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Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development

PROVINCE ADDS \$3M FOR ENGLISH TRAINING IN WORKPLACE

VICTORIA - The B.C. government is investing \$3 million to help new British Columbians improve their English skills and succeed in the labour market and the workplace, announced Murray Coell, Minister of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development.

"This government's commitment to expanding English language services for adult immigrants is helping newcomers settle, adapt and pursue work," said Coell. "Increasing these services is meeting a critical need for employers and communities."

Three initiatives will serve the specific English language training requirements of communities in B.C. The classes are being offered where there is demonstrated demand based on new immigrant arrival data, the census, English as a second language school enrolment and waitlist data.

"Strong English language skills are critical to immigrants becoming full contributing members of Canadian society," said Coell. "This funding is one part of our WelcomeBC initiative, which supports immigrants and their families in succeeding both economically and socially."

Today's investment is comprised of three initiatives - two English Language Services for Adults programs, which help immigrants learn basic English skills; and one English Language Training pilot project, which focuses on teaching skilled professionals new to B.C. how to master English language skills.

* The Province is providing \$2 million for ELSA for the Workplace to teach participants language skills needed in the workforce and to increase their awareness of the B.C. labour market culture. These classes will be available in Vancouver, Burnaby/New Westminster, Tri-Cities, Richmond, Surrey/North Delta and Abbotsford. The request for proposals was posted on BC Bid on Feb. 16, 2009 and closes on March 26, 2009.

* Another \$656,000 is being added to the Province's previous investment of \$3.3 million in ELSA classes in Richmond to meet growing demand. The request for proposals was posted on BC Bid on Jan. 23, 2009, and the proposals are currently being assessed.

* The government has also invested \$373,000 in an ELT pilot project currently underway to help internationally educated health professionals at the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority improve their English language skills.

The Agreement for Canada-B.C. Co-operation on Immigration provides funding through the transfer of approximately \$120 million per year from Citizenship and Immigration Canada to the B.C. government, which is responsible for administering settlement services for new immigrants.

"The Government of Canada wants newcomers to get a good start," said Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism. "Language training is an essential first step in supporting many newcomers on their path to integration. We are pleased to be working in partnership with the Province of B.C. to fund community agencies throughout the province to provide language training. Since 2006, the federal government has begun investing an additional \$1.4 billion in settlement funding over five years to help newcomers integrate and succeed in Canadian society."

The Province is providing these English-language services through WelcomeBC, which helps immigrants in B.C. access services under one umbrella to assist them in better adapting to life in their new communities and builds on the province's history of welcoming newcomers and creating inclusive communities.

More information can be found at www.WelcomeBC.ca.

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