**Plenary Session 1 – Canada’s Labour Market / How We Compare in the World**

**Session at a Glance**

Session Time: 9:20 am – 10:25 am

Meeting Room: Plenary Room

Discussion Topics: International and Canadian perspectives on current context and emerging trends, including opportunities and challenges.

Panelists:

* Moderator: **Noel Baldwin**, Executive Director, Future Skills Centre
* Panelist 1: **Michele Tuccio**, Labour Market Economist, Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
* Panelist 2: **Mark A. Mitterhauser**, Associate Deputy Undersecretary, Bureau of International Affairs, US Department of Labor
* Panelist 3: **Robert Gagné**, Director, Centre for Productivity and Prosperity; Professor, Department of Applied Economics, HEC Montréal
* Panelist 4: **Karen Myers**, President and CEO, Blueprint

**Key Issues**

* Canada is viewed favourably by businesses in terms of market access, with 15 free trade agreements covering 51 countries and 1.5 billion consumers worldwide.
* Canada’s lagging labour productivity, relative to the U.S. and several OECD peers, is of concern in an increasingly competitive global economy undergoing significant changes.
* The labour market is loosening, but specific sectors still have gaps (concentrated in health, natural and applied sciences, and trade occupations).
* Canadians with lower educational attainment and low skills are at greater risk of the impacts of economic shocks with less resiliency.
* Canada’s labour market has been softening, with employment and unemployment rates retreating from their records. Employment and unemployment rates vary across demographic groups.
  + In August 2024, the youth unemployment rate was 14.5%, an increase of 3.2 percentage points relative to August 2023.

**Government Action**

* *Labour Market Development Agreements and the Workforce Development Agreements* – As announced in Budget 2024, the Government of Canada continues to provide nearly $3 billion per year to provinces and territories to ensure Canadians continue to have access to skills training and labour market supports to take advantage of economic opportunities. Each year, approximately one million Canadians receive supports under these agreements.
* Through federally delivered programs such as Skills for Success and the Sectoral Workforce Solutions Program, the Government is targeting investments to be responsive to individual worker and business and industry needs.
* Job Bank is the primary online platform for the delivery of employment, job matching and labour market information services in Canada. It helps Canadian employers recruit and hire across the country, supports Canadians workers to find a job, plan their careers by providing information on occupations and skills in demand, and find information about programs and services targeted to their needs
* Student Financial Assistance (SFA): In 2021-2022, 544,055 students received Canada Student Grants, valued at $3.256B, and 558,356 students received Canada Student Loans, valued at $2.940B.
* On September 26th, restrictions come into effect for the Low-Wage stream of the TFW program.

**Points to Register**

* Total employment in Canada reached 20.5 million in August 2024, a rise of 1.3 million compared to February 2020.
* As of August 2024, the unemployment rate was 6.6%, up 1.1 percentage points compared to one year earlier. Despite the recent uptick, the unemployment rate remains below the average rate over the 2010-2019 period (6.9%). While the unemployment rate has risen across all age groups on a year-over-year basis, youth have experienced the largest increase.

**Questions to Raise**

* What regulatory barriers can be removed to help improve labour market outcomes?
* How can we improve upon existing programs to enhance efficiency and effectivness?
* What gaps and barriers exist that need to be addressed by the federal government?