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HOUSE OF COMMONS
CANADA

Maurice Vellacott, MP
Saskatoon-Wanuskewin

Government of Canada support brings employers and Aboriginal workers together

For Immediate Release

April 6, 2009

SASKATOON, SASKATCHEWAN - Today Mr. Maurice Vellacott, Member of Parliament for Saskatoon-Wanuskewin, on behalf of the Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, announced support for a series of forums that will bring the supply and demand sides of the labour market equation together.

Through the Sector Council Program, the Government of Canada is providing over \$490,000 to the Aboriginal Human Resource Council to co-ordinate and implement Workforce Connex, a national forum series that links Aboriginal people to regional partners that offer employment training, recruitment and job retention solutions.

"Workforce Connex will increase opportunities for Aboriginal and industry partnerships that will address Aboriginal under-representation in the labour force and, at the same time, fulfill industry demand for skilled workers in key sectors," said Mr. Vellacott.

The forum series will bring Aboriginal workers and employers together with employment, education and training organizations for relevant, focussed discussions to develop employment solutions. At these events, employers learn how to attract Aboriginal talent, and Aboriginal people learn how to become better prepared for the labour market. The forum series concentrates on developing cross-cultural relationships and creating partnerships between Aboriginal groups and employers that lead to successful training programs and increased advancement opportunities for Aboriginal workers.

This initiative builds on previous regional Workforce Connex forums that have resulted in new partnership initiatives with employers. For example, in Alberta, Safeway Canada recruited 1,419 Aboriginal workers in 2007 and over 780 in 2008. In Nova Scotia, the Aboriginal Peoples and Training Secretariat funded five Aboriginal participants to enter into an apprenticeship program at the Nova Scotia Community College, which was followed up by work experience in the boat building industry.

"Through the development of connections and conversations built on respect and understanding, the national Workforce Connex forum series has helped bring resolve to the disconnect in Canada by creating partnerships and real job opportunities for Aboriginal people," said Mr. Kelly Lendsay,

President and Chief Executive Officer of the Aboriginal Human Resource Council. "The 11 forums that have been held across Canada have brought together over 1,500 participants that have made 595 commitments to build workplaces of inclusion and advance Aboriginal training and employment opportunities in their regions."

The Government of Canada is working in partnership with the provinces and territories and other stakeholders to make sure that Canadians get the training, skills and opportunities they need to participate in the work force and contribute to the quality of life in their communities.

Sector councils are a part of the Government of Canada's strategy to create the best-educated, most-skilled and most flexible work force in the world. The Government underscored this commitment in January when it introduced Canada's Economic Action Plan. A key component of the Plan is to create more and better opportunities for Canadian workers through skills development.

This news release is available in alternative formats upon request.

Visit new Human Resources and Skills Development Canada Web site at www.hrsdc.gc.ca.

BACKGROUND

Developing Canada's human capital is increasingly vital to competing in today's competitive global economy. The Government of Canada recognizes the need to maintain Canada's knowledge advantage and ensure that Canada has the best-educated, most-skilled and most flexible work force in the world. Through the Sector Council Program, the Government of Canada works with the private sector to enhance adult workers' knowledge and skills and to address industry-wide human resources issues.

Sector councils

Sector councils embody the principles of partnership. Operating at arms length from the Government, they bring together business, labour and educational stakeholders to share ideas, concerns and perspectives about current and anticipated human resources and skills issues. They look at their industry's labour market issues and find solutions that are right for them.

The Sector Council Program

The Program is guided by four principal objectives:

- increase industry's investment in skills development to promote a quality work force;
- improve learning systems so they better meet the needs of industry;
- reduce barriers to labour mobility, creating a more efficient labour market; and
- enhance the ability of industry to recruit and retain workers and to address human resources issues.

Some of the activities funded include labour market forecasting and analysis, workplace learning, the development of national occupational standards and essential skills, the development of curricula tailored to industry needs, and the integration of foreign workers into the Canadian labour market.

Aboriginal Human Resource Council

The Aboriginal Human Resource Council creates and markets a wide range of resources to help Aboriginal people participate fully in Canada's economy. They do this through building bridges-with connections, partnerships and solutions-between Canada's Aboriginal and business communities.

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