

### NATIONAL COALITION SOUNDS SKILLS WARNING

#### **Coalition of leading business, education, health, and labour representatives wants issue debated in federal election**

OTTAWA, Sept. 23, 2008--Key sectors of Canada's economy are struggling because of an acute shortage of skills, and the situation threatens Canada's global competitiveness. This was the warning issued today by a coalition of leading business, education, health, and labour representatives, who see this as a national crisis requiring a national strategy.

"The shortage of skilled workers is crippling our country's economy," said Paul Charette, Chairman of the Canadian Construction Association, and coalition chair. "In the construction sector alone, close to 260,000 new workers are needed over the next eight years. We expect all party leaders to tell Canadians how they plan to address this crisis."

The *Investing in Skills* coalition was officially launched today to bring the growing skills deficit to the attention of Canadians as they prepare to vote in next month's federal election.

The coalition, which includes national organizations such as the Canadian Construction Association (CCA), Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters (CME), the Canadian Advanced Technology Alliance (CATAAlliance), the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), the Canadian Healthcare Association (CHA), and the Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC), wants the issue debated by all party leaders.

According to the coalition, the skills crisis affects all sectors of the Canadian economy and is becoming an accepted part of life for many small and medium-size businesses, leading to companies choosing to operate with fewer employees and ignore growth opportunities.

The coalition says that while erasing the skills deficit will not happen overnight and will require a number of specific policy responses ranging from immigration to employment insurance to added investments in apprenticeship and post-secondary education, the scope, complexity and urgency of the issue require political will on a national scale.

"As our country braces for more economic uncertainty, we can choose to invest in a skilled workforce that can compete with the best the world has to offer, or we can continue to turn our back to the problem and force employers to fight among themselves for an ever-more scarce resource," said Jayson Myers, President of Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters. "In part, this election will be about making that choice."

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## **Members of the Investing in Skills Coalition**

1. Association of Canadian Community Colleges
2. Association of Canadian Engineering Companies
3. Association of Equipment Manufacturers
4. Canadian Advanced Technology Alliance (CATAAlliance)
5. Canadian Construction Association
6. Canadian GeoExchange Coalition
7. Canadian Healthcare Association
8. Canadian Labour Congress
9. Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters
10. Canadian Solar Industries Association
11. Cement Association of Canada
12. Certified General Accountants Association of Canada
13. Certified Management Accountants
14. Hotel Association of Canada
15. Railway Association of Canada
16. Retail Council of Canada
17. Tourism Industry Association of Canada