

Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the Upcoming Federal Budget 2026



Canadian Coalition of Community-Based Employability Training (CCCBET)/
Coalition canadienne des organismes communautaires en développement de l'employabilité
(CCOCDE)

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Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

That the Government of Canada establish a National Employment Strategy, aligned with the One Canadian Economy vision, with a dedicated federal investment of approximately \$10 million over five years, leveraging community-based employment service providers to improve labour mobility, reduce barriers to employment, and support inclusive workforce participation.

Recommendation 2:

That the Government of Canada provide targeted, ongoing investment of approximately \$500 million annually to operationalize Workforce Alliances by formally integrating community-based employment service providers as delivery partners and strengthening Labour Market Transfer Agreements (LMTAs) and Workforce Development Agreements (WDAs).

Recommendation 3:

That the Government of Canada invest approximately \$200 million annually in mid-career upskilling and reskilling supports for workers and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), delivered through community-based employment service providers and expanded access to employment services.

About CCCBET

The Canadian Coalition for Community-Based Employment and Training (CCCBET) is a national, non-profit organization with representatives from provincial and national employment and training associations and organizations. We advocate for approximately 1,000 community-based training organizations across Canada that deliver vital workforce development programs. These programs are primarily funded through the Workforce Development Agreements, Labour Market Development Agreements, and direct funding initiatives such as the Government of Canada's Youth Employment and Skills Strategy.

CCCBET provides pan-Canadian leadership for the community-based employment and training sector. Our vision is to ensure that this sector delivers professional, recognized services, enabling all individuals to access community-based support in their pursuit of meaningful employment and social inclusion. Due to our extensive national scope, we serve as a conduit for information between the government and citizens seeking employment, offering a community perspective on regional issues.

Community-based employment service providers are essential to the success of our workforce. They are deeply embedded in their communities, allowing them to understand and respond to the unique needs of local clients and employers. By fostering local economic development, participating in economic development boards, and working jointly with other social service providers, our members contribute significantly to the well-being and prosperity of their communities.

As experts within their communities, our members bring invaluable insights to national discussions on community-based employability and training support programs. They are committed to meeting the evolving needs of both clients and employers, ensuring that our workforce remains dynamic and resilient.

Introduction: Mobilizing Canada's Workforce Through Community-Based Systems

Across Canada, community-based employment service providers act as economic first responders. They are often the first to support workers navigating job loss, career transition, or entry into the labour market, and the first to help employers respond to changing workforce needs.

With a national network of over 1,000 organizations, these providers are deeply embedded in local economies. They bring together employers, training providers, and job seekers, translating policy into action and ensuring that workforce strategies are responsive to real-world conditions.

As the federal government advances its One Canadian Economy vision and launches Workforce Alliances to address sector-specific labour challenges, there is a clear opportunity to leverage this existing system to achieve national objectives.

CCCBET represents this pan-Canadian network and offers a practical, scalable approach to aligning workforce development with economic priorities: mobilize what already works and connect it nationally.

Recommendation 1: Establish a National Employment Strategy

Canada's commitment to a more integrated national economy requires a workforce system that enables people to move across regions, sectors, and opportunities.

While recent federal initiatives have focused on labour mobility and sectoral coordination, Canada lacks a unified framework to align workforce development efforts across jurisdictions and systems.

A National Employment Strategy would provide this foundation.

However, national coordination must be matched with local implementation. Community-based employment service providers are uniquely positioned to bridge this gap. They:

- Convene employers, training institutions, and community partners
- Identify emerging labour market needs and skills gaps
- Connect individuals to training and employment opportunities
- Support participation among those facing barriers to employment

In this role, Community-based employment service providers function as connective infrastructure, aligning workforce supply and demand across fragmented systems.

Current labour market conditions underscore the need for this approach:

- Canada's unemployment rate is approximately 6.9%, with youth unemployment significantly higher at 14.3%
- At the same time, employers continue to face persistent labour shortages in key sectors

A National Employment Strategy that leverages community-based employment service providers would:

- Translate national priorities into coordinated, community-level action
- Improve labour mobility by supporting transitions across jobs and regions
- Increase participation among youth, Indigenous workers, and equity-deserving groups
- Strengthen alignment between training systems and employer demand

With targeted federal investment, Canada can establish a strategy that is both nationally coherent and locally effective.

Recommendation 2: Invest in Workforce Alliances and Workforce Infrastructure

The federal Workforce Alliances initiative reflects a shift toward sector-driven, multi-stakeholder coordination to identify labour bottlenecks and align responses across industries such as construction, manufacturing, and the care economy.

This approach is well aligned with the strengths of community-based employment service providers.

Workforce Alliances are designed to bring together employers, training providers, and other partners to develop shared solutions. Community-based providers already perform this convening role across Canada. Through a network of more than 1,000 organizations, they:

- Engage employers, particularly small to medium-sized enterprises, in workforce planning
- Collaborate with training providers to align programs with labour market demand
- Provide real-time insights into local and regional labour conditions
- Ensure that workforce strategies include underrepresented and equity-deserving populations

Through CCCBET and its partnership with CERIC, this work can be scaled nationally, connecting approximately 60,000 career development professionals and linking sector strategies to community-level delivery.

Workforce Alliances are intended to identify challenges and align actors. Community-based providers are the mechanism that enables those aligned strategies to be implemented, ensuring that planning translates into action.

At the same time, Labour Market Transfer Agreements (LMTAs) and Workforce Development Agreements (WDAs) provide the core infrastructure that supports service delivery across the country.

Targeted, ongoing federal investment would:

- Enable Workforce Alliances to move from coordination to implementation
- Strengthen the capacity of community-based providers as delivery partners
- Improve alignment across jurisdictions, sectors, and systems
- Ensure consistent access to workforce supports for employers and workers

This approach ensures that federal investments are not only strategic, but also deployable at scale through existing, trusted networks.

Recommendation 3: Support Small to Medium-Sized Enterprises and Mid-Career Workforce Transitions

Canada's labour market is evolving rapidly, with increasing demand for workers to adapt, reskill, and transition across roles and sectors.

Small and medium-sized enterprises, which represent over 97% of businesses in Canada, are central to this transformation. However, many small to medium-sized enterprises lack the capacity to:

- Identify workforce needs and skills gaps
- Develop training and retention strategies
- Navigate available workforce development supports

At the same time, many workers—particularly those who are employed but underemployed—lack access to services that would support career progression and transition.

Community-based employment service providers play a critical role in addressing both sides of this equation. They:

- Work directly with small to medium-sized enterprises to understand workforce needs
- Connect employers to training providers and talent pipelines

- Support workers through career transitions and upskilling
- Provide wrap-around supports that improve retention and outcomes

Expanding access to employment services and investing in mid-career upskilling would enable community-based employment service providers to further mobilize employers, trainers, and workers in response to changing labour market conditions.

This would:

- Support small to medium-sized enterprises in adapting to economic and technological change
- Enable workers to build skills while remaining attached to the labour market
- Reduce long-term unemployment and workforce detachment
- Strengthen productivity and economic resilience

With targeted investment, Canada can strengthen the role of community-based providers as connectors and mobilizers, ensuring that workforce transitions are supported in real time.

Closing

Canada's ability to realize a *One Canadian Economy* depends on more than coordination at the policy level. It requires a workforce system that can mobilize employers, training providers, and workers across regions and sectors.

Community-based employment service providers are that system.

By investing in a National Employment Strategy, Workforce Alliances, and mid-career workforce supports, the federal government can leverage this pan-Canadian network to deliver coordinated, inclusive, and responsive workforce solutions.

With the right alignment and investment, Canada can ensure that its workforce is not only prepared for change but fully mobilized to meet it.