



Labour Market: Meeting the Requirements of the 21st Century

Québec City, July 18, 2008 – The Council of the Federation discussed a number of issues related to the labour market requirements in the 21st Century.

Immigration: Visa Processing

The Council of the Federation recognizes that immigrants are critical to Canada's social, economic, and cultural vitality.

Premiers acknowledge that the federal government has taken actions to allow for better prioritization of visa application processing. However, they remain concerned that Canada's attractiveness as a destination of choice for immigrants is at risk due to the continuing and substantial backlog of applications.

The Council urges the federal government to make a concerted effort to reduce the backlog of applications. As a first step, Premiers suggest that a commitment to increase resources in order to reduce the backlog of applications from 925,000 to a more manageable 200,000 applications by 2011 would ensure that Canada remains a destination of choice for immigrants.

Premiers also stressed the importance of planning Canada's immigration levels on a multi-year basis and to better involve provinces and territories.

Immigration: Foreign Credential Recognition

The Council of the Federation recognizes that effective and efficient foreign credential recognition processes are critical to maximizing the contribution of immigrants to the Canadian economy and to increasing the appeal of Canada to foreign workers.

Provinces and Territories will accelerate work with employers, regulatory authorities and educational institutions within their jurisdictions to increase attention to the timely and thorough recognition of foreign credentials.

Premiers direct Ministers responsible to develop stronger mechanisms to assure regulatory authorities and educational institutions are fully collaborating to reduce duplication in foreign credential recognition practices.

They agreed that, as part of their commitment to achieve full labour mobility, once a foreign-trained worker is certified for an occupation in one province or territory, that worker should enjoy the same labour mobility rights as Canadian-trained workers.

Labour Force Participation

Labour force participation contributes to productivity and the country's economic well-being. Premiers discussed their ongoing commitment to labour force participation, including taking further action to review and remove barriers faced by many Canadians.

They discussed the policies and programs in provinces and territories directed at improving labour market participation of under-represented people, including Aboriginal peoples, single parents, people with disabilities and new Canadians.

The Council agreed that, in addition to ongoing provincial and territorial efforts, the federal government has a role to play. Premiers acknowledge the significant barriers to employment faced by Aboriginal peoples, and encourage the federal government to provide increased assistance to move toward the full labour force participation of Aboriginal peoples.

In the coming year, a symposium will be held in Newfoundland and Labrador for policy developers, community-based agencies, and experts to identify the most effective ways for addressing barriers and disincentives to employment and for better integrating services for marginalized and/or vulnerable groups.

Premiers acknowledge the federal government's interest in removing financial disincentives for people entering the labour force. They encourage the federal government to continue to work in cooperation with provinces and territories to develop further measures to improve the access to employment for all Canadians.

Without adequate, affordable, and stable housing, it is very difficult for individuals to form or maintain labour market attachment. Provinces and territories are investing in this area and call on the federal government to renew its commitment to adequate, predictable, and sustainable funding, in particular, by renewing the federal housing programs scheduled to expire in March 2009.

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