



Canadian Career Development Foundation
Fondation canadienne pour le développement de carrière

July 20, 2011

The Honourable Diane Finley
Minister, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
140 Promenade du Portage
Gatineau K1A 0J9

The Honourable David Arseneault
Minister, New Brunswick Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour
CCNB-Dieppe, 505 College
Dieppe, NB E1A 6X2

Dear Ministers Finley and Arseneault,

We are writing to you in your capacities as Co-Chairs of the Forum of Labour Market Ministers to express our concerns regarding the dissolution of the Career Development Services Working Group (CDSWG) of the FLMM. This is in our view a major step backwards for the career development industry in Canada and an exceedingly untimely one. Canada is left with no pan-Canadian forum of provincial/federal policy makers with a mandate to enhance quality and access by Canadian to career services. This puts us out of step with the international community and the recommendations of the 55-country OECD Policy Review on Career Development Policy conducted from 2002 until the present. It is also precisely at the time when the Canadian Council of Career Development Associations (CCDA), formed in 2009, is building membership and momentum as the professional voice for career development in Canada.

Given the decentralization of career and employment services in Canada, it is essential that a collaborative body exists to promote sharing of effective policy and practice, conduct and disseminate promising research and inform policy and funding decisions. The CDSWG was formed to fill this void. With this representative federal-provincial policy forum and a representative provincial professional body, Canada was positioned to make significant strides to improving quality career services for all Canadians.

It is our understanding that the FLMM Labour Market Information Working Group will continue which is excellent. However, research is abundantly clear that with respect to making decisions about and navigating education, training, and employment pathways, LMI is necessary but insufficient. The majority of people require career direction, support and guidance to successfully manage the complexities of employment and post-secondary education and training. The major reason young people drop out of post-secondary education is not a lack of money; rather it is a lack of fit and a lack of future direction. For some this comes easily; for the majority it does not. Compared with many other countries (United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, France), career development policy has a very low profile in Canada and career and employment services, particularly for young adults and adults are very inconsistent. There is much improvement needed for us to be comparable to many other OECD countries.

The achievements of the CDSWG in less than four years have been excellent. Among their contributions are a Mapping Study of the career industry, identifying human resource and training challenges which need to be addressed, a comprehensive survey of current Assessment instruments and tools identifying promising



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developments as well as needed research and a survey of Quality Standards which again identified specific directions for quality improvement and assurance. The CCCDA, building on these reports, has undertaken major initiatives to enhance practitioner standards and support provinces which are moving towards certification for career practitioners. Several provinces (New Brunswick, Newfoundland/Labrador, Saskatchewan, Nunavut and Manitoba) have initiated major professional training strategies for their career practitioners. This is the kind of synergy between policy and practice which the OECD regards as essential for quality assurance. With the dissolution of the CDSWG, this synergy will be lost.

At the time of writing, a team is being formed to represent Canada at the sixth International Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy to be held in Hungary in December, 2011. The Symposium team format calls for equal representation of policy makers, researchers and professional practitioners. The Symposia are held every two to three years with the intent that countries develop specific action plans and work toward their implementation in the years between Symposia. Each subsequent symposium builds on country advancements and achievements. Representative forums which can advance the action agendas within countries are essential to the success of this initiative. With the dissolution of the CDSWG, such a forum will not exist.

We have been advised that this was a difficult decision made because of budgetary considerations and changing priorities. We are not privy to the budget for the CDSWG but we surmise that it is modest relative to its outputs. With economic recovery being the number one priority of the current Canadian government, it is very difficult to see the rationale for dismantling a key forum which promotes quality career and employment services, so essential to economic growth and stability.

It is our sincere hope that this decision can be reversed. It is a regressive step for Canadians, the career industry in Canada and our influence internationally. We would be more than pleased to provide any additional information, copies of reports or analysis of research which lends further support to the arguments we have presented. We would also be happy to meet with you or your representatives to present the issues in more detail and if you would find it helpful, to connect you or your representatives to international partners to discuss comparable structures in their countries.

Sincerely

Lynne Bezanson, Executive Director, Canadian Career Development Foundation
Sareena Hopkins, Co-Chair, Canadian Council of Career Development Associations