
Strengthen preparation, education and training for the world of work so that an increasing number of workers can improve their standard of living and, together with employers, have the opportunity to benefit from hemispheric integration. In this regard, consideration will be given to the adoption of new technology based on different options and alternatives, ranging from specific occupational training to strengthening general employability competencies. Special attention will also be paid to the establishment or strengthening of mechanisms that permit workers to obtain certification of job-related competencies acquired through formal education and work experience. In order to confront changes in the labour market and to enhance employability prospects, actions that take into account the development of entrepreneurial skills will be included and will involve the different sectors and offer various options and alternatives.

Changes in the economy and rapid advances in technology have created a new world of work. It is critical, therefore, for Canadians to have access to training opportunities. A unique feature of Canada's community college system is its link with business and industry to offer employment-related programs that include co-operative and continuing education courses.

For example, the Nova Scotia Community College and the University College of Cape Breton (UCCB) provide technical training that emphasizes quality, currency and relevancy. Apprenticeship curriculums are being updated and revised continuously to meet the needs of industry. In addition, UCCB is working with the Nova Scotia Department of Education Apprenticeship Training Division to develop a system of accreditation.

In Alberta, the Registered Apprentice Program enables students to begin apprenticeship training while still in school. Innovative programs are also in place to recognize prior learning, thus enabling qualified individuals to obtain advanced placement in apprenticeship programs.

The Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Plan allows students to begin apprenticeships while earning high school diplomas. The Government of Ontario has expanded the program and more than doubled its funding since 1998. By broadening the apprenticeship system through the new *Apprenticeship and Certification Act*, the skills needs of industry and critical skills shortages experienced in some sectors will be addressed. Furthermore, the government has allocated funding over the next three years for a new Apprenticeship Innovation Fund to support updating classroom training for existing programs and introduce opportunities in new trades.

In order to support the transition from school to work, many Canadian provinces offer employment programs and services to students and youth. Manitoba, for instance, has been very successful in placing large numbers of students in career-related positions that offer valuable work experience through CareerStart, a program that provides wage incentives to help private sector employers create new, career-related summer jobs for full-time students and unemployed youth aged 16 to 24. To make it easier for youth to have access to career information, Manitoba has been providing an Internet-based Career Explorer Service to schools and employment and training agencies since April 1998.