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National agreement on labor mobility recognizes trade qualifications

QUÉBEC - A national agreement on labour mobility announced by Canada's premiers is an important step forward in ensuring all Canadians have the right to live and work anywhere in the country, said Premier Gordon Campbell.

"I'm very pleased with the commitment of all premiers to move forward and work towards achieving full labour mobility across Canada," said Premier Campbell. "British Columbia and Alberta have long been advocating for Canadians and their families to have the right of free movement across the country as an integral part of citizenship. Currently, B.C. and Alberta are the only jurisdictions where this right exists, and this agreement is a critical step in extending this right to all

Canadians in all parts of Canada."

At the Council of Federation meeting in Québec City, Québec, the premiers agreed to amend the Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT) by Jan. 1, 2009. These amendments will provide that any worker certified for an occupation by a regulatory authority of one province or territory shall be recognized as qualified to practice that occupation by all other provinces and territories. The premiers also directed that any exceptions to full labour-market mobility will have to be clearly identified and justified as necessary to meet a legitimate objective such as the protection of public health or safety.

By the 2009 summer meeting of the Council of the Federation, these amendments will result in mutual recognition of

occupational credentials between all provinces and territories.

B.C. and Alberta were the first jurisdictions in Canada to introduce full labour mobility under the Trade and Labour Mobility Agreement. TILMA creates a market of more than 7.7 million people and the nation's second-largest economy.

"Under the new amendments, individuals will be able to take full advantage of their talents and education by having the freedom to seek the best opportunities for themselves and their families where they exist," said Premier Campbell.

The premiers also announced an enhanced and effective dispute resolution mechanism to enforce AIT dispute panel recommendations for government-to-government disputes. Effective Jan. 1, 2009, the strengthened mechanism includes the use of monetary penalties to a maximum of \$5 million.

"The dispute resolution mechanism is an important part of ensuring full mobility, and gives weight to the shared commitment to labour mobility," said Premier Campbell. During the Council of Federation meeting, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty announced the province's decision to join the Western Climate Initiative (WCI), which is creating a regional cap-and-trade system. The addition of Ontario means WCI partners now account for over 82 million people with a collective GDP of \$3.6 trillion CAD.

"The WCI now represents 73 per cent of Canada's economy, and 20 per cent of the U.S. economy. Ontario's engagement in this partnership demonstrates their commitment to combating climate change and their recognition of the role regional partnerships will play in that," said Premier Campbell.

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