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**For Immediate Release
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ITA E-PPRENTICE Strategy Will Reduce Barriers to Completion of Apprenticeship Training, Expand Access

Richmond, BC – BC’s Industry Training Authority today announced a \$6 million investment into its new E-PPRENTICE initiative, which will create more flexible options for delivering the technical training component of apprenticeship for skilled trades occupations.

The funding will be used to develop innovative, blended models – often including an e-learning component – for eight high-volume trades, beginning with the millwright, welding, cooking and auto collision repair programs in the coming year.

“This new service provides British Columbians seeking to become certified in the trades with a great new opportunity,” said Minister of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, Murray Coell. “Through our Canada/BC Labour Market Agreement funding we’re building made in B.C. solutions to respond to our current and future economic challenges.”

“This new project will go a long way to help British Columbians get the skills they need to fully participate in the workforce,” said the Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development. “Through our Labour Market Agreement with BC, and initiatives like E-PPRENTICE, we are helping employers find skilled workers and delivering on our commitment to help everyone get access to the specialized training necessary to find and keep jobs in BC.”

In announcing the initiative, which is the outcome of best practices research and a business strategy developed for the ITA by a steering group led by Vancouver Community College and comprising representatives of BC colleges and industry, CEO Kevin Evans acknowledged that traditional models of training are not effective for everyone.

“We know that being released from work for 4-10 weeks each year to attend training in a college setting can present hardships for some apprentices and their employers,” said Evans. “We hope that flexible alternatives like online or other distributed learning, done at the apprentices’ chosen time and pace, will help remove some of the barriers to apprenticeship completion, while at the same time attracting new entrants to the trades who are attracted to the real-time, high-tech education offering.”

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Evans added that the ITA continues to support and fund the traditional block release model of technical training, for those who prefer it.

The ITA has contracted BCcampus to manage the E-PPRENTICE initiative. Executive Director David Porter says that his agency's first step will be to issue a request for proposals later this week. BCcampus will be seeking partnerships between public and private post-secondary institutions, secondary school districts and new media companies to lead the development and province-wide delivery of the E-PPRENTICE programs.

Funding for E-PPRENTICE has been provided through the federal/provincial Labour Market Agreement (LMA.) Under the LMA, each year for the next six years, the Government of Canada will provide approximately \$66 million in funding to the Province for labour market programs. For more information on the LMA, visit www.WorkBC.ca.

Established as a crown corporation in 2004 to oversee and expand B.C.'s industry training and apprenticeship system, the ITA works with industry and employers, trainees and apprentices, labour unions and training providers to meet industry's current and future training needs. See www.itabc.ca for more information.

BCcampus provides services and leadership to support the online learning goals of BC's public post-secondary institutions by identifying, acquiring, developing, and implementing technologies and services that enhance online learning opportunities. For more information, please visit www.bccampus.ca.

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