**Plenary Session 2 - Innovation to Increase Employer Involvement in Skills Development**

**Session at a Glance**

Session Time: 13:20 – 14:25

Meeting Room: Plenary Room

Discussion Topics: Innovative approaches to industry/employer involvement to develop effective practices for employee attraction, recruitment, development, and retention.

Panelists

* Moderator: **Philip Mondor**, President and CEO, Tourism HR Canada
* Panelist 1: **Val Walker**, CEO, Business + Higher Education Roundtable (BEHR)
* Panelist 2: **Shelley Grey**, CEO, SkilledTradesBC
* Panelist 3: **Bea Bruske**, President, Canadian Labour Congress

**Key Issues**

* Employers play an active role in supporting training and skills development.
* In Canada, 3 quarters of all adult learning is employer‑supported in some way.
* In 2022, 79% of large businesses used training to address their skills gaps, while only 61% and 68% of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) respectively did so.
* In general, Canadian business investment appears to be lower than that of its international counterparts in terms of training rates and hours. The Future Skills Centre indicated that firms invest an average of $240 per employee annually.
* SMEs face unique challenges. Limited financial resources and employee release time are common constraints in supporting training.
* SMEs account for 90% of private-sector jobs and 63.8% of Canada's workforce.
* Given SMEs reach with Canadian workers, helping them to facilitate employer-supported training is a priority for building momentum as a nation.
* Despite the increased need for enhanced skills, low-skilled and lower-income workers are less likely to be prioritized by their employers for training and development opportunities.
* Workers who have not taken training in the past 5 years are also more likely to be over 45 years old. They tend to experience financial pressures, which prevent them from setting aside money to take training.
* Reskilling supports have a significant impact on employers’ productivity and competitiveness.

**Government Action**

* *Community Workforce Development Program* – tests community-based approaches to workforce planning and skills training to support local economic development and growth. The program supports communities to develop local workforce plans and connect employers with training providers to upskill and reskill workers to fill jobs in demand.
* *Sectoral Workforce Solutions Program* – helps key economic sectors implement solutions to address current and emerging workforce needs, It funds sectoral projects to connect workers with the training they need to access good jobs and help employers attract and retain a skilled and diverse workforce.
* *Future Skills -* helps Canadians make informed choices about the skills and training they need and drives innovation to help Canada’s employment and training programs remain future-fit. The Future Skills Centre (the Centre) is an independent innovation and applied research centre that identifies emerging skills trends, tests new approaches to skills assessment and development, and disseminates evidence widely to inform future programming.

**Points to Register**

* Supporting employers in overcoming structural barriers to training investment is key to addressing labour and skills shortages.
* Helping SMEs to overcome common challenges of time, money and capacity could enable them to reap the benefits of employee retention, reduced staff turnover and recruitment costs.
* The importance of partnerships between industry and training is increasingly recognized, enabling workforce development approaches to adapt more rapidly.
* Employers need to be involved in identifying their skills and training needs to ensure programs effectively train new entrants into the workforce (for example, youth) and upskill existing workers.

**Questions to Raise**

* What are the most important barriers to increasing employer involvement in skills development?
* What are effective practices to address needs, particularly in supporting SMEs?