

EDUCATION

College gets more funding for trades

Province investing \$281,000 to create 148 new seats for culinary arts, carpentry, plumbing and welding

By ANDREA PEACOCK

The Okanagan Saturday

Trades programs at Okanagan College got a boost from the provincial government, which announced additional funding to create more seats in the culinary arts, carpentry, plumbing and welding programs.

"Okanagan College has been so successful with full enrolments and high employment after graduation, that it's time to recognize that and give Okanagan College the dividends it deserves," said Andrew Wilkinson, minister of advanced education, on Friday.

The province is investing \$281,000 to provide 148 new seats in the college's trades programs: 36 of those seats will be in the culinary arts program, 80 will be in carpentry and 16 seats each will be added to plumbing and welding.

"I have a hard time thinking of a more heavily successful institution in the whole province," said Wilkinson.

"You're one of our models of success around the province, and we'll continue to reward that success with new programs, new buildings, new funding and new seats."

Investing in the trades is important because of the high demand for those jobs, said Wilkinson.

"We're looking at 700,000 retirements in this

province over the next 10 years, and a good chunk of that involves skilled trades people," he said. "We have to invest in training people for the skills that they need, so they'll be fulfilling all of the job needs of tomorrow."

Bernard Casavant, manager of culinary arts at Okanagan College, was thrilled to see an investment in the culinary arts program in particular.

"I know of two restaurants for sure in the valley that had to limit their hours last year because of the fact they didn't have enough cooks," he said. "It only makes sense that we would be using this funding for the training of cooks to go out into the valley during the height of tourist season."

The demand for the culinary program is so high, there are wait-lists, said Casavant.

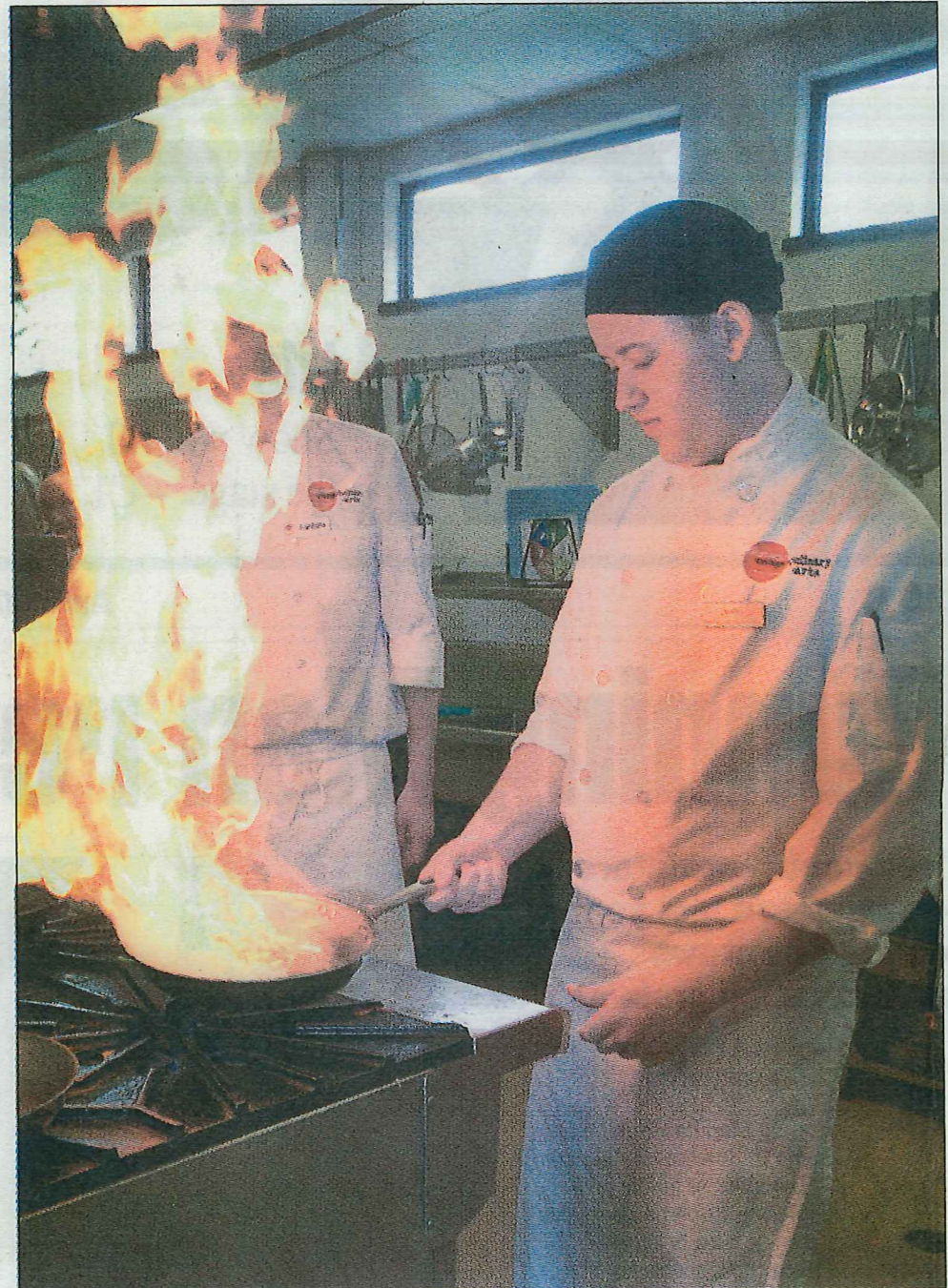
"We're bursting at the seams," he said. "We need to be able to recognize that the industry demands are there, but we're not able to fulfil them because of the square footage space."

The culinary program has roughly 182 students per year. The additional 36 seats will create two new classes of 18 students each.

Nathan Robinson is in his second year in the culinary program at Okanagan College. He moved to Kelowna from Calgary for this program.

"I chose here because I heard about the chefs and the program, and I wanted more of a one-on-one basis, which so far has been awesome," he said.

"The progression that I've had myself shows these guys know their stuff, and they know-how to relay that information, and, to me, that's what an instructor is."



ANDREA PEACOCK/The Okanagan Saturday

Jarrod Beaton, a culinary arts student at Okanagan College in Kelowna, cooks with fire in the culinary arts room on Friday. The province announced a \$281,000 investment to fund 148 seats in trades programs at the college.