



Future Skills Centre - Centre des Compétences futures

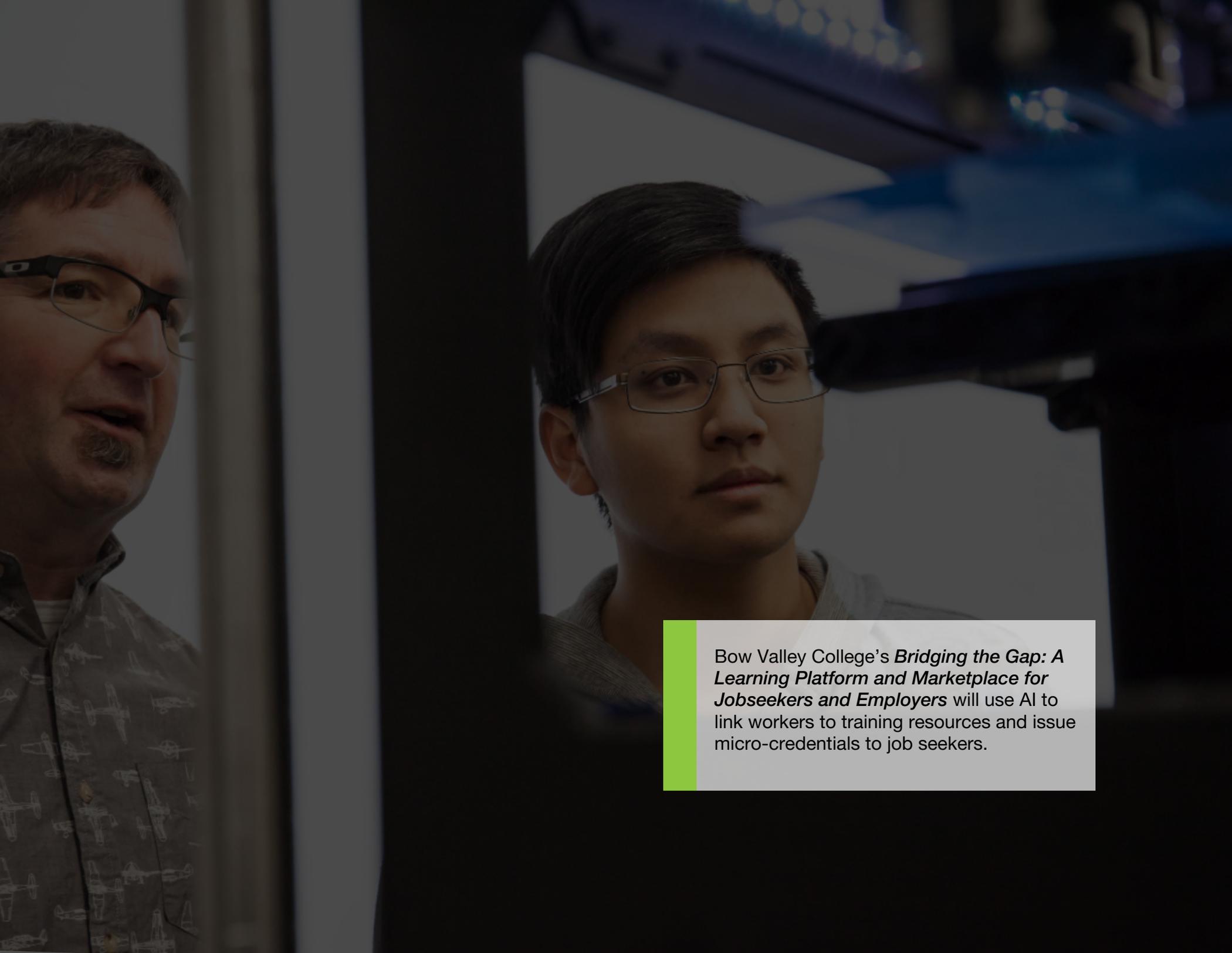
# Strategic Plan

2020-2023

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Bow Valley College's *Bridging the Gap: A Learning Platform and Marketplace for Jobseekers and Employers* will use AI to link workers to training resources and issue micro-credentials to job seekers.

# Executive Summary

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The Future Skills Centre (FSC) is a pan-Canadian organization passionate about creating a future in which everyone has life-long access to high-quality career advice and learning opportunities.

**We have created this Strategic Plan to guide our work over the next three years. It draws on insights gathered from a wide range of sources, including cross-Canada regional roundtables; surveys of business, labour, education, government and community stakeholders; and discussion papers contributed by experts in training and skills development.**

The Plan highlights how we see our organization contributing to a broader skills development ecosystem within Canada. It recognizes the vital role played by other individuals, organizations, and governments, and articulates how FSC will collaborate with partners to create a more responsive, effective, and co-ordinated skills development ecosystem. This effort rests on four pillars:

1. Easy-to-access, practical labour-market information;
2. Responsive career pathways;
3. Agile labour-market responses;
4. “What Works” replication.

Our Plan is geared equally to the present and the future. It acknowledges the immediate urgency occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic, yet it fixes its sights firmly on disruptions to the labour market that are coming—such as the steadily growing influence of technology on the world of work. Above all, it prioritizes collaboration among all sectors of society to ensure that training and education are delivered equitably. Together with our valued partners, FSC aims to strengthen Canada’s skills development ecosystem and help equip people with the skills, knowledge, and tools they need to thrive in the future.



## Who We Are

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FSC is a forward-looking organization that prototypes, tests and measures new and innovative approaches to skills development and training.

We are passionate about building a resilient learning nation, backed by an agile and responsive skills ecosystem that equips everyone with the skills they need to thrive in a rapidly changing economy and share in Canada's prosperity.

As a pan-Canadian organization, we work with partners across the country to understand how global trends affect the economy and to identify what skills working-age adults need to thrive within an ever-evolving environment. Based on these insights, and with our partners, we test and measure innovative approaches to skills development and training to learn what works.

FSC is funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program. We were founded as a partnership between Ryerson University, Blueprint ADE, and the Conference Board of Canada. Ryerson—through the Office of the Vice-President of Research and Innovation—is the lead organization for the consortium and the home base for the Centre.

Our collaboration with consortium partners and others within Ryerson draws on the expertise that they offer to the skills development ecosystem:

- Blueprint leads our evidence generation strategy and the evaluation of our innovation projects.
- The Conference Board of Canada leads our knowledge dissemination and mobilization activities and contributes to our research program.
- Ryerson's Diversity Institute advances our research strategy.
- Ryerson's Magnet provides a purpose-built digital infrastructure to grow and sustain our pan-Canadian network.

**We believe Canada is stronger when everyone has the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from our shared prosperity.**

This is why we are committed to an inclusive approach to skills development, with an emphasis on engaging and supporting underserved groups such as women, youth, Indigenous peoples, newcomers, racialized people, LGBTQ2S+ people, persons with disabilities, veterans, and Canadians living in rural, remote, and Northern communities.

# Our Vision and Mission

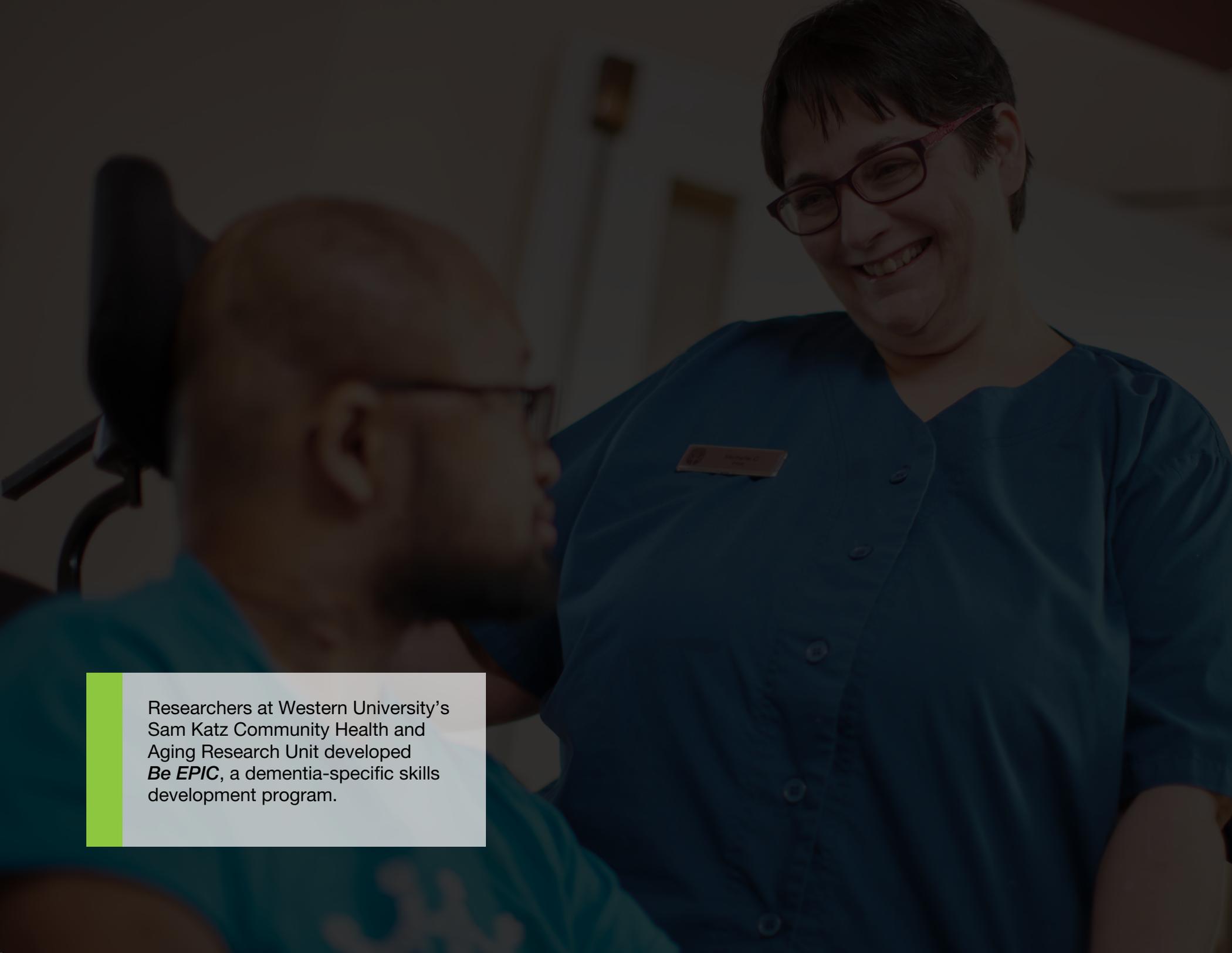
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## Our Vision

Canada is a resilient learning nation, backed by an agile and responsive skills ecosystem, that equips everyone with the skills they need to thrive in a rapidly changing economy and share in Canada's prosperity.

## Our Mission

We focus on strengthening Canada's skills development ecosystem so that Canadians can look to a future of meaningful and relevant lifelong learning opportunities.



Researchers at Western University's Sam Katz Community Health and Aging Research Unit developed **Be EPIC**, a dementia-specific skills development program.

# How We Work: Five Principles

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## **We are agile.**

We are curious about the changes happening around us and strive to test, adapt, evaluate and learn from what works, and what doesn't, when it comes to skills development innovations.

## **We are collaborative.**

We seek to add value and complement the innovation ambitions of our partners and stakeholders in the skills development ecosystem.

## **We are inclusive.**

We believe Canada is stronger when everyone has the opportunity to contribute to, and benefit from, our shared prosperity, so we focus on addressing systemic barriers affecting underserved populations.

## **We pursue excellence.**

We set a high bar for our work from research to partnership development, and add value through our investments in prototypes, the rigour of our approach to evaluation and evidence, and our ability to share what we learn.

## **We focus on impact.**

We are future-oriented and seek to create knowledge beyond “what we already know” through our mandate to test and evaluate new and innovative approaches to skills development.



## Why Our Work Matters

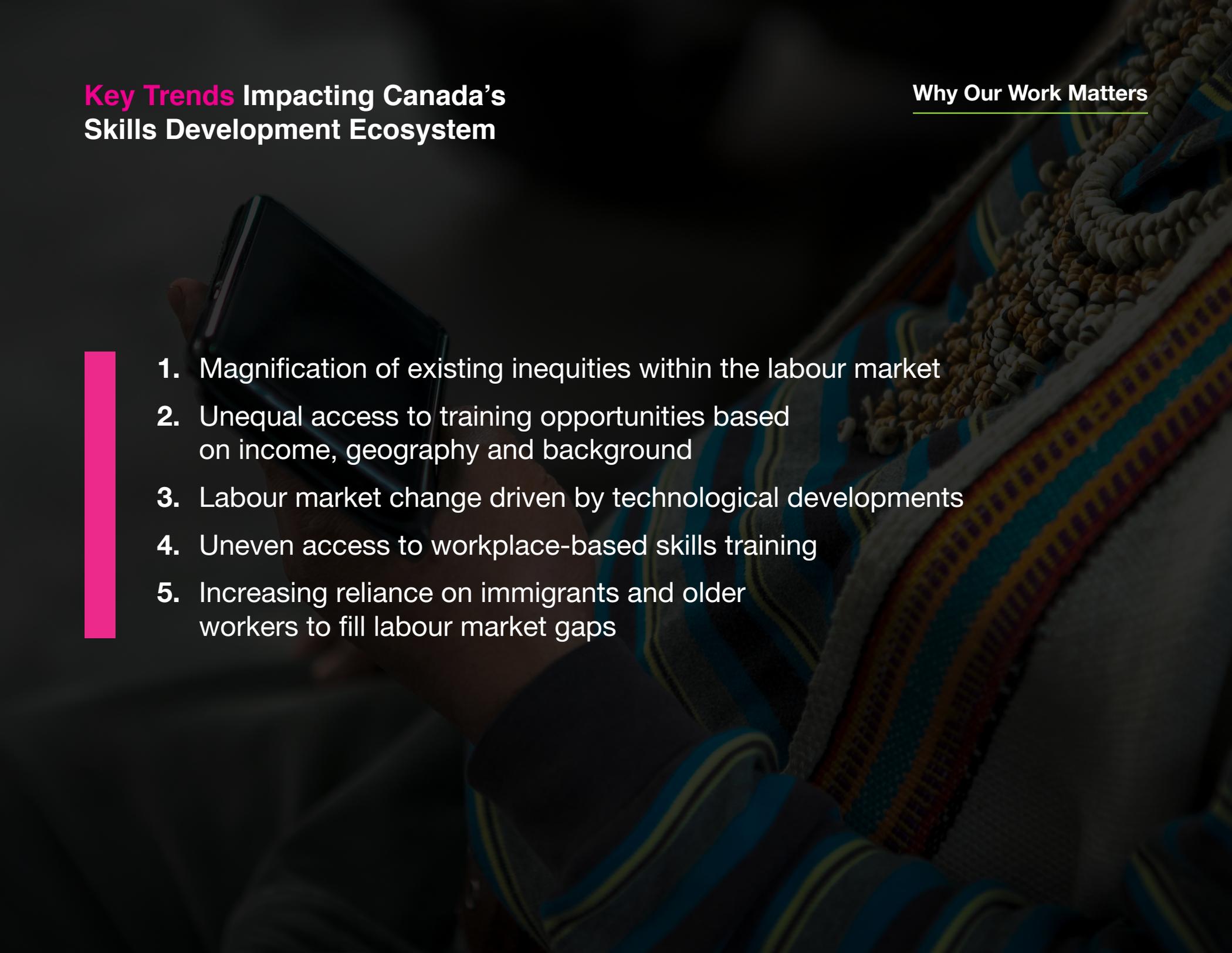
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Our Strategic Plan is geared to addressing the challenges and opportunities for skills development both here and now as well as into the future. Sharpening our understanding of key drivers for skills development innovation will be critical, especially as Canada enters a period of recovery following the deep economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For many key drivers behind a skills agenda, the “future is now” when it comes to adapting and leveraging the growing influence of new technologies in the world of work; addressing systemic barriers facing underserved populations; mitigating unequal access to training opportunities based on income, geography and job type; and engaging more employers as core partners in training solutions.

## Key Trends Impacting Canada's Skills Development Ecosystem

Why Our Work Matters

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1. Magnification of existing inequities within the labour market
  2. Unequal access to training opportunities based on income, geography and background
  3. Labour market change driven by technological developments
  4. Uneven access to workplace-based skills training
  5. Increasing reliance on immigrants and older workers to fill labour market gaps

## Key Trends:

### 1. Magnification of existing inequities within the labour market

- The COVID-19 pandemic and related government interventions are significantly impacting global and Canadian economies, accelerating the pace of change and disruption within some sectors and highlighting inequities that exist between different groups.
- The number of unemployed individuals has increased sharply in Canada, with some populations and sectors experiencing greater employment declines than others.<sup>1</sup>
- For these workers, the “future is now,” and their pressing challenge is to ensure their economic security, maintain a foothold in the economy, and upskill and reskill.



More than **3 million people** in Canada have lost their jobs since the beginning of the COVID-19 economic shutdown.<sup>2</sup>



**4 in 10** of the more than **2.5 million** Canadians working less than half of their usual hours for reasons related to COVID-19 fear they may lose their job.<sup>3</sup>



**5.5 million Canadians** were either not employed or working substantially reduced hours as of April 2020.<sup>4</sup>

## Key Trends:

### 2. Unequal access to training opportunities based on income, geography and background

- Increasing income inequality and uneven access to good jobs, technology, healthcare, and social services are contributing to lower levels of intergenerational mobility, significantly impacting underrepresented groups.<sup>5</sup>
- Postsecondary education, a strong determinant of economic success and resilience, is out of reach for many.



**Only 60% of Canadians** with the lowest incomes increased their wages between 2006 and 2011, significantly less than their peers in the 1980s and 1990s, when 70% and 74%, respectively, of those with the lowest incomes were able to move up the income ladder.<sup>6</sup>



Positively, Canada continues to **rank first** among the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries in the proportion of college and university graduates.<sup>7</sup>

## Key Trends:

### 3. Labour market change driven by technological developments

- Automation, artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies mean swift changes in demand for skills in many sectors. With global labour supply constantly evolving and undergoing increasing polarization, middle-skill jobs are being lost.
- As digital and machine technology advances, social and emotional skills will be crucial to success: the next generation of Canadians will need to be more adaptive, creative and collaborative, adding and refining skills to keep pace with a world of work undergoing profound change.<sup>8</sup>
- Information technology will drive the labour market. An understanding of how to interact with computers, smartphones and any future technology will be essential. Digital literacy will be a prerequisite for nearly any job.<sup>9</sup>



Nearly **1 in 5 Canadian** employees are at risk of being replaced by a machine and have few or no options to move to lower-risk occupations unless they are retrained.<sup>10</sup>



**Indigenous people, women, youth (aged 15-24) and visible minorities** are disproportionately represented in the top five occupations at highest risk of automation.<sup>11</sup>

## Key Trends:

### 4. Uneven access to workplace-based skills training

- While many workers must upskill or reskill to adapt to labour market change, Canadian employers invest relatively little in training compared to peers in the Organizations for Economic Co-operation and Development.<sup>12</sup>
- While employers have challenges to find new and keep their skilled staff, they have begun looking at new approaches to upskill and reskill their workers.<sup>13</sup>



On average, Canadian employers spent 81 cents for every dollar spent by U.S. employers on training from 2016-2017.<sup>14</sup>



Two thirds of executives at large companies say addressing skills gaps caused by automation and digitization is one of their top 10 priorities.<sup>15</sup>

## Key Trends:

### 5. Increasing reliance on immigrants and older workers to fill labour market gaps

- Canadians are working longer, often in multiple careers, creating challenges and opportunities related to upskilling and continuous learning.
- With fertility rates below replacement, Canada will need more immigration to build our labour force and maintain economic growth.



75% of Canada's population growth comes from immigration.<sup>16</sup>



In 1971, Canada's worker-to-retiree ratio was **approximately 7 to 1**. The ratio is anticipated to be 2 to 1 by 2035.<sup>17</sup>

# The need for an agile, responsive and customized skills development ecosystem

Traditionally, Canada's skills development ecosystem has delivered skills through two avenues: education systems prior to workforce entry, and employment assistance for those in the workforce who encounter unemployment. While both are critically important, they need to be supplemented by a third: a system-wide approach to skills development that enables adaptation to changes in the labour market—gradual or sudden—through continuous learning.

Such an approach needs to respond to diverse requirements. It must help individuals build skills and access labour-market information; address the needs of employers facing gaps in their workforce; and recognize the different impacts—regional, social, demographic—caused by the decline or growth of different industries.

**Future Skills Centre's unique mandate to experiment, foster innovation and disseminate knowledge regarding skills development is geared to building a more responsive, adaptable labour market.**

Our goal is to promote effective, future-focused skills development policy and programs. To do so, FSC will:

- Identify ecosystem needs and priorities, and enhance our knowledge base;
- Invest in innovation, evidence generation, capacity building and knowledge through strategically targeted, future-focused partnerships;
- Mobilize knowledge, build platforms for collaboration and communities of practice, and foster ongoing systems dialogue;
- Build a network of skills development practitioners, educators, employers, labour groups, and policymakers that is plugged into our work and incorporates learning into policy and programs.



***Skilled Jobs for Mid-Career Workers Through Work-Based Learning*** by Work-Based Learning Consortium (WBLC) is an innovation project transitioning displaced auto workers to the manufacturing industry.

# Our Areas of Focus

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**We are committed to strengthening Canada's skills development ecosystem through a focus on three areas:**

## **Relevant data and information**

Given rapid and often confusing changes in the labour market, individuals and employers need expert advice to make informed decisions about training and career paths.

## **New and innovative skills approaches**

Economic shocks and changes are inevitable. We need strategies for effectively supporting displaced workers and proactively intervening for those at risk of displacement. We have an opportunity to foster innovation and generate evidence about the effectiveness of interventions that respond to real-time crises as well as proactive strategies that seek to minimize the effects of disruption.

## **Systemic change enablers**

By fostering collaboration and engagement across the skills development ecosystem, investing in technical supports and capacity for skills development providers, and engaging with policy makers, we can support the incorporation of leading practices into policies and programming that create a more agile, forward looking, and co-ordinated ecosystem.

# Our Strategy

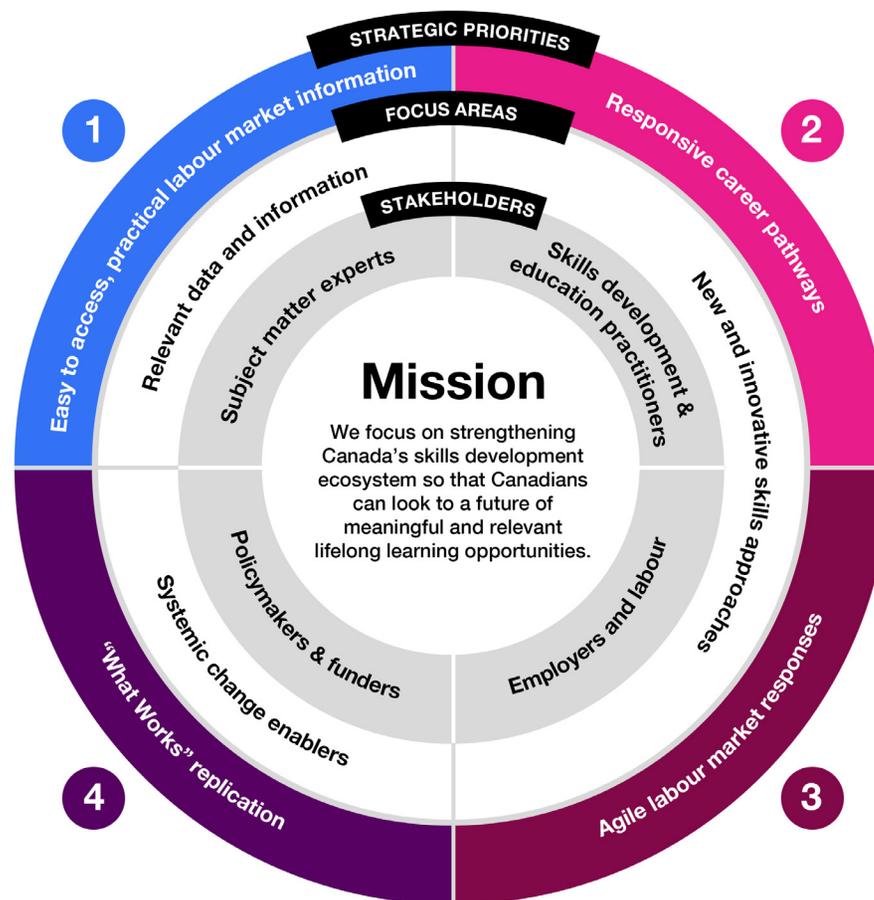
Future Skills Centre’s vision for Canada is a resilient learning nation, backed by an agile and responsive skills ecosystem that equips everyone with the skills they need to thrive in a rapidly changing economy and share in Canada’s prosperity.

## Easy to access, practical labour market and skills information

We work with labour market information experts and partners to provide accurate, practical and timely data, tools, and resources that can help the skills ecosystem understand changing skills needs and shape evidence-based responses.

## “What Works” replication

We build networks that host ongoing learning, support service providers and build their capacity to adopt “what works,” and inform policies and funding that enable system-wide scaling of best practices in skills training.



## Responsive career pathways

We enable the testing, prototyping and evaluation of new approaches that will provide forward-looking, customized, high-quality, accessible career and training advice, alongside education and skills training.

## Agile labour market responses

We collaborate with sectors and industries to test, prototype and evaluate new approaches for proactively anticipating labour market change and equipping workers with necessary skills.

Canada is stronger when everyone has the opportunity to contribute to, and benefit from, our shared prosperity, so we focus on addressing systemic barriers affecting underserved populations.



## Looking Ahead

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Over the next three years, FSC will work closely with our consortium partners, Advisory Board, innovation pilot partners, and the broader ecosystem to drive our Strategic Plan forward. Our progress toward achieving the priorities described here will be outlined in our Annual Report.

While this Plan is intended to guide us, we know our environment will continue to change. Through open engagement and close collaboration with our partners, we will continually reassess how we can best respond to emerging needs and work together to build capacity for innovation, measurement, and continuous learning in Canada.

We will be responsive to specific sectors, as well as regional and population needs. We will look for partners that are on the same journey to innovate and take risks. We will choose priorities that continue to focus our work and learning each year.

We are confident that by working together, we can strengthen Canada's skills development ecosystem and ensure that people have easy access to practical labour market information; career and training advice; education and skills training; and the overall skills, knowledge and tools they need to succeed in an ever-changing labour market.

# Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada. 2020. *Labour Force Survey, March 2020*. 04 09. Accessed April 28, 2020. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200409/dq200409a-eng.htm>.
- <sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada. 2020. *Labour Force Survey, April 2020*. Ottawa, May 5.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> Bakshi, Hasan, Jonathan M. Downing, Michael A. Osborne, and Phillippe Schneider. 2017. *The Future of Skills: Employment in 2030*. London: Pearson and Nesta.
- <sup>6</sup> Government of Canada. 2016. *Towards a Poverty Reduction Strategy: A Discussion Paper on Poverty in Canada*. Ottawa: Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada.
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- <sup>8</sup> RBC. 2018. *Humans Wanted: How Canadian Youth Can Thrive in the Age of Disruption*. Toronto: RBC.
- <sup>9</sup> Conference Board of Canada. 2020. *Responding to Automation: How Adaptable is Canada's Labour Market?* Toronto: Conference Board of Canada.
- <sup>10</sup> Cukier, Wendy. 2020. *Return on Investment: Industry Leadership on Upskilling and Reskilling in the Workforce*. Toronto: Public Policy Forum; Future Skills Centre.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> Statistics Canada. 2019. *Population Projections for Canada (2018 to 2068), Provinces and Territories (2018 to 2043)*. Ottawa: Government of Canada.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> Statistics Canada. 2020. *Labour Force Survey, March 2020*. 04 09. Accessed April 28, 2020. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200409/dq200409a-eng.htm>.
- <sup>17</sup> Government of Canada. 2019. *Immigration and Economic Growth*. Ottawa, June 24.

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