



# MEDIA RELEASE

**Association of Canadian Community Colleges**

Serving Canada's colleges, institutes, cégeps, university colleges and polytechnics

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## **ACCC Recommends National Dialogue on Advanced Skills Crisis**

**Ottawa, September 1, 2010** – In its brief to the House of Commons Finance Committee, ACCC recommends the launch of a national dialogue toward an action plan to mitigate the imminent demographic bombshell and the associated shortage of advanced skills that will damage the Canadian economy. The first baby boomer will reach 65 in 2011, and many millions are poised to retire soon after.

Currently 44 percent of Canadians do not participate in the labour market, a figure that will rise to 57 percent by 2026. According to a report by consultant and educator Dr. Rick Miner, Canadian employers will face a shortfall of 1.2 million skilled persons by 2021.

Miner's analysis indicates that owing to the penetration of technology into all sectors, employers will require more people with post-secondary education (PSE). By 2031, it is estimated that at least 77 percent of new jobs will require a PSE credential. Currently, about 60 percent of Canadians between the ages of 25 and 64 have completed some form of PSE. To remain competitive, Canada must increase its participation rate in PSE.

A necessary condition for mitigating the crisis is to increase access to PSE for groups that generally fare poorly in the employment market: immigrants, Aboriginals, persons with disabilities and those with low literacy rates.

Canadian colleges provide accessible, cost-effective post-secondary education and lifelong learning opportunities for people of all ages. They reach out and nurture marginalized populations through to graduation. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business reports that on a ratio of six to one, college graduates are required over university graduates to fill shortages in advanced skills. Well in excess of 90 percent of college graduates are employed within six months.

"Unfortunately, colleges continue to experience capacity limitations," said James Knight, ACCC President and CEO. "Tens of thousands of qualified students are turned away or languishing on waitlists which have grown even longer due to the recession. Applications for the fall 2010 semester have increased dramatically in all regions and programs, but far too many are disappointed."

"Clearly, colleges will be at the heart of mitigating the advanced skills shortage, but the massive challenge of graduating a much higher percentage of Canadians will require a pan-Canadian action plan involving all orders of government, educational institutions, the private sector and civil society. Hence our call for a national dialogue," Knight explained.

The brief also calls for an investment to market Canadian education internationally. Offshore students currently contribute \$6 billion to our economy, but Canada is losing market share to aggressive competitors.

Other recommendations include encouraging Canadian students to study abroad, lifting the cap on funding of the Post-Secondary Student Support Program for Status Indian and Inuit students, investing in Aboriginal programs and services at colleges, and helping colleges provide applied research and commercialization services for SMEs.

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The ACCC brief is available online at: [http://www.accc.ca/ftp/briefs-memoires/201008201008\\_FinanceBrief.pdf](http://www.accc.ca/ftp/briefs-memoires/201008201008_FinanceBrief.pdf)

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