



September 2, 2008

Governments of Canada and Alberta sign a new agreement on training and skills development that will help prepare Albertans for jobs of the future

Calgary... The Honourable Diane Ablonczy, Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism), on behalf of the Honourable Monte Solberg, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, and the Honourable Hector Goudreau, Minister of Employment and Immigration for Alberta, today signed a new agreement to help Alberta workers improve their skills, and to prepare them for the jobs of the future.

The agreement represents a significant Government of Canada investment in the people of Alberta and addresses employers' needs for skilled workers. Under the new agreement, the Government of Canada will invest nearly \$316 million in Alberta's labour market over the next six years.

Through this agreement, residents of Alberta who are not eligible for training under the Employment Insurance (EI) program will have more of a chance to improve their skills. The funding will help those often under-represented in the labour force, including Aboriginal people, immigrants and persons with disabilities, gain access to the training they need to find good quality jobs. It will also help people move from low-skilled work to better jobs in sectors such as construction, manufacturing and health care. Approximately 5,000 Albertans will benefit directly from the Labour Market Agreement each year.

"Today's announcement will help thousands enjoy the benefits of Alberta's prosperous economy and respond to Alberta's skills and labour shortage," said Secretary of State Ablonczy. "Our Government has made an important commitment in our long-term economic plan, *Advantage Canada*, to create the best-educated, most skilled, and most flexible workforce in the world. With today's agreement, we are one step closer to getting this done in Alberta."

The agreement complements the work Alberta is undertaking to address its current and future labour market needs, including its 10-year labour force strategy, *Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce*.

"Helping Albertans develop their skills is critical for the prosperity of both individuals and the province as a whole," said Goudreau. "This investment will help ease the skills shortages that limit our growth and affect our ability to compete internationally."

"Bow Valley College plays a prominent role in educating the labour force for Calgary and Alberta," says Sharon Carry, Bow Valley College President and CEO. "Our governments' announcement will allow institutions such as Bow Valley College to expand its commitment to preparing Aboriginal people, immigrants, and persons with disabilities for the next steps in their career path. We congratulate the governments of Canada and Alberta for renewing this significant partnership which will provide many Albertans with access to the education they need to succeed."

The new Canada-Alberta Labour Market Agreement comes into effect today. It helps fulfill the commitment made in the Government of Canada's long-term economic plan, *Advantage Canada*, and recent federal budgets to create the best-educated, most skilled, and most flexible work force in the world.

Similar agreements have been signed with several provinces, and further agreements are being negotiated with other provinces and territories and will be signed in the coming months.

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This news release is available in alternative formats upon request.

Visit the new Human Resources and Social Development Canada Web site at www.hrsdc.gc.ca.

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Under the new Labour Market Agreements, the Government of Canada will invest \$500 million annually over the next six fiscal years to increase the quantity and enhance the quality of Canada's labour force. These resources will be allocated to the provinces and territories on an equal per capita basis. The Canada-Alberta Labour Market Agreement helps fulfill the commitment made in the Government of Canada's economic plan, *Advantage Canada*, and in recent federal budgets to create the best-educated, most skilled, and most flexible workforce in the world.

The Government of Alberta will continue to implement its 10-year labour force development strategy - *Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce* by working with stakeholder groups to ensure Alberta has more workers, better-trained people and innovative workplaces. The new investments under the Labour Market Agreement, combined with this strategy and other key labour market initiatives, will enhance the province's competitiveness and productivity in the global marketplace.

The new investments will focus on supporting skills development for unemployed individuals who are not eligible for training assistance under the Employment Insurance program, including groups who are under-represented in the labour market, such as Aboriginal people, immigrants, persons with disabilities and women, as well as employed individuals who are low skilled.

Under the agreement, Canada will invest nearly \$316 million (\$52.5 million annually) in the Alberta labour market.

The Government of Alberta will invest the new funding in the following areas:

- Employment and training programs \$28.2 million. Funding will increase and expand training opportunities and enhance career information and counselling services. It will see more training options and supports available to improve the labour force participation of women, Aboriginals and low-skilled Albertans, as well as expanded workplace supports for persons with disabilities.
- Immigration programs - \$10.2 million. The agreement will expand training opportunities to help newcomers integrate into the workforce.
- Partnership with industry and employers - \$10 million. The investment will be used in partnership with industry to improve the literacy and essential skills of low-skilled workers. Increased access to training in areas of critical skill shortages will help address labour market demand for skilled workers.
- Program administration - \$4.1 million.

The Labour Market Agreements contain a robust accountability framework that includes commitments related to:

- the development of annual plans and the engagement of stakeholders;
- the management of financial resources provided under the agreement;
- the measurement of the outcomes and benefits of investments in three areas - participants, service delivery and results;
- regular public reporting of results achieved; and
- regular review and evaluation of activities.

In developing and delivering its eligible programs and services, Alberta agrees to take into account the needs of the official language minority communities within the province.

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