



September 4, 2018
The Honourable William Morneau, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Finance
Finance Canada
90 Elgin Street
OTTAWA, Ontario
K1A 0G5

RE: Innovation, Skills and Work-Integrated Learning

Dear Minister Morneau,

In Budget 2018, you highlighted the need to position Canadians for success in the global economy by supporting new and innovative approaches to skills development.

Already, your government has invested in a number of important initiatives to enhance Canada's future talent pool: the Future Skills Centre, Mitacs, the Youth Employment Strategy and the new Student Work Placement Program.

As employers, educators and students, we believe that the most efficient and effective way to prepare Canada's youth for the coming skills revolution is to embrace a national work-integrated learning (WIL) strategy. WIL opportunities such as co-ops, internships, apprenticeships and applied research projects enable students to apply their skills and knowledge in the workplace.

They introduce young people to potential new career paths, while providing businesses with access to new talent, energy and ideas.

Now is the time to make Canada the world leader in WIL – to commit to ensuring that every post-secondary student in the country has access to a valuable work experience by the time they finish school. This is not just a job for government: all of us have a role to play in supporting young Canadians and making this vision a reality.

We, the undersigned, join the Business/Higher Education Roundtable (BHER) in recommending the following actions, and fully support BHER's pre-budget submission to the Standing Committee on Finance (appended):

1. Launch a National WIL Strategy and create a National Taskforce to implement it.
2. Commit additional federal funding to the existing WIL matching platform investment (e.g. Orbis/Magnet) to increase functionality and reach more employers. The result will be a national WIL platform that will simplify WIL participation for employers and provide a place to house resources to help expand and develop new programs and share best practices.
3. Increase WIL funding to support employers that offer meaningful WIL placements. This should focus on small- and medium-sized enterprises and companies that are new to WIL.
4. Expand existing WIL programs to include humanities and social sciences students, international students and not-for-profit organizations.
5. Place special emphasis on WIL funding for students from under-represented groups, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit students, to ensure WIL can truly be a social and economic equalizer.
6. Leverage existing federal programs and initiatives, including the Innovation Superclusters Initiative and the Economic Strategy Tables, and changes to procurement policies that would reward companies that participate in WIL.
7. Increase the number of WIL placements offered by the Government of Canada to maintain its position as an employer of choice and in support of its public service renewal.

As the Canadian economy faces an uncertain global environment, we need a well-prepared, well-educated, and highly skilled workforce to navigate these shifts.

We thank you for your investments to date, and urge your government to continue creating new opportunities for young people and breaking down barriers that prevent Canadians from reaching their full potential.

Sincerely,

The Honourable John Manley
President and Chief Executive Officer
Business Council of Canada



Rob Henderson
President and Chief Executive Officer
BioTalent Canada



Greg D'Avignon
President and Chief Executive Officer
Business Council of British Columbia



Manjeet Birk
Executive Director
Canadian Alliance of Student
Associations





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Ray Massey
Acting Executive Director
Canadian Apprenticeship Forum



The Honourable Perrin Beatty
President and Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Chamber of Commerce



Mary Van Buren
President
Canadian Construction Association



Jean Paul Gladu
President and Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business





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Dennis Darby

President and Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters



Canadian
Manufacturers &
Exporters

Manufacturiers et
Exportateurs du
Canada

Denise Amyot

President and Chief Executive Officer
Colleges and Institutes Canada



Colleges and Institutes Canada
Collèges et instituts Canada

Claudia Sperling

President
Co-operative Education and Work-
Integrated Learning Canada



Co-operative
education and
work-integrated
learning

Yves-Thomas Dorval

Président-directeur general
Conseil du patronat du Québec



Kevin Nilsen

President and Chief Executive Officer
ECO Canada





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Michelle Branigan
Chief Executive Officer
Electricity Human Resources Canada



Gabriel Miller
Executive Director
Federation for the Humanities and
Social Sciences



Robert Watson
President and Chief Executive Officer
Information Technology
Association of Canada



Yung Wu
Chief Executive Officer
MaRS Discovery District





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Pierre Gratton
President and Chief Executive Officer
Mining Association of Canada



Alejandro Adem
Chief Executive Officer and
Scientific Director
Mitacs



Rocco Rossi
President and Chief Executive Officer
Ontario Chamber of Commerce



Sarah Watts – Rynard
Chief Executive Officer
Polytechnics Canada





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Jennifer Reynolds
President and Chief Executive Officer
Toronto Financial Services Alliance



Meric Gertler
Chair
U15 Group of Canadian
Research Universities



Paul Davidson
President
Universities Canada



Scott Stirrett
Executive Director and Founder
Venture for Canada





BHER's Recommendations:

1. Launch a National WIL Strategy and create a National Taskforce to implement it.
2. Commit additional federal funding to the existing work-integrated learning (WIL) matching platform investment (e.g. Orbis/Magnet) to increase functionality and reach more employers. The result will be a national WIL platform that will simplify WIL participation for employers and provide a place to house resources to help expand and develop new programs and share best practices.
3. Increase WIL funding to support employers that offer meaningful WIL placements. This should focus on small- and medium-sized enterprises and companies that are new to WIL.
4. Expand existing WIL programs to include humanities and social sciences students, international students and not-for-profit organizations.
5. Place special emphasis on WIL funding for students from under-represented groups, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit students, to ensure WIL can truly be a social and economic equalizer.
6. Leverage existing federal programs and initiatives, including the Innovation Superclusters Initiative and the Economic Strategy Tables, and changes to procurement policies that would reward companies that participate in WIL.
7. Increase the number of WIL placements offered by the Government of Canada to maintain its position as an employer of choice and in support of its public service renewal.

100 per cent work-integrated learning: Together, we can prepare today's talent for tomorrow's innovation economy.

Across the country, an unprecedented coalition of educators and employers have come together to ensure that Canada has the most highly skilled and productive workforce in the world.

We believe that the most efficient and effective way to prepare Canada's youth for the coming skills revolution is by embracing work-integrated learning (WIL). WIL opportunities such as co-ops, internships, apprenticeships and applied research projects enable students to apply their skills and knowledge in the workplace. They introduce young people to potential new career paths, while providing businesses with access to new talent, energy and ideas.

This is why we believe that 100 per cent of Canada's post-secondary students should have access to a WIL opportunity. To achieve this ambitious but important goal, Canada will need a National Work-Integrated Learning Strategy that focuses the efforts of employers, educators and government.

The challenge: Canada is not prepared for the future of work

In Budget 2018, the Government of Canada highlighted the need to position Canadians for success in the global economy by supporting new and innovative approaches to skills development. We share the government's view that equipping Canadians with the necessary skills is essential to our country's ability to compete globally. Already, this government has invested in a number of important initiatives to enhance Canada's future talent pool: the Future Skills Centre, Mitacs, the Youth Employment Strategy and the new Student Work Placement Program.

Despite these investments, 40 per cent of post-secondary students – 150,000 every year – are not given the opportunity for work-integrated learning (WIL), a proven Canadian approach to bridging the classroom and workplace.

The opportunity: a National WIL Strategy

Now is the time to make Canada the world leader in WIL – to commit to ensuring that every post-secondary student in the country has access to a valuable work experience by the time they finish school. This is not just a job for government: all of us have a role to play in supporting young Canadians and making this vision a reality.

WIL leads to better and more relevant job prospects for **students** and helps them develop new technical and human skills, such as teamwork and communication. WIL also improves their academic and workplace performance and leads to higher wages¹.

WIL provides **employers** with a competitive advantage. Today's youth think differently, and WIL helps inject their insights into companies, non-profits, public sector organizations and start-ups. It also attracts students to jobs or sectors that suffer from talent shortages and introduces employers to potential full-time employees – often at a reduced cost.

Educators also realize the advantages of WIL. Institutions that offer WIL programs can see improved enrollment and students graduating with higher levels of satisfaction². Students with diverse WIL experiences also bring new ideas into the classroom.

¹ Peggy Satler and Julie Peters, "Work-Integrated Learning and Postsecondary Graduates: The Perspective of Ontario Employers." For the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2012.

² Abacus Data, "What Students Think: an Abacus Study on Work-Integrated Learning," For the Business/Higher Education Roundtable, Fall 2016.



WIL is more than co-operative education

As more schools and businesses offer practical, work-related instruction, defining WIL has become increasingly challenging. Gaining consensus on a common definition has been harder still. However, a lack of a common definition and inconsistency in WIL tracking leads to funding and administrative problems, and creates confusion among employers and students over objectives and expectations.

Our research shows that a broad range of WIL experiences provide meaningful learning opportunities for students. All experiences should be structured learning opportunities with defined and measurable outcomes and should adhere to the following principles: they should be inclusive, meaningful and provide an opportunity for mentorship and learning reflection.

We advocate for the adoption of a common definition and framework of WIL experiences. This will allow for the creation of consistent evaluation metrics we need to track WIL outcomes and impacts. To date, our research has identified nine types of meaningful WIL that should serve as a starting point for the creation of a common framework³:

1. **Apprenticeships:** A combination of on-the-job (80-85%) and technical training (15-20%) delivered at a college, vocational school or union training centre.
2. **Co-op:** Periods of study alternate with work placements, offering students a structured approach that integrates their studies with related work experience.
3. **Internships:** Work experiences, typically lasting a year or more, at or near the end of a study program.
4. **Mandatory professional practice:** Work arrangements required for a professional license or designation.
5. **Field experience:** Placements and work-related experiences that prepare students for professional or occupational fields, but are not required for a professional license.
6. **Applied research projects:** Students taking on real-world projects, often with industry partners as clients and the students as service providers.
7. **Service learning:** A range of activities intended to provide equal benefit to the student and the community while maintaining a focus on learning.
8. **Incubators and accelerators:** Intended primarily to promote entrepreneurship, but the scope of services has expanded in recent years to include social initiatives. Qualified applicants may receive funding, supervision, and mentorship from experienced practitioners.
9. **Bootcamps and hackathons:** Popular venues for computer programmers and app designers to develop and showcase their skills. These programs and events have a short duration and are typically focused on developing a particular set of skills or deliverable.

³Academica Group, "Taking the Pulse of Work-Integrated Learning in Canada: Full Report." For the Business/Higher Education Roundtable. Fall 2016.



The timing is right: the road to 100 per cent WIL

Since announcing its goal of 100 per cent WIL in 2016, BHER has partnered with other groups in Canada's training and innovation ecosystem to increase WIL opportunities. Over the past few months, we have consulted with over 25 national associations and organizations in order to understand the challenges and opportunities of creating a National WIL Strategy.

A National WIL Strategy will ensure that 100 per cent of post-secondary students have access to a meaningful WIL placement before they finish school.

To do this, we need to:

1. Simplify processes;
2. Expand reach; and
3. Better allocate funding.

It will require the collective efforts of government, employers, educators, and students to create and fill 150,000 new placements each year. BHER believes that, through collaboration, communication and shared objectives; we can reach our goal by 2028.

Action plan: First three years of a National WIL Strategy (2019-2021)



Simplify Processes

- Create a National WIL Strategy
- Prepare supporting tools and provide group training
- Enhance existing matching platforms



Expand Reach

- Validate and promote benefits to employers
- Launch marketing campaign and engage employers directly
- Heighten advocacy efforts
- Broaden eligibility and increase funding for existing programs
- Leverage federal initiatives



Allocate Funding

- Enable 'Simplify Processes' and 'Expand Reach'
- Identify funding sources

Simplify Processes

1. Create a National WIL Strategy

- Federal government should launch a National WIL Strategy.
- Federal government should identify critical partners to create a multi-body taskforce to implement the Strategy.

2. Prepare supporting tools and provide group training

- BHER to work with employers and educators to create and distribute WIL-related tools with a focus on small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), including “how-to” guides and a WIL-budget calculator.
- Large employers to assist SMEs and suppliers in similar industries by providing training in a group format to students placed with those businesses or suppliers.

3. Enhance existing matching platforms

- BHER to consult educators, employers, and students to better understand challenges with existing platforms and consolidation, and advocate for challenges to be addressed.
- Federal government should commit funding to platform providers, such as Orbis, Magnet and others, to improve, consolidate and increase scope of existing matching platforms.

Expand Reach

1. Validate and promote benefits to employers

- BHER will commission research and surveys to validate quantitative WIL benefits. This research will support a marketing campaign and advocacy efforts (see Recommendations 2 and 3 below).

2. Launch marketing campaign and engage employers directly

- BHER will retain agency to launch digital marketing campaign highlighting WIL benefits (with a focus on SMEs and students) and matching platform, including success stories and influencers.
- BHER will work with industry associations to meet one-on-one with individual employers to encourage WIL participation with a focus on SMEs.

3. Heighten advocacy efforts

- BHER directors, BHER members and other national champions to engage key allies.
- Industry associations to advocate for WIL to drive employers to matching platforms and to add placements.
- BHER directors and BHER members to engage provincial governments to ensure alignment with national strategy.



4. Broaden eligibility and increase funding for existing programs

- Federal government should expand existing WIL programs to include non-STEM students, international students and not-for-profits.
- Federal government should place special emphasis on funding for students from under-represented groups, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit students.
- Federal government should increase WIL funding to support employers that offer meaningful WIL placements with focus on SMEs and companies that are new to WIL.

5. Leverage federal initiatives

- Federal government should partner with local employers and educators to leverage existing initiatives, such as the Innovative Superclusters Initiative and Economic Strategy Tables.
- Federal government should increase WIL placements to maintain its position as an employer of choice and in support of its public service renewal.
- Federal government should introduce procurement directives, such as on infrastructure projects, to reward companies that participate in WIL.

Looking ahead: The next 18 months

Although the plan will evolve over the next decade, we have created an initial roadmap to kick-start and coordinate current efforts. We have also identified the key outcomes and major players for the first three years of this plan (2019-2021).

We believe that if the federal government signals their commitment to WIL as a national priority and confirms support for a National WIL Strategy, then employers and educators will step up to meet the challenge.

August 2018 – February 2019

**Government to
lay foundation**

- Signal WIL is national priority and support National WIL Strategy
- Create multi-sector national WIL taskforce to implement strategy
- Allocate existing funding
- Allocate additional funding in Budget 2019

October 2018 – June 2019

**Employers to
build demand**

- Validate quantitative benefits of WIL to employers (return on investment)
- Address lack of awareness (marketing; industry associations)
- Facilitate finding placements (matching platforms; industry associations)
- Leverage existing programs and initiatives (superclusters)

January 2019 – December 2019

**Educators to
improve programs**

- Engage provinces
- Better prepare students for placements
- Ensure quality placements
- Increase collaboration with industry



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Conclusion

As the Canadian economy faces an uncertain global environment, we need a well-prepared, well-educated, and highly skilled workforce to navigate these shifts. We thank you for your investments to date, and urge your government to continue creating new opportunities for young people and breaking down barriers that prevent Canadians from reaching their full potential.

About BHER

Launched in 2015, the Business/Higher Education Roundtable represents some of Canada's largest companies and leading post-secondary institutions. Although partnerships between higher education and industry have existed in other countries – including the U.K., U.S. and Australia – for decades, Canada has lacked a coordinated strategy to strengthening cooperation between employers and educators. BHER harnesses the strengths of some of Canada's top businesses, universities and colleges to deepen collaboration and improve opportunities for young Canadians.

Learn more at www.BHER.ca.

Contact

Valerie Walker

Executive Director, Business/ Higher Education Roundtable

valerie.walker@bher.ca