also found that the growth rate for graduates from science and technology programs in B.C. since 1992 has been relatively low (3.1 per cent as opposed to the average growth rate of 5.6 per cent for all instructional programs).

This is of particular concern as a labour pool made up of workers with fewer science degrees has been identified as one of the reasons that Canada's overall productivity levels have stagnated in recent years – along with the fact that Canadian businesses are less technology-intensive and do far less research and development than their counterparts in other developed nations. This is important because productivity growth is a precursor to higher employment and ultimately, a better standard of living.

The report concludes that B.C. has a solid foundation upon which to build a lower-carbon future, but that continued efforts are required to attract the innovators and entrepreneurs, to train the skilled workers, and to source the capital needed to build a sustainable green economy that will lead to economic prosperity in the province for both present and future generations.

About GLOBE

The GLOBE Foundation of Canada is a Vancouver-based, not-for-profit organization dedicated to finding practical business-oriented solutions to the world's environmental problems. Formed in 1993, the GLOBE Foundation has helped companies and individuals realize the value of economically viable environmental business opportunities through its conferences and events, research and consulting, project management, communications, and awards program.

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