

NEWS RELEASE

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BC'S SHIPBUILDING AND REPAIR INDUSTRY LAUNCHES MAJOR REVIEW OF TRAINING PRIORITIES

VANCOUVER, BC – As a result of several major shipbuilding and repair contracts being awarded to British Columbia suppliers, demand for qualified trades people and ongoing recruitment issues have grown. To meet this challenge, stakeholders have formed the Shipbuilding and Repair Human Resource Steering Committee. The committee is composed of senior representatives from the WCSRF (West Coast Shipbuilding and Repair Forum), the RTO (Resource Training Organization), the ITA (Industry Training Authority) and Service Canada.

The objective of this project, funded through Service Canada's Labour Market Partnerships program, is to examine the feasibility of re-establishment of several of the industry-specific trades which have become dormant over the years. Critical to this initiative is the development of a skilled workforce for the industry and meeting the industry staffing requirements over the next ten years.

“With this new HR committee in place, the goal is to modernize the apprenticeship training programs to meet known and anticipated shipbuilding and repair projects over the next ten years. With the demand for the repair and refit and construction of new ships increasing we must develop a strategy to encourage, promote and recruit new young talent”, said Captain (N) Alex Reuben, Commanding Officer of the Fleet Maintenance Facility CAPE BRETON in Esquimalt BC.

“This Industry recognizes that to be successful in this marketplace it must continue innovating aggressively and, at the same time, we must build a new generation of skilled workers to sustain the tradition of shipbuilding in BC”, said Ron Holmes, Work Force Renewal Officer, JTFP/MARPAC HQ.

This project will be completed by March 31, 2009, and is expected to lead to the development of new and updated training standards and programs to support a growing BC shipbuilding and repair industry and hundreds of highly skilled, well-paying jobs.

BC's shipbuilding and repair industry continues to play an important role in the province's economy by designing, building, repairing, maintaining and refitting ships for the marine transportation system. It also supports the Government of Canada's naval and coast guard fleets on the west coast. Similar to other industrial sectors, the shipbuilding and repair industry faces the challenge of attracting new recruits to replace a skilled and aging workforce.

Shipyards located in Nanaimo, North Vancouver, Port Alberni, Richmond, Vancouver and Victoria generally focus on various projects such as cruise ship repairs and conversions, refits of naval vessels and barge construction. BC shipyards have developed specialized abilities in serving the expanding cruise ship market, ferry construction, tug and barge construction, and luxury yacht building for the export market.

Based on available statistics the number of principal establishments in Canada's shipbuilding and repair industry increased from 43 in 1994 to 114 in 2005. BC has the largest share of shipbuilding and repair establishments in Canada, including 4 medium sized, 20 small and 23 micro-sized establishments.

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