Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada
Enseignement coopératif et apprentissage en milieu de travail Canada

CEWIL CANADA Applauds Monumental Boost to Student Work-Integrated Learning

(Ottawa, Ontario – March 19, 2019) – Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning (CEWIL) Canada is thrilled by the federal government’s monumental support for work-integrated learning (WIL) and skills development in Budget 2019, a total commitment of close to $800M over five years. The government’s announcement coincides perfectly with National Co-op and WIL Week, during which the contributions and achievements of students engaged in work-integrated learning across the country are celebrated. Budget 2019 signals landmark support for work-integrated learning from the federal government including a laudable goal that within ten years a WIL opportunity will be available to all young Canadians who wish to pursue one. Budget 2019’s three different streams of funding will support the development of up to 84,000 new WIL opportunities per year.

Work-integrated learning helps students gain real-world experience, develop crucial transferable skills, and build their professional networks. Employers who facilitate work-integrated learning gain access to flexible, cost-effective student employees and a longer-term, high-quality talent pipeline. Post-secondary institutions obtain closer ties to industry thereby closing the feedback loop which allows curriculum to match leading edge skills requirements. Budget 2019 contains several important investments that will contribute to the creation and maintenance of meaningful partnerships between students, employers, and post-secondary institutions and provide a breadth of quality WIL experiences to Canadian students.

CEWIL applauds the government of Canada and Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Patty Hajdu for expanding the Student Work Placement Program (SWPP) both in scope and in scale. Budget 2019 allocates $631.2M over 5 years to provide wage subsidies for students in an extensive array of WIL opportunities including co-op work terms and internships. These funds will support up to 20,000 new WIL placements by 2021-2022. Canada is already a leader in paid employment for students through its robust co-operative education model, and SWPP builds on this leadership by encouraging paid employment in other forms of WIL. CEWIL is delighted by SWPP’s expansion which recognizes that students studying in all disciplines have the knowledge and creativity to drive innovation. Expanding SWPP eligibility encourages paid employment for students in disciplines such as social services, health care and education where WIL opportunities are traditionally unpaid and are more likely to be filled by women, Indigenous students and persons with disabilities. CEWIL looks forward to continuing our collaboration with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) on this program and using our broad network of post-secondary institutions – including universities, colleges and polytechnics to accelerate SWPP’s growth into new sectors.
Further, Budget 2019 allocates $150M over four years to ESDC to create partnerships with innovative businesses to create an additional 20,000 WIL opportunities per year. These opportunities will focus on non-placement types of WIL including applied research and industry-based projects. As ESDC develops parameters for these types of WIL experiences, CEWIL will be pleased to provide information on the key elements associated with quality work-integrated learning experiences and to ensure that newly created opportunities can be integrated into our robust existing infrastructure.

Budget 2019 also includes funds for the Business/Higher Education Roundtable to continue their work championing work-integrated learning with Canada’s business and post-secondary leaders. CEWIL looks forward to working closely with BHER in progressing Canada’s strategy on work-integrated learning and support for students across regions and post-secondary disciplines. By sharing our over 45 years of experience and expertise and working collaboratively, we can ensure that all newly created WIL opportunities are high quality experiences with outcomes which will play an important role in preparing Canadian students for the challenges expected in the future of work and learning.

“We believe work-integrated learning is the best way to prepare students in Canada for the uncertain, complex future of work,” said CEWIL Canada president Kristine Dawson. “Budget 2019’s investment in work-integrated learning places Canada at the forefront of WIL around the world. It gives our students the tools they need to develop essential skills and propel the Canadian workforce into the future.”

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About CEWIL Canada

Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada (CEWIL Canada), is the lead organization for work-integrated learning in Canada. Their mission is to build the capacity to develop future-ready students and graduates through quality work-integrated learning. CEWIL Canada partners with post-secondary institutions, community members, employers, government, and students to champion work-integrated learning (WIL).