

2008-2009 BUDGET
PRESS RELEASE No. 3

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CNW CODE 01 + WEEKLIES

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DEVELOPING THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS OF QUEBECERS

Québec, March 13, 2008 – In presenting the 2008-2009 Budget, Minister of Finance, Minister of Government Services, Minister Responsible for Government Administration and Chair of the Conseil du trésor Monique Jérôme-Forget pointed out that, by 2011, Québec will have 700 000 jobs to fill. Stressing that education is the main key to our success and the first step toward reducing poverty, the Minister announced a series of measures aimed at meeting the challenges awaiting us.

Investing in higher education

The budget provides for substantial additional investments in higher education to enable Québec universities, CEGEPs and technical schools to continue playing a strategic role in our society. These measures include:

- an additional investment of \$250 million over five years in our universities;
- additional investments of \$150 million over five years to develop vocational and technical training, and build new bridges between businesses and training centres.

Implementing the Employment Pact

To address the growing labour shortage, the 2008-2009 Budget launches an unprecedented training initiative, namely:

- implementation of the Employment Pact. This measure will make it possible to offer training to workers who wish to enhance their competencies, support unemployed people in acquiring new skills, support social assistance recipients who wish to go back to work and, finally, remove the obstacles to hiring newcomers to Québec. With this budget, the government is investing \$196 million over five years in this measure.

“The Employment Pact has specific targets: reduce the number of social assistance recipients by 50 000 and offer training to 250 000 more workers. My colleague the Minister of Employment and Social Solidarity will soon make public all of the measures in the Employment Pact,” declared the Minister.

Enabling newcomers to participate fully in Québec's growth

"Immigration contributes greatly to the growth of our collective wealth. Immigration enriches our lives, our culture. It broadens our horizons," stated the Minister. In a context of labour shortage, where competition will be stiff between host countries seeking to attract skilled labour, the Minister announced:

- that immigration funding will be raised by 20%. Labour market integration and French instruction programs will be significantly bolstered.

"It is not just a matter of welcoming newcomers by seeing that their essential needs are met. It is also necessary to assist them in their efforts to integrate into Québec society. My colleague the Minister of Immigration and Cultural Communities will give details of the use of this additional funding of \$20 million over two years," she said.

Promoting the use of French in the workplace

"As the premier said: 'The French language is the heart of our identity and the primary instrument of our freedom.' The government intends to ensure the protection and promotion of the French language in Québec, strengthen its use in public, value mastery of the language and improve its quality. French is the language of school, business and work. It is the language of Québec," stressed the Minister.

To value French as the language of the workplace and facilitate the integration of immigrants into companies, the budget provides for:

- a new refundable tax credit for francization. All businesses, including those with 50 employees or less, will be eligible;
- additional funding of \$10 million over two years to promote the French language.

"By investing in knowledge, by steering everyone, where possible, toward work, by fostering the integration of newcomers and by strengthening the use of French in the workplace, we are affirming our ambition that every Quebecer participate in our success and that our success itself become the prime lever for affirming our identity," concluded the Minister.

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