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For Immediate Release
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June 28, 2010

Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market
Development

EMPLOYERS, EMPLOYEES WIN WITH ESSENTIAL SKILLS TRAINING

VICTORIA – \$2 million in funding will create new essential skills training opportunities for over 500 British Columbians, helping employees gain the skills they need to succeed, increasing productivity for employers, and supporting the growth of B.C.’s economy, Moira Stilwell, Minister of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development announced today.

“Essential skills are the foundation for the jobs and skills of our future,” said Stilwell. “Through programs like SkillsPlus, British Columbians can access the tools they need to improve their skills and support the growth of B.C. businesses to create jobs and contribute to our economic recovery.”

SkillsPlus is a unique program that brings delivery of essential skills training to the workplace, building them into everyday employee training and work practices. Essential skills are identified as reading text, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, continuous learning, thinking skills and computer use. According to Statistics Canada, a one-per cent gain in the average literacy / numeracy skill level in Canada would create a permanent increase of \$18.4 billion per year in the country’s Gross Domestic Product.

“Through the Canada-B.C. Labour Market Agreement, we are helping to build Canada’s skilled, trained and capable workforce of the future,” said the Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development. “Programs such as SkillsPlus are vital to ensure that all Canadians have the tools they need to succeed in our knowledge-based economy.”

First announced in April, 2009, the initial SkillsPlus pilot projects were offered only to businesses with less than 50 employees, delivering essential skills training to about 480 participants. Through these pilots, over 50 unique teaching resources were created and are now available to participants in key sectors such as construction, hospitality, health and manufacturing. With completion of the pilots, SkillsPlus participants can include organizations of up to 500 employees. Benefits of SkillsPlus have included improved customer service skills, more confidence in ability to master new skills, and improvements in computer literacy and understanding of written instructions.

Under the Labour Market Agreement (LMA), the Government of Canada is providing the Province approximately \$66 million annually until 2013-14. Through a variety of programs, these funds will increase training for employed individuals who are low-skilled and require essential skills, or require recognized credentials to reach their full potential in the current marketplace.

They will also help increase access to training for unemployed individuals who are not currently Employment Insurance clients, including but not limited to those who are underrepresented in the labour market.

For more information about the LMA, please visit www.WorkBC.ca.

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A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUNDER

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SkillsPlus, first announced in April, 2009, is designed to integrate essential skills training into the normal work environment, increasing the capabilities, productivity and success of British Columbians within their current jobs and creating new opportunities for them within the labour market.

Through partnerships between businesses and training service agencies in each community, projects are able to develop and deliver skills training that meets the needs of local employers.

Community	Project Description	Funding
Burnaby	A partnership between the B.C. Construction Industry Skills Improvement Council and Construction and Specialized Workers' Union Local 1611 will deliver essential skills interventions to about 40 employees.	\$154,000
Lower Mainland	Delivered by Douglas College, will target 90 employees, with both a train-the-trainer and ongoing, "hands on" mentorship/coaching, providing skills training to 90 building managers and maintenance employees.	\$306,000
Lower Mainland	Delivered by Douglas College in partnership with four security industry employers, will identify and provide essential skills upgrading to 50 commercial, institutional and/or special events security guards employed in the Lower Mainland of B.C.	\$247,000
Lower Mainland/ Southwest region	Delivered by SUCCESS with partners in the tourism and retail sector, will assist approximately 60 low-skilled employees in accommodations and resort operations services, as well as retail, grocery and wholesale industries operating in the Mainland/Southwest region.	\$280,000
New Westminster	A partnership between the United Food Commercial Workers 24/7 Training and Education Society and unionized small- and medium-sized businesses will deliver essential skills training to 40 employees.	\$156,000
Duncan, Nanaimo, Oceanside, Powell River	Delivered by Vancouver Island University, the SkillsPlus: Essential Skills for Service Excellence Program will focus on 48 employees of small- and medium-sized tourism and hospitality businesses in the tourism/hospitality sector.	\$245,000
Campbell River	Delivered by North Island College will be provided in two segments, the Essential Skills in the workplace program and essential skills leadership certification. About 100 employees from several local businesses will take part.	\$274,000
Greater Victoria, including Sooke	The Victoria READ Society, in partnership with Bridges for Women, will provide face-to-face and on-line essential skills training for up to 200 employees from small- and mid-sized business in the retail/wholesale/grocery and tourism/hospitality sectors.	\$247,000

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