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Ontario Unlocking Free Trade **Within** Canada

TORONTO — As a next step in its plan to protect Ontario by unleashing the province's economy, the Ontario government is introducing the Protect Ontario through Free Trade within Canada Act to unlock free trade and labour mobility within Canada. This legislation will, if passed, create new opportunities for job creation and investment attraction, supporting economic integration across Canada and cutting costly and unnecessary red tape to help protect and grow Ontario and Canada's economies.

"For too long, we've let red tape and endless regulations hold back our economy, making us vulnerable to external threats, including from President Trump's tariffs," said Premier Doug Ford. "Not anymore. The legislation we're introducing today will make Ontario a national leader when it comes to trade between provinces and territories, so we can strengthen and unify Canada and create new markets and opportunities for Ontario workers and goods."

Trade barriers within Canada cost the economy up to \$200 billion each year and lower gross domestic product by nearly eight per cent. These barriers also increase the cost of goods and services Ontario families rely on by up to 14.5 per cent, at a time when families are already struggling from increased costs due to tariffs. Ontario is leading the charge to tear down these barriers to unlock Canada's full economic

potential.

Ontario's plan, including the measures in the Protect Ontario through Free Trade within Canada Act, will support free trade and mobility across Canada by:

Becoming the first province in Canada to remove all its party-specific exceptions (PSEs) under the Canadian Free Trade Agreement (CFTA) without exception and encouraging other provinces and territories and the federal government to follow suit.

Allowing workers from other parts of the country to come and work in Ontario by enabling the government to remove labour mobility barriers, reduce administrative burdens and simplify the movement of certified workers across Canada. By expanding labour mobility with new "As of Right" rules, Ontario will allow certified workers from other provinces and territories to begin working in Ontario immediately while they complete a streamlined registration process.

Enabling mutual recognition with reciprocating provinces and territories, so that goods, services and registered workers that are good enough for other parts of Canada are recognized as good enough for sale, use or work in Ontario. Moving to allow more regulated health professionals in good standing to begin practising in Ontario while they wait for registration in an Ontario health regulatory college and removing restrictions on where they may work using "As of Right" rules. The

government will also begin consultations to allow American health professionals, including doctors and nurses, to be included under these new "As of Right" rules. Enabling direct-to-consumer alcohol sales with reciprocating provinces and territories so that consumers will be able to purchase alcohol directly from producers across Canada for personal consumption.

Establishing a "Buy Ontario, Buy Canadian" day held annually on the last Friday in June to help consumers support local businesses and workers through programs such as Ontario Made, Ontario Wood, VQA and Foodland Ontario.

Ontario is also launching the new \$50 million Ontario Together Trade Fund to help businesses make near-term investments so they can serve more interprovincial customers, develop new markets and re-shore critical supply chains, strengthening Ontario's trade security and diversification.

As part of this effort, Ontario is signing memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with Nova Scotia and New Brunswick that will bolster interprovincial trade. These MOUs will support the reciprocal removal of barriers to trade between Ontario and Nova Scotia and Ontario and New Brunswick by advancing mutual recognition, such that a good, service or registered worker that is acceptable for sale, use or work in one province is acceptable in the

other. Ontario will also work with Nova Scotia and New Brunswick on a framework for direct-to-consumer alcohol (DTC) sales, so that producers have easier access to new market opportunities, and so that consumers have greater choice and access to a broader selection of alcoholic beverages. This collaboration will enhance economic resilience, create job opportunities and set a precedent for other provinces to follow.

"This is a significant moment for our country and Nova Scotia is proud to be leading the way with Ontario," said Premier Tim Houston. "Last month, Nova Scotia passed the Free Trade and Mobility within Canada Act, a first in our country. It's short and succinct. This action says a lot about our commitment to make our economies stronger, and about fairness to workers, opportunities for businesses, and respect for Canadians' right to move, work and trade freely across their own country."

"Ontario is New Brunswick's second biggest trading partner, and we are excited to be building on the positive momentum to reduce internal trade barriers across Canada," said Premier Susan Holt. "Today's signing of this MOU commits both our provinces to enhance direct-to-consumer alcohol sales and improve interprovincial labour mobility. It will also encourage the free flow of goods, services, and investment, all while maintaining and strengthening the safety

of our communities. We encourage other Canadian jurisdictions that have not already done so to join us in driving progress on internal trade by tabling their own legislation to reciprocally remove barriers to trade across Canada, including through mutual recognition."

"Ontario is leading the way when it comes to free trade within Canada, and we're pleased to work with our partners across the country to get it done," said Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. "The legislation being announced today and the historic funding we are providing through the Ontario Together Trade Fund will create new opportunities to grow our economy, secure our supply chains and unify our country."

Ontario is Canada's largest interprovincial trader. With access to more than 41 million customers and purchasing power per capita among the highest in the world, the opportunity for Ontario businesses and workers through increased internal trade needs to be leveraged in an increasingly unstable global market. The government of Ontario is committed to supporting business and workers through these challenging economic times and will pursue additional measures and supports to ensure stability and resiliency.

"Ontario is unlocking Canada's economic potential by building our workforce and expanding labour mobility.

This will reduce red tape, help more professionals get to work faster, support Ontario employers with addressing their labour needs and boost our economy."

- David Piccini
Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development

"Our government is taking bold, decisive action to protect Ontario and support the needs and livelihood of all Ontarians during this uncertain time. By building on our success and further expanding our innovative "As of Right" rules, our government is recruiting even more health care professionals from other jurisdictions, bolstering our nation-leading health care workforce and making world-class health care more accessible for people and their families across the province, for years to come."

- Sylvia Jones
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health

"Unlocking Ontario's economic potential isn't just about growing our economy today; it's about building long-term economic prosperity that future generations can count on. By lifting interprovincial trade barriers, we're creating opportunities for people in Ontario and across Canada to thrive in their communities while benefiting our nation as a whole."

- Peter Bethlenfalvy
Minister of Finance