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 Human Resources and Social Development Canada  
 Ressources humaines et Développement social Canada

## Governments of Canada and Ontario sign a new agreement on training and skills development

Toronto, Ontario, February 21, 2008 — The Honourable Monte Solberg, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, and the Honourable John Milloy, Ontario Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, today signed a new agreement to help Ontario workers improve their skills and get better jobs.

Today's announcement represents a significant Government of Canada investment in the Ontario labour market while addressing employers' needs for skilled workers. Under the new agreement, the Government of Canada will invest nearly \$1.2 billion in Ontario's labour market over the next six years. These funds will help individuals and workers who are not eligible for training under the Employment Insurance (EI) program to improve their skills. The funding will also help individuals too often excluded from the labour force, including Aboriginal people, immigrants, persons with disabilities, as well as those workers who lack literacy and essential skills, get the training they need to obtain meaningful and sustainable employment.

"Our government promised to get this agreement signed to ensure that the people in Ontario who want to work will be able to get the training they need to get a good job. Today I am proud to announce that we are delivering on our promise," said Minister Solberg. "Through this agreement, more people in Ontario will be able to enjoy the benefits of the province's prosperous economy, and employers will gain the skilled labour they need."

"We've worked hard to come to a solid agreement on labour market support and I look forward to a continued partnership that will benefit Ontarians into the future," said John Milloy, Ontario Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. "Investing in people is our government's top priority and this agreement will extend the Employment Ontario network to help more people achieve their potential and to foster the next generation of economic growth."

The new Canada-Ontario labour market agreement comes into effect on April 1, 2008. It complements the Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) signed between the governments of Canada and Ontario in 2005, under which the Province assumed responsibility as of January 2007 for designing and delivering employment programs and services for unemployed people eligible under the EI program.

The Ontario government offers a range of skills training and employment services and programs to meet the needs of individuals and employers. Through the Employment Ontario network and its Rapid Reemployment and Training initiative, Ontario supports foundation skills, apprenticeship and other technical skills training, and employment services.

Today's agreement helps fulfill the commitment made in the Government of Canada's economic plan, Advantage Canada, and the 2007 federal budget to create the best educated, most skilled, and most flexible workforce in the world. A similar agreement was signed with British Columbia yesterday, and other agreements are being negotiated with other provinces and territories, which will be signed in the coming weeks and months.

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For more information (media only):

Pema Lhalungpa

Press Secretary

Office of Minister Solberg

819-994-2482

Annette Phillips

Senior Advisor, Communications

Office of Minister Milloy

416-473-4649

Media Relations Office

Human Resources and Social Development Canada

819-994-5559

backgrounder

Under the new Labour Market Agreements (LMAs), 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-Ontario Labour Market Agreement helps fulfill the commitment made in the Government of Canada's economic plan, Advantage Canada, and the 2007 federal budget to create the best educated, most skilled, and most flexible workforce in the world.

The main elements of the Canada-Ontario agreement are as follows:

The new Canada-Ontario LMA will inject approximately \$1.2 billion over the next six years into Ontario's labour market - based on current population estimates - beginning with an investment of about \$194 million in 2008-2009. It comes into effect on April 1, 2008.

The new investments will focus on supporting skills development for unemployed individuals who are not eligible for training assistance under the Employment Insurance (EI) program, including groups who are under-represented in the labour market, such as:

- o Aboriginal peoples, immigrants, persons with disabilities, youth, women, older workers and other under-represented groups within the labour market; and
- o individuals entering and re-entering into the workforce.

Under these arrangements, the new resources will also help to provide training for employed individuals who are low-skilled, in particular, those who do not have a high school diploma or a credential recognized in Ontario, or have low levels of literacy and essential skills.

Funding under the Canada-Ontario Labour Market Agreement will flow through Ontario's programs and services. Ontario will direct the new investments to the following four priority areas:

- o Technical skills training - Increase access to timely, relevant and effective training opportunities to assist eligible clients with occupationally specific training that supports labour market attachment, bridges skills gaps to grow Ontario's labour supply, addresses cost as a barrier to skills training for non-EI eligible Ontarians, and helps meet the demand for skilled tradespersons;
- o Labour market integration of immigrants - Create opportunities for internationally trained individuals to quickly meet employer and regulatory requirements in professions, trades and other occupations with focused bridge training projects, financial support, and credential assessment, and increase opportunities to obtain Canadian work experience through mentoring, coaching and other supports for work experience;
- o Foundation skills training and supports - Improve access to literacy and essential skills training, ensure availability of foundation skills training tailored to specific trades and occupations, and create new opportunities for foundation skills training in the workplace; and
- o Labour market supports for persons with disabilities - Remove barriers to participation in training and employment services, by providing sign language interpreters, alternate formats, and attendant care, and increase availability of employer incentives to train on the job, including accommodations and enhancements in the workplace

Both governments are committed to a focus on results and strong accountability measures. Specific elements include the following:

- o development of annual plans and the engagement of stakeholders;
- o stewardship of financial resources provided under the agreement;
- o measuring the outcomes and benefits of investments;
- o ensuring that new federal resources are additional to normal provincial spending;
- o regular public reporting of results achieved; and
- o regular review and evaluation of activities.

In developing and delivering their eligible programs and services, Ontario agrees to continue taking into account the needs of the official language minority communities within the province and to deliver, where there is significant demand, services in either official language.

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Date Modified: 2008-02-21

  
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