

Honourable Jason Kenney
Minister of Employment and Social Development
Place du Portage, Phase IV, 14th Floor
140 Promenade du Portage
Gatineau, Québec K1A 0J9

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January 30, 2014

Dear Minister Kenney,

Re: Canada Job Grant, LMA and LMDA

OCASI – Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants is writing to express appreciation for your ongoing dialogue with the provinces and territories on Labour Market Agreements, in the process of fulfilling your government’s plans to grow a strong and responsive labour force for Canada.

OCASI is the umbrella organization for immigrant and refugee-serving agencies in Ontario. The Council has more than 200 member agencies across the province, of which a significant number provide a variety of labour market access and attachment services to immigrants. Since our founding in 1978, OCASI has been the Ontario immigrant and refugee-serving sector’s collective voice on immigrant settlement and integration, including on issues of labour market access and accreditation.

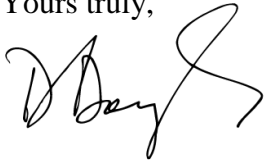
In principle we wish to express our support for ongoing funding provided through the Labour Market Agreement (LMA). LMA funding has allowed Ontario to broaden and deepen labour market interventions to meet the needs of all Ontario workers, including vulnerable workers. Ontario programs provide training and employment services to workers who do not qualify for EI programs, particularly immigrant workers who are over-represented in low-skill and precarious jobs that do not allow them to make full use of the skills, training and education they bring to Canada. LMA funding also supports literacy training and upgrading, allowing vulnerable workers to make better use of skills training and employment programs.

Ontario LMA programs are working to build labour market access and engagement for workers, connecting them with employers and helping to grow the economy. The proposed substantial cuts to LMA funds to invest in the Canada Job Grant will significantly and negatively impact immigrants and other vulnerable groups that benefit from Ontario’s current employment programs. The programs have proven positive results, as reported in “*Building Skills Together: A Report from Provincial and Territorial Labour Market Ministers (2013)*”, and any change will impact individual workers and their families.

Within this context, we support the position recently put forward by provinces and territories to allow them, if necessary, the flexibility to draw funding from the LMA or from Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDA) according to the needs and labour market imperatives in each region.

We urge you to renegotiate the Labour Market Agreements and Labour Market Development Agreements, maintain consistent funding for both and give provinces and territories the flexibility to draw from the most appropriate funds, thus allowing Ontario and other provinces and territories to build and strengthen labour market attachment for all vulnerable workers.

Yours truly,



Debbie Douglas
Executive Director



Carl Nicholson
President

CC: Honourable Chris Alexander, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration