

## Check Against Delivery

### **YWCA Canadian Employment Skills Program April 4, 2014, Calgary Honourable Manmeet S. Bhullar, Minister, Human Services**

I want to start by welcoming the graduating newcomers and their family members, distinguished guests, Calgary YWCA staff, and volunteers.

I'm pleased to be here today, representing Premier Dave Hancock and my colleagues at the Alberta legislature.

Today we celebrate diverse cultures and communities in Calgary and the people who make it a vibrant and cosmopolitan city.

Calgary's current population of just over one million is projected to reach 1,259,000 by 2018.

Today there are approximately 298,000 immigrants in Calgary.

A number that is estimated to double by 2020.

Those immigrants make valuable contributions to our province and to Calgary.

They have enriched the city through the arts, culture, business, community service and their professional work.

Immigrants have helped build this province and as citizens, many have achieved remarkable things.

But it's not always an easy road.

It is very difficult to move to a new country, learn a new language and become a part of a new city.

Many of you know what I mean.

You arrived with dreams, determination, education and expectations of working in your new country in your chosen field.

When you arrived here, there were unexpected challenges and barriers.

The life you envisioned when you embarked on your journey may have been more difficult to attain than you imagined.

It would have been challenging to discover that you needed Canadian workplace experience and knowledge of the Canadian work culture to achieve your dreams of a new and better life.

That cannot have been easy.

That's why programs such as the YWCA Canadian Employment Skills program is so important.

It enables immigrants to navigate their way through those barriers to a successful career in Canada.

The program helps newcomers learn workplace English and Canadian business culture with the goal of increasing their ability to contribute to the community and province.

As you leave the program, the experiences you have had with your work experience placements have prepared you to begin exciting careers in Alberta's dynamic labour market.

Some of you may be starting jobs with the employers that are here today and others will take on new roles with large employers that include accounting and engineering firms, oil and gas companies, and financial institutions.

You have made the right choice.

You have come to the right province.

And we are happy to have you.

Alberta continues to drive the country's economy.

In the past year, nine out of 10 new jobs in Canada were created in Alberta.

Educating and training skilled workers is vital to growing and diversifying our economy.

For 14 years, YWCA Canadian Employment Skills program has worked with 850 internationally trained professionals connecting them to opportunities in Alberta's workplaces.

Success for this program is measured by the number of people working in their field.

In 2011, 2012 and 2013, the YWCA Canadian Employment Skills program had a success rate of 89%.

That is an achievement worth acknowledging and celebrating.

I would like to recognize the businesses and organizations that have made diversity and inclusion a priority in their workplace.

Through working with programs that build Canadian employment skills for new immigrants, you are giving new members of Calgary's community an opportunity to fully participate in Canadian society.

This is something to be proud of.

All of you here today are an important part of Alberta's future.

As newcomers you have embraced the challenges of adjusting to a new way of life.

As businesses and organizations, you are helping build workplaces that make everyone feel welcome.

Successful employers know that immigrants bring with them a variety of skills, connections to other parts of the world and new and innovative ways of doing business.

Educating and training skilled workers is essential to Alberta's growing and diversifying economy.

YWCA in partnership with Alberta Human Services delivers high quality training, services and supports to immigrant professionals as they navigate the road to gaining employment in Canadian workplaces.

The YWCA Canadian Employment Skills program is a good example of how government and community are working together.

By implementing plans such as Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce, Alberta Human Services is preparing for labour challenges that Alberta is experiencing now and the demographic shifts we are anticipating in the future.

It is vital that businesses continue to work with community and government to invest in training and productivity.

By working together we can solve Alberta's labour needs.

When community, business and government come together we build stronger communities and a better Alberta.

So congratulations to the graduates and congratulations to the YWCA and their business partners on your continued success in enhancing the lives of new immigrants in Alberta.

Thank you