

FOR RELEASE

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LANDMARK FORUM: QUEBEC'S LABOUR MARKET ANXIOUS TO TAP INTO ABORIGINAL WORKFORCE SOLUTION

Val d'Or, Quebec – *Quebec Workforce Connex*, an innovative and results-driven labour market forum, will be hosted today and tomorrow at the Hôtel Forestel Centre de Congrès in Val d'Or. The forum is a landmark event that brings together, for the first time, all Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal labour market stakeholders in Quebec for discussions that will create new relationships based on understanding, respect and knowledge. The outcome of the conversation will build Quebec's capacity to meet upcoming labour demand challenges. The forum will involve every Aboriginal employment centre in Quebec, sector committees, unions, employers, training institutions and provincial/federal government representatives.

Quebec is experiencing the lowest birthrate in the Western World. While Quebec's economy is stabilized at this time, economists are forecasting an upcoming skills shortage gap caused by an aging workforce and a shift in employment demographics. Today Quebec's economic players are in an ideal position to do the preliminary work necessary to ensure a skilled workforce is available to meet upcoming labour demands. *Quebec Workforce Connex* will open training and employment opportunities to build and sustain an Aboriginal workforce. Emphasis will be placed on skilled trades in the construction, mining, forestry, tourism and social economy sectors.

"Canada is experiencing an Aboriginal baby boom," said Kelly Lendsay, President and CEO of the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Council of Canada. "Aboriginal people are the nation's youngest and fastest growing human resource. This young upwardly mobile labour force wants and needs workplace opportunities for training, skills development and employment."

Across Canada employers are searching for innovative solutions to the skilled worker shortage. Many are taking aggressive action to recruit workers from beyond provincial and national borders. Others are awakening to the competitive advantage of workplace diversity, inclusive of Aboriginal people.

"On a national scale, a disconnect exists between the potential skills contribution made by the Aboriginal workforce and the view held by some business and labour leaders on this contribution," said Lendsay. "Delegates participating in *Quebec Workforce Connex* are innovative thinkers motivated to develop an Aboriginal presence in their workforce and become an 'employer-of-choice' for top Aboriginal talent."

Workforce Connex is a national forum series hosted by the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Council of Canada in cooperation with the Quebec regional planning committee (Algonquin Nation HRSD, Association minière du Québec, CSMO en aménagement forestier, Comité sectoriel de main-d'œuvre des mines, Commission de développement des ressources humaines des Premières Nations du Québec, Cree Human Resources Development, CSMO transformation du bois, CSMO-ÉSAC, CSN, Emploi-Québec, FTQ, Hydro-Québec, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Kativik Regional Government, Ministère du Conseil exécutif, Commission de la construction du Québec, Natural Resources Canada, Regroupement des centres d'amiti autochtones, Service Canada).

The Quebec forum is the eighth forum held in the series, with more scheduled for 2007. The outcomes of the forum will be integrated into a national private sector/Aboriginal partnership strategy. This forum is largely sponsored by Human Resources and Social Development Canada, CSMO des mines, Commission de la construction du Québec, Confédération des syndicats nationaux, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Service Canada.

- 30 -

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The Aboriginal Human Resource Development Council of Canada is a national not-for-profit, private/public sector organization mandated to build connections, partnerships and solutions that advance opportunities for Aboriginal people in the nation's labour market. The council is Canada's leading innovator in Aboriginal recruitment, retention and advancement.