



Interim update

# Resilient Workforce Working Table

**This document serves as an interim update in advance of the final report from the Resilient Workforce Working Table. It is meant to provide an overview of the Working Table's mandate, progress, and early insights developed from July to December 2025.**



The [Future Skills Centre \(FSC\)](#) is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to driving innovation in skills development so that everyone in Canada can be prepared for the future of work. We partner with policymakers, researchers, practitioners, employers and labour, and post-secondary institutions to solve pressing labour market challenges and ensure that everyone can benefit from relevant lifelong learning opportunities. We are founded by a consortium whose members are Toronto Metropolitan University, Blueprint, and Signal49 Research, and are funded by the [Government of Canada's Future Skills Program](#).



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The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.



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## About the Resilient Workforce Working Table

In July 2025, the Future Skills Centre (FSC) formed the [Resilient Workforce Working Table](#) to identify creative and practical approaches to strengthen the resilience of the Canadian workforce for the short and long-term.

The Working Table was tasked with providing insights on how to build a more resilient workforce in Canada, how to mitigate negative impacts from disrupted labour markets, and how to be positioned to capture the benefits of emerging opportunities.

In particular, the Working Table has considered how comprehensive skills, training, and employment policies could continue to build a highly-skilled and adaptable workforce during this time of uncertainty. Their work will culminate in a report, which outlines ideas and opportunities to ensure Canada's workforce is resilient in the immediate and long-term.



U.S. tariffs and other threats are shaking the foundations of Canada's economy and challenging long-standing relationships & assumptions.

## The challenge: Canada needs a resilient workforce

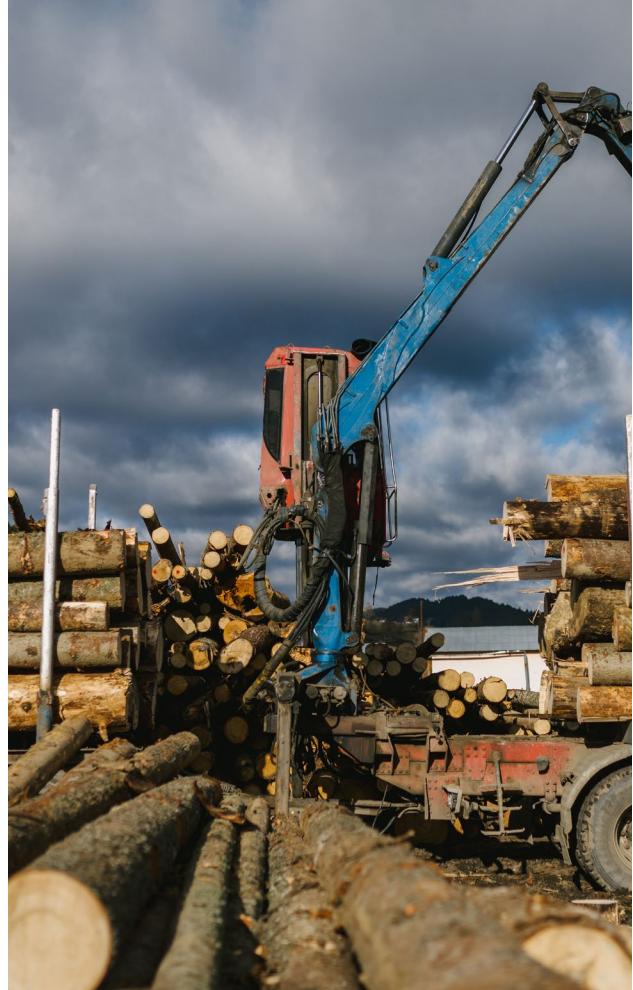
U.S. tariffs and other threats are shaking the foundations of Canada's economy and challenging long-standing relationships and assumptions.

Canada's labour market conditions, including employment rate, GDP, and employment growth have already shown signs of stress, with certain workers, sectors, and regions experiencing sharp shocks.

Some of those top-line impacts include:

- The unemployment rate fell to 6.8% as of December 2025, with employment steady after three months of gains.<sup>1</sup> Youth unemployment hit a 15-year non-pandemic high of 14.7% in September 2025,<sup>2</sup> but has declined since to 13.3%.<sup>3</sup>
- The real GDP growth outlook has weakened significantly; Budget 2025 projects growth at about 1% annually, about half the rate projected in the 2024 Fall Economic Statement.<sup>4</sup>
- Canadian exports have declined about 10% to the U.S. and 7% overall, with job losses concentrated in affected industries and communities.<sup>5</sup>
- As of September 2025, regular Employment Insurance (EI) beneficiaries were up 11.7% over the year before, though trending down from a summer 2025 peak.<sup>6</sup>

Beyond these national numbers, the Working Table dedicated considerable attention to emerging patterns of differences in impacts between regions, between sectors, and between workers with different skills and experiences.



## Canada will need a resilient workforce to weather the impacts of U.S. tariffs, tackle major projects, harness the opportunities brought on by artificial intelligence, & adapt to transitioning labour markets.

Now is the time to think about what makes a workforce resilient and what all players in Canada's skills and employment ecosystem can do to support resilience for years to come.

Governments have responded to these threats with some shorter-term strategies to shore up affected sectors and assist displaced workers. They have also developed new measures for longer-term—including nation-building—projects and trade diversification strategies that aim to further support Canada's resilience.

Some of these measures began launching in Spring 2025, including [temporary measures](#) to add more flexibility to EI, [financial relief](#) for affected businesses, and efforts to support sectors with reduced [internal trade barriers](#) and “[Buy Canadian](#)” strategies. Others have emerged in the months that the Working Table has been engaged in this work. Those have included [training and employment investments](#), in particular through the Labour Market

Development Agreements and the launch of Workforce Alliances, longer-term financial measures for [affected businesses and sectors](#) from both federal and provincial governments, and other measures meant to spur economic growth more generally, including major projects and [tax measures](#). Many of these measures were intended to respond to the immediate impacts of U.S. tariffs. Some programs have since ended, and even with the remaining measures in place, there are still gaps to address in order to support disrupted workers and sectors.

The federal government's efforts to draw capital into the economy through major nation-building projects will require skilled workers in specific regions across the country. These projects, launching alongside tariff-related workforce disruptions, present a timely opportunity to establish labour market policies that can simultaneously respond to tariff consequences and prepare for regional increases in skilled labour demand.

The Working Table has tracked these developments closely throughout its work. In their discussions to date, the Working Table generated ideas that would align with government measures and amplify their impact to strengthen the resilience of the Canadian workforce now and for years to come. The insights in this interim update and in the future report take into account this context and other actions by governments, businesses, and other institutions as part of a broader imperative for responsive approaches to both fast-moving drivers and longer-term trends.

## The work of the Resilient Workforce Working Table

Between July and November 2025, the Working Table held five workshops together. The bulk of these meetings were structured around key policy questions to generate ideas to support a stronger and more resilient workforce. To solicit a range of ideas to strengthen the workforce, discussions were centered around the following three policy questions:

**1.**

**What are effective, creative, and specific approaches to support the workers, sectors and regions most impacted by U.S. tariffs and related disruptions (e.g., adoption of AI)?**

**2.**

**How can we ensure a range of training and upskilling pathways to support a resilient workforce?**

**3.**

**How can we ensure a strong labour supply in Canada, where no Canadians get left behind?**

Following these discussions and through an ongoing process, the Resilient Workforce Working Table Secretariat synthesized the insights and have summarized those insights in this interim report. The subsequent final report will build upon these initial findings with more evidence and policy recommendations.



## Early insights

Across all meetings, the Resilient Workforce Working Table affirmed a number of conditions that should be in place for Canada to have a resilient workforce. The table members – representing years of experience across multiple domains – made clear that building a resilient workforce in Canada requires **collaboration**, and approaches that are **responsive** and **adaptable**. Workforce policies and programming need to be informed by **high-quality labour market data** (i.e., publicly available regular forecasts, analyses, and projections of labour demand), be supported by **high-quality training and education, and not be burdened by administrative red tape**. In addition to those overarching conditions, a number of early insights have emerged from the Working Table discussions.



## Navigating workforce disruptions

The first major theme focused on understanding and responding to some of the needs of sectors and populations expected to face significant impacts in 2025 and beyond. These include manufacturing, motion picture and sound recording, and oil and gas extraction sectors; men with low formal education attainment,<sup>7</sup> youth, and workers nearing retirement age;<sup>8</sup> and trade vulnerable regions like Alberta, New Brunswick, Ontario, and Quebec.<sup>9</sup> The Working Table's discussions have surfaced the major distinctions between regions in their needs and approaches. The Working Table also highlighted the impacts of artificial intelligence on the workforce - anxieties of automation and possible displacement of workers, alongside the potential benefits of AI through increased productivity.

The Working Table considered active labour market policies that could support skills and employment in the face of disruption (e.g., training, wage subsidies, job creation, support for entrepreneurship, and employment services), and other system-level and supportive labour market policies to inform current and future needs related to employment and skills training (e.g., labour market information and skills pathway mapping).

# 1.

## How can we ensure a range of training and upskilling pathways to support a resilient workforce?



Insights from these discussions included:

1. Employer investment and engagement in quality training can help ease transitions during labour force disruptions, and a range of tools and incentives could be used to encourage employers to invest in training. A number of approaches were discussed, including the use of mandated or pooled employer training investments including Ireland's national training fund and Quebec's 1% fund, as well as incentives like "[pay-for-performance](#)."
2. To support career transitions, initiatives that support workers to identify and define their skillsets paired with guidance can help direct workers to suitable up/reskilling or job opportunities. Newcomers and young people entering the workforce might need added support in defining their skills and experience so that employers can easily recognize the skills they are looking for in those workers.
3. In cases where fast transitions are needed, short, targeted training and up/reskilling initiatives are helpful options in certain, but not all, sectors. Short courses are helpful options in cases where skills gaps can be bridged through targeted training, but not necessarily suitable for skilled trades like construction. Systems that are responsive and ready to deploy support for workers quickly during disruptions are critical to produce good outcomes for affected workers, sectors, and communities.
4. Including industry and labour in labour market policy development and planning is critical for success, as is including labour market planning alongside the development of major projects that will require a significant number of skilled workers. Coordinating labour market policies alongside key industry players and workers helps to increase the likelihood of successful implementation.

## Training and upskilling pathways for a resilient workforce

The second main theme of the Working Table discussions focused on opportunities to address gaps in the available training and upskilling pathways and to improve their effectiveness and resilience. That could include looking at the types of training opportunities (e.g., short courses, apprenticeships) and their relative effectiveness; the supports that foster successful career transitions (e.g., work-to-work, school-to-work); and the relationships or partnerships that support a strong skills ecosystem.

The Working Table generated ideas across a spectrum from the individual to system level and over the short-, medium- and long-term. This included ideas to support individual needs as a person navigates a career transition (e.g., career services), sector/organization-level needs as they adapt to changing labour market conditions (e.g., training funding), and system-level needs that will support resilience for years to come (e.g., timely and regional LMI).

## 2.

### How can we ensure a range of training and upskilling pathways to support a resilient workforce?



#### Insights from these discussions included:

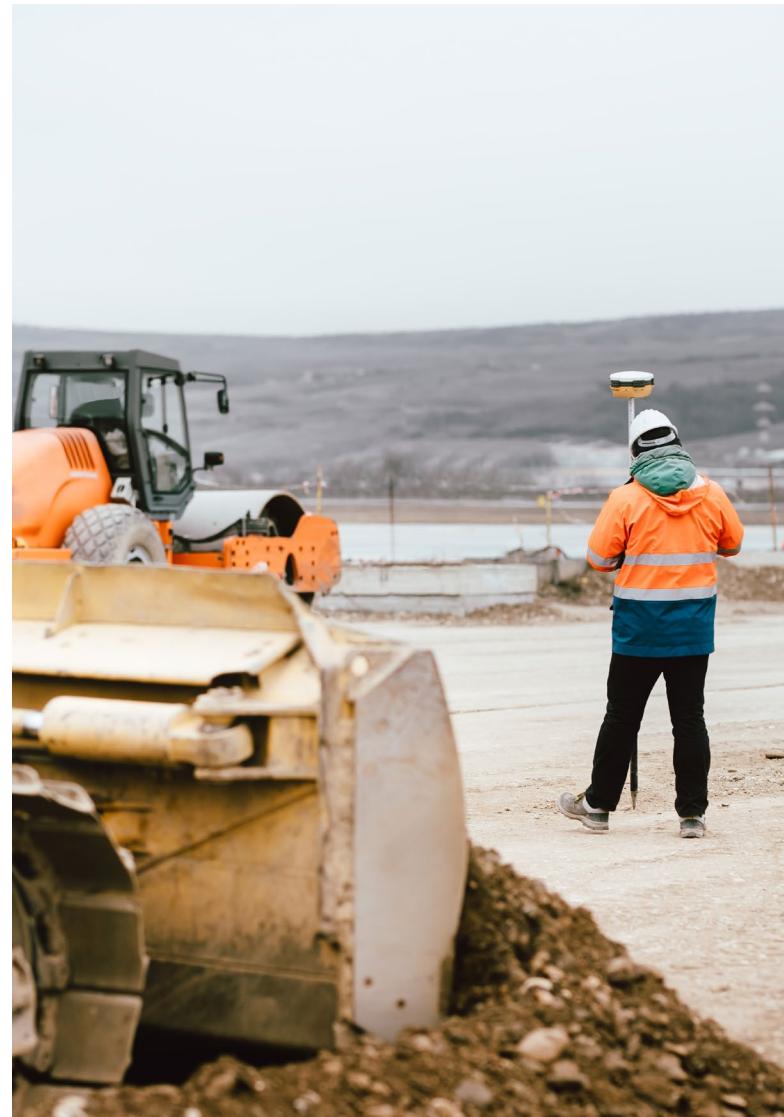
1. Aligning formal education, training, and upskilling opportunities with shifting labour market demand can support better outcomes for people. This might include introducing students early to in-demand skills and potential career pathways in their region.
2. Focusing on expanding training opportunities for sectors facing chronic and critical shortages can support effective workforce planning. This might include options to fast-track high school students to in-demand careers (e.g., early apprenticeship, PSE credits).
3. Understanding and addressing barriers to accessing training and upskilling opportunities for equity-deserving and underrepresented groups can help to increase their participation in the labour market. By consulting directly with underrepresented groups to understand their needs, targeted training solutions can be developed and/or scaled to increase their participation in in-demand careers. [A growing evidence base exists](#) to draw on the most effective approaches.

## Ensuring a strong labour supply

The third main theme looked at how to support a strong labour supply by ensuring that a resilient workforce is:

- **Easy to enter** (i.e., supports career navigation and skills recognition);
- **Easy to return to** (i.e., supports workers to re-enter the labour market after life disruptions); and
- **Easy to remain in** (i.e., keeps mid-career and long-tenured workers attached to the labour market even as personal circumstances, workforce and economic conditions change).

The Working Table discussion took note of the important context of policy changes and economic conditions that impact overall labour supply (e.g., the new immigration levels plan, changes that impact the post-secondary education sector). In terms of potential responses, the discussion focused on interventions within the skills and employment policy landscape.





### 3.

#### How can we ensure a strong labour supply in Canada, where no Canadians get left behind?

Insights from these discussions included:

1. Meaningful consultations with underrepresented groups can help to understand and address barriers preventing successful workforce entry or re-entry. Ideally, consultations should continue throughout a career to ensure these groups remain in the workforce.
2. Recent increases in youth unemployment suggest it is getting harder to enter the labour market for young people, due to factors such as increased youth population growth, softening hiring demand, and AI adoption changing the labour market context.<sup>10</sup> The gap between education or training and work could be bridged with financial incentives to hire young people, and navigation and networking support to help people entering the workforce make successful transitions to quality work. Re-entering the workforce could be made easier through flexible work arrangements as employees re-integrate work into their life. Providing employees with flexibility where possible as an employer helps to encourage employee retention and wellbeing.
3. Successful transitions from work to retirement can be supported through succession planning, including knowledge transfer, and phased retirement options. Providing employers with tools and resources to facilitate phased retirement options, and incentives for workers that are aligned with those options, helps employees remain in the workforce for longer while leveraging their wisdom in ways to support succession.

## Next steps

The Resilient Workforce Working Table will work with the Secretariat to draft a full report for release in **Spring 2026**.

The report will aim to share a list of actionable recommendations to support a more resilient workforce in Canada and elaborate on the high-level insights shared in this interim document. In the coming months, the Future Skills Centre and the Working Table may share other learnings from their work.



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# Appendix A

## Resilient Workforce Working Table Members

Co-Chairs	
<b>Rob Fleming</b>	Former British Columbia Minister of Education and Transportation and Infrastructure
<b>Monte McNaughton</b>	Former Ontario Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training, and Skills Development
<b>Jennifer Robson</b>	Associate Professor and Director of the Graduate Program in Political Management, Carleton University
<b>Noel Baldwin</b>	Executive Director, Future Skills Centre
<b>Tricia Williams</b>	Director of Research, Evaluation and Knowledge Mobilization, Future Skills Centre
Members	
<b>Bridgitte Anderson</b>	President and CEO, Greater Vancouver Board of Trade
<b>Stephen Beatty</b>	Former VP, Toyota Canada Inc.
<b>Loleen Berdahl</b>	Executive Director, Johnson-Shoyama Graduate Policy School
<b>Tyler Downey</b>	President, SEIU Healthcare
<b>Matthew Foss</b>	Vice President, Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business
<b>Graham Fox</b>	Vice President, Public Affairs, External Relations and Communications, Hydro Quebec
<b>Jean-Pierre Giroux</b>	President, Excellence in Manufacturing Consortium (EMC)
<b>Jennefer Griffith</b>	Executive Director, Food Processing Skills Canada
<b>Anna Jahn</b>	Executive Director, Centre for Media, Technology and Democracy and Associate Professor, McGill University's Max Bell School of Public Policy
<b>Audrey Murray</b>	Présidente-directrice générale, Commission de la construction du Québec (CCQ)
<b>Adrienne Oldford</b>	Executive Director, The McKenna Institute
<b>Suhayl Patel</b>	Associate Dean, Centre for Workforce Development, Bow Valley College
<b>Sean Strickland</b>	Executive Director, Canada's Building Trades Unions
<b>Penny Walsh-McGuire</b>	Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Alliance for Skills and Training in the Life Sciences (CASTL)

## Consortium Members

<b>Michael Burt</b>	Vice-President, Signal49 Research
<b>Wendy Cukier</b>	Professor, Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Ted Rogers School of Management, Founder, Diversity Institute, Toronto Metropolitan University
<b>Steven Liss</b>	VP, Research and Innovation, Toronto Metropolitan University
<b>Karen Myers</b>	President and CEO, Blueprint ADE
<b>Mark Patterson</b>	Executive Director, Magnet, Toronto Metropolitan University

# Endnotes

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