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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market  
Development

### **BETTER ACCESS TO FOREIGN GRADS HELPS B.C. BUSINESS**

VANCOUVER – Businesses will gain improved access to highly skilled, in-demand foreign graduate students with a new expansion to B.C.'s Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) announced Moira Stilwell, Minister of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development today at Langara College's newly renovated International Education office.

“These highly skilled graduates are vital to helping our province succeed in a world where knowledge is the most important currency,” said Stilwell. “With over 950,000 job openings anticipated by 2020, attracting international post-secondary students is one way we can meet the future needs of B.C. business for well trained, highly educated employees.”

A three-year pilot program will enable graduates from B.C. masters and PhD programs in natural, health and applied sciences to apply for immigrant status in advance of receiving and accepting a full-time offer of employment, eliminating the need to wait for a job offer. With more foreign students per capita than any other province, B.C. is well positioned to tap into this valuable talent pool.

Competition for highly skilled workers, particularly in these degree areas, is strong. This pilot will help British Columbia attract and retain recent graduates, meeting the needs of B.C. employers and universities as they attract high-quality students from around the globe to sustain research capacity.

Other changes to the PNP will expand opportunities to include foreign graduate students with degrees or diplomas from any eligible institution across Canada, extend the application deadline from one to two years, and broaden the range of employment options that qualify candidates for resident status. These changes will help fill critical employer needs, expanding their opportunities to find new and talented employees.

“Global competition for people with advanced degrees, particularly in the fields of science and technology is growing,” said Greg Peet, co-chair of the Premier's Technology Council. “Opening the doors to international students will help British Columbia attract and retain people with the skills needed to support and expand our efforts in research and development of new technologies and health services.”

The British Columbia PNP was introduced in 2001 to attract skilled workers to the province. The PNP is authorized under the Canada-B.C. Immigration Agreement, and allows B.C. to select potential economic immigrants for expedited permanent residence. Nominees are fast-tracked for permanent resident status with federal citizenship and immigration authorities, reducing average wait-times from about five years to less than one.

The program was expanded in 2002 to allow business immigrants seeking to invest and start businesses in B.C. to apply to the PNP. Since 2001, almost 10,000 graduate students, skilled and business immigrants have been attracted to the province through the PNP. Graduate students account for about one in 10 immigrants welcomed to British Columbia through the PNP.

For information on other B.C. immigrant programs, visit <http://www.welcomebc.ca/en/immigration/come/work/about/information/news.html>. (Ed. note: this link was updated on June 1, 2010.)

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