

## **NEWS RELEASE - Federal, provincial and territorial governments agree to improve Canada's immigration system**

**Ottawa, June 15, 2010** — Federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for immigration met in Ottawa today to discuss ways to improve Canada's immigration system, given its increasing importance to Canada's future.

"If Canada wants to succeed in the global economy, our country must be able to attract and retain immigrants with the skills it needs today while preparing us to face the challenges of the future," said Jason Kenney, federal Minister for Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism. "After today's discussion, I am confident that our governments' combined efforts will help position Canada as a destination of choice for the world's best and brightest, while continuing to maintain our humanitarian tradition."

"Immigration is important to all provinces and territories," said Ramona Jennex, Nova Scotia's Minister of Immigration on behalf of her provincial and territorial colleagues. "We agreed here to improve our cooperative approach to immigration to ensure its benefits are shared across the country. We are pleased that future meetings will be co-chaired by the federal and provincial governments."

This meeting occurs at a time when the increasing importance of immigration to Canada's competitiveness is undisputed. Within the next few years, Canada's labour force growth will depend on immigration. Welcoming immigrants with the skills we need is essential to build Canada's future labour force.

Ministers agreed that the future of immigration would embrace welcoming and supporting newcomers to join in building inclusive, diverse and vibrant communities and a prosperous Canada. This recognizes the increased involvement of provinces and territories in jointly managing the immigration system, as well as Quebec's responsibility under the *Canada-Quebec Accord*.

Ministers discussed the importance of planning immigration levels on a long-term basis to make immigration more responsive to economic and regional needs. As Canada emerges from the recession, we must also continue to ensure skilled workers selected are those most likely to succeed.

Minister Kenney reported on progress made in reducing the backlog for federal skilled worker applications under the Action Plan for Faster Immigration, but that applications are once again above the level that can be processed in a timely way. Ministers discussed the need to remain flexible in order to control the flow of applications, while working to allow provincial nominee programs to respond to emerging labour market needs.

The ability of immigrants to succeed in Canada's labour market is also critical to building an immigration system that is responsive to Canada's economy. Given provincial and territorial responsibility for recognizing foreign credentials, ministers discussed work to date on the Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications. As the Framework states, all governments are working towards the common goal of ensuring that foreign qualifications are recognized in a fair, consistent, transparent and timely manner.

Ministers recognized the continued importance of supporting settlement and integration programs being delivered across the country to ensure the successful integration of newcomers into their communities. Ministers agreed to work together to improve measuring and reporting outcomes, and committed to developing a pan-Canadian framework that would establish a common set of successful settlement indicators across jurisdictions, as well as an assessment of service delivery models. Under the *Canada-Quebec Accord*, Quebec is responsible for its own settlement services including the evaluation of its programs. However, the province will share best practices as part of this exercise.

As well, Ministers agreed that Canada must increase its vigilance and cooperation to prevent and reduce fraud in the immigration system.

Ministers also committed to work together to ensure that Canada continues to improve its standing as a destination of choice for international students seeking a quality education.

Underlying all of these discussions was recognition of the unique needs of provinces and territories, as well as Canada's values of diversity, inclusiveness and equality of opportunity.

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