

Underfunded Trades Programs Stoke Housing Shortage



Skilled trades shortages are growing as baby boomers retire and demand for new housing increases.

Labour market studies predict 83,000 job openings in the skilled trades by 2032.

Yet, there was little in the recent BC budget for more training, and this is reflected in the service plan for SkilledTradesBC.

Their plan admits, “increase in housing demands in BC will also increase the demand for skilled workers.”

Yet page 17 of the plan shows flat “training investment” of \$88,008,000 to 2026/27. Considering inflation, this is a decline in government support.

This expenditure does not reflect BC’s “housing demand” and “demand for skilled workers” and will undermine existing programs.

For example, after 16 years hosting Women in Trades classes, Okanagan College is shutting down the program after the provincial government pulled its funding.

SkilledTradesBC claims they don’t have enough money to fund the classes.

Yet their service plan says, “SkilledTradesBC will continue to work with partners to ensure women and other underrepresented groups are receiving the necessary support and funding...”

In addition, there are wait-lists for trades programs at Camosun College, indicating underfunding to meet demand is clearly a problem.

This reveals a big disconnect between what’s claimed in government service plans and news releases, and what government is supporting in the real world of construction.

This has far-reaching consequences. The BC government’s goal to build thousands of new homes is not credible while they underfund training to build the homes.

BC Builds and other government solutions to boost housing supply must start with a large well-trained workforce.

Politicians and bureaucrats don’t build anything. They rely on the private sector – builders and trades - to achieve their housing goals.

In light of the trades shortages and underfunding training programs, the BC government’s claim of significantly boosting housing supply is a pipedream.

We have proposed creative solutions to get more young people into the trades. This includes enabling university students to take practical electives for credit in framing, welding and other skills.

However, if the government is unwilling to significantly invest in trades training programs, the seats will not be available to accommodate students.

The BC government’s underfunding of trades programs will continue to stoke housing shortages and boost prices.



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