



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Business Immigrant Mentorship Program

-- Integrating Newcomers into the Saint John business community --

May 27, 2010

Saint John, NB. Enterprise Saint John is pleased to announce the launch of the **Business Immigrant Mentorship Program** for the Saint John Community. In response to the growing immigrant population in Saint John, Enterprise Saint John is addressing the need to support immigrants launching entrepreneurial endeavors here. The program is made possible by the support and funding of the Government of New Brunswick's Population Growth Secretariat. Additional community partners include the Saint John Board of Trade, the Saint John Multicultural and Newcomers Resource Centre, and the Saint John YMCA Settlement Services.

The program follows the principles of a mentor-mentee relationship to help newcomers from different cultural backgrounds integrate into the business community. Experienced professionals from the local business community will be matched with immigrant entrepreneurs. "This program offers immigrant entrepreneurs a very critical service: the ability to meet with, learn from and network with established local business/professional people," says Anita Punamiya, the program coordinator.

Two six-month program cohorts will be held, each with up to eight pairs of mentors-mentees. The first runs from July to December 2010, and the second from September 2010 to February 2011.

Business immigrants will benefit greatly by the interactions and lasting bonds formed with people already solidly established in the business community. They will learn the processes involved with setting up a business, be introduced to a professional network, and how best to integrate into the local business community. To be accepted into the program, immigrants must either currently be involved with a business or have a developed business plan and be in the final stages prior to business launch.

Mentors will also benefit from establishing relationships with newcomers. They will gain professional insight and knowledge of best practices from the mentees with whom they are matched. The program provides orientation and training for mentors and mentees. The time demands are reasonable and flexible, amounting, on average, to only one hour per week over the six month program duration.

Lois Vincent, Manager, Business Development with Enterprise Saint John sees the program as furthering the Agency's mission of inspiring and supporting people, ideas and investment. She states, "Business immigrants contribute to a growing and thriving community. They bring diversity, new ideas, skills, knowledge and investment to the community." In the spirit of innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship, initiatives like the Business Immigrant Mentorship Program further positions Saint John as a welcoming place for immigrants to start a business and raise a family. This is vital for the Saint John region because it is those communities which have the ability to attract and retain people that will be successful in the long run.

Anyone interested in becoming a mentor or mentee in the Business Immigrant Mentorship Program, can contact Anita Punamiya at 506-693-0032 or visit www.enterprisesj.com/mentorship for more information.

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