

October 31, 2007

Alberta immigrants encouraged to reach for their full potential

Fund provides micro loans to help immigrants follow chosen professions

Edmonton... The Alberta government is providing \$740,000 over the next three years to support the operating costs of a program that assists immigrants to register or become fully accredited in their chosen profession or occupation.

The Immigrant Access Fund (IAF) provides loans of up to \$5,000, repayable within four years, to foreign-trained professionals and trades people to cover tuition fees, course materials, exam fees, living and travel expenses, qualification assessments and professional association fees. The loans are funded by donations from corporations and individuals to the IAF Loan Fund.

“At this stage of Alberta’s unprecedented growth, we need everyone working to their full potential, and new immigrants are no exception,” says Iris Evans, Minister of Employment, Immigration and Industry. “Some newcomers have trouble finding work in their profession because of a range of registration, certification or education issues – we need to overcome these barriers in a way that allows them to practice their professions fairly and safely, and in accordance with Canadian standards.”

Evans announced the funding during the official opening of the Edmonton and North Alberta office of the Immigrant Access Fund, located within the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (10010 – 107A Avenue). The fund has also operated an office in Calgary since 2005.

“Alberta welcomes all newcomers to share in our high quality of life and to help sustain our economic prosperity,” says Dr. Maria Eriksen, IAF president. “This boost from the Alberta government will go a long way toward assisting immigrants to settle into our communities, find quality work in their chosen fields, and be proud to call Alberta home.”

While the Alberta government provides the largest funding contribution, other IAF contributors include Momentum, the Calgary Foundation, Western Economic Diversification Canada, HSBC Bank of Canada and RBC Financial Group and the United Way of Calgary and area.

Supporting immigrants and building Alberta’s workforce are part of Premier Ed Stelmach’s plan to secure Alberta’s future by building communities, greening our growth and creating opportunity.

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Media enquiries may be directed to:

Terry Jorden, Communications
Employment, Immigration and Industry
(780) 427-0703

Dianne Fehr
Immigrant Access Fund
(403) 228-9981 ext. 222
(403) 835-8972 cell

To call toll-free within Alberta dial 310-0000.