



April 3, 2017

The Honourable Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour  
Employment and Social Development Canada  
140 Promenade du Portage  
Phase IV, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor  
GATINEAU, Quebec  
K1A 0J9

Dear Minister Hadju,

As the co-chairs of the Business Higher Education Roundtable (BHER), we are writing to extend our congratulations on the Government's recent budget. We were pleased to see such a strong focus on skills training and work-integrated learning (WIL). This is very much a focus of the key initiatives the Business Higher Education is undertaking.

As you may be aware, BHER is a unique body that brings together the heads of some of Canada's top companies and post-secondary institutions. Launched in 2015, its purpose is to strengthen collaboration between business and the education sector in support of three primary objectives: to assist young Canadians as they transition from school to work; to strengthen Canada's research capacity; and to help Canadian employers adapt to the economy of the future.

As reflected in the Government's budget, we live at a time of rapid innovation, disruptive new technologies and rising global competition for talent. The labour market that today's graduates are entering is dramatically different from the one that awaited previous generations of Canadians. BHER, composed of 27 leaders from the private sector, universities, colleges and polytechnics, is committed to developing fresh approaches to the changes now taking place at the crossroads of business, education and employment. Collectively, the organizations we represent educate hundreds of thousands of students in diverse programs and employ millions of Canadians in a broad range of industry sectors and regions across the country.

BHER is focused on priority areas that align closely with the Government's agenda on skills and your mandate:

- **Building bridges between classrooms and workplaces.** We believe 100 per cent of Canada's post-secondary students should have the opportunity to benefit from a meaningful WIL experience before completing their studies. Last June, BHER members publicly pledged to help make this ambitious goal a reality. We are currently focused on increasing the availability of WIL opportunities for students in a number of industry sectors, while also addressing specific, industry-identified skills gaps. For example, with BHER support and leadership from Dave McKay, President and CEO of RBC, the Toronto Financial Services Alliance will launch an innovative WIL pilot program called ASPIRE on April 19 in Toronto. The goal of this program is to create 10,000 new WIL opportunities in the financial services sector by the end of 2020.
- **Increasing the number of high-quality, permanent jobs for younger workers.** As employers and educators, we know the value of up-to-date, comprehensive labour market information. BHER is developing an evaluation framework that will allow us to assess the effectiveness of our WIL programs and monitor progress against our goal of 100-per-cent student WIL participation. This will include tracking the number of student WIL placements that lead to full-time, permanent employment. The information we gather will also make it easier to identify existing or emerging skills gaps.

Minister, we look forward to working with you. We have had discussions with your officials about possible areas of collaboration. We would welcome an opportunity to meet with you to explore how we can support you in ensuring young people get the skills they need to pursue rewarding, successful careers in a strong and growing Canadian economy.

Sincerely,



**Tom Jenkins**  
Chair of the Board  
OpenText Corporation



**Anne Sado**  
President  
George Brown College



**Dr. Elizabeth Cannon**  
President  
and Vice-Chancellor  
University of Calgary

**Co-Chairs, Business Higher Education Roundtable (BHER)**