

# Older Workers program gets \$10M injection

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Home Depot employee Art Rossier, 68, left, talks to federal ministers Rona Ambrose, Diane Finley, and Alberta Employment and Immigration Minister Thomas Lukaszuk, on Tuesday.

**Photograph by:** Rick MacWilliam , The Journal

Art Rossier is through with being told he can't learn anything.

Sixteen years ago, Rossier became a registered nurse and was slated to become a nurse practitioner at Dalhousie University.

"They asked how old I was and I said 52. I was told, 'People that age can't learn anything anymore,' " said Rossier.

He spent many years unemployed and staring blankly into the future. Now 68, he works at Home Depot and is grateful for the opportunity he was given through the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers program.

On Tuesday, a handful of federal and provincial cabinet ministers --including Diane Finley, the federal minister of Human Resource and Skills Development, Rona Ambrose, federal minister of public works and government services, and Thomas Lukaszuk, Alberta's minister of employment and immigration, announced that the two levels of government are providing more than \$10 million for continuation of the program.

"In partnership with the province of Alberta, our government is helping older workers get the support, training and skills-development opportunities they need to find jobs and adapt to the changing economy," Ambrose said in a news release.

This program helps unemployed older workers aged 55 to 64 learn new skills to assist them in finding and keeping new jobs. They will receive one-on-one career counselling, including tips to make a more impactful resume.

Ambrose said seniors have already been taking advantage of the program, and she is pleased that Alberta has signed onto the agreement.

"This particular program has over a 90-per-cent success rate and older workers are able to get jobs in different areas," said Ambrose.

In an era of high unemployment, Lukaszuk believes it's essential to maintain a strong economy and that includes having older workers capable of filling positions in the labour force.

"Older workers have a great deal of experience, but may not realize how important their skills are when they choose to return to the workforce," he said.

The Alberta government will account for \$1.6 million of the funding and Ottawa will provide the rest.

Finley said additional funding through the Economic Action Plan will go toward extending the TIOW program until March 31, 2012.

"Displaced workers are faced with looking for new careers and it can be particularly daunting if you're an older worker," said Finley. "The additional funding ... will create the most skilled and flexible workforce."

Rossier is certain the program will continue to help older people like himself.

"It's like teaching an old dog new tricks, but I still learn things every day," said Rossier.

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