

Employer Investment in Workplace Learning in Canada

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November 9, 2006

Does it matter?

How is Canada doing?

What are the key issues?

How can we do better?

Does it matter?

Demographics mean a smaller workforce in the future

We are already seeing skills and labour shortages and they will intensify

Knowledge economy means rising and rapidly changing skill requirements

Investing in skills and training pays off

How is Canada doing?

Canada's performance is only average

Overall participation rate is increasing

But employer investment is stagnant

Training is highly concentrated among certain groups of workers and larger firms

And Canadian workers lack adequate “essential skills” for the knowledge economy

Why aren't we doing more?

Time and money are significant barriers

Lack of information is a problem

Employers are not convinced about the return-on-investment

Firms worry about “poaching”

SMEs face greater barriers

Access to training resources can be a problem for some

Training must make “business sense”

Whose responsibility is it?

Everyone agrees that “everyone” has a role.

But who should do what?

Should firms do only “firm-specific” training?

Who should be responsible for “basic” training?

Should firms or government and/or the individual take more responsibility?

What about the federal government *versus* the provincial/territorial governments?

What are governments doing?

In Canada, the federal and provincial/territorial governments are all active in supporting workplace learning

Internationally, governments use many instruments:

- Financial incentives (tax and subsidies)
- Training levies and mandatory requirements
- Rights to leave for workers and financial incentives
- Information, advisory and referral services
- Qualification and certification
- Assistance for disadvantaged and at-risk populations
- Support for testing, best practices, pooling of resources

Do we know what works?

Training must be linked to firms' priorities, overall management practices

Shared or co-financing may be the best approach

Subsidies and other public financial supports must avoid “deadweight” costs, address equity issues (SMEs, disadvantaged)

The jury is still out on compulsory/levy schemes

Individual learning accounts hold promise but need development

Targeting disadvantaged and at-risk populations can pay dividends

Pooling resources and sharing risks and costs can be effective

Where do we go from here?

Partnership and working together are essential

A comprehensive approach is needed . . . and flexibility

Awareness is important . . . understanding the return-on-investment

Firms require supports and incentives – SMEs may need special measures

Individuals also need supports and incentives

Information and tools can help

Essential skills needs must be addressed

Effective national recognition and qualification systems are needed

What ideas are being put forward?

Tax credit to encourage firms' investment in training
. . . perhaps scaled for SMEs

Training fund . . . possibly with matching
contributions

National training levy

Right-to-training leave for workers and paid training
leave (EI . . . Learning accounts . . . Vouchers . . .)

What ideas are being put forward?

Support for sectoral councils/initiatives and for pooling of resources (especially for SMEs)

Greater government support for essential skills

Information, tools, and “one-stop” shopping

Awareness, information dissemination, active advocacy by business organizations and leaders

So now what?

Do we really think that investment in workplace learning is important?

What is preventing us from doing more?

Who should do what? Should employers do more?
Or should Governments and individuals take more responsibility?

What kind of training/learning is needed? What are the priorities?

So now what?

How do we “incent” employers to do more?

What about SMEs?

Should public supports focus more on firms or on individuals?

What should the federal government do? The Provincial/territorial governments?

What should business do? Labour/unions?

So now what?

What do we do to move forward?

Is there a need for more dialogue?

What are the next steps?

Who should lead?