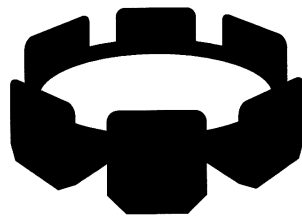


Bringing Employers Into the Immigration Debate

Survey and Conference



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Background

Immigration makes an important contribution to the Canadian economy. It is estimated that by 2011, immigration will account for all of Canada's labour force growth. However, employers are still underrepresented in the development of strategies to help immigrants integrate into the workforce.

To better understand how to engage employers in the immigration debate, the Public Policy Forum undertook a multi-phased research project. The research sought to:

- determine the extent to which employers think foreign-trained or educated individuals can fill their current or future labour market needs;
- identify any issues or concerns employers may have when hiring and/or assessing the skills of foreign-trained or educated individuals;
- identify any barriers to integrating foreign-trained or educated individuals into the labour force; and
- better understand the importance of foreign-trained or educated employees according to a number of factors, including city, province and company size.

The first phase of this project consisted of a survey of 2,091 employers across Canada. The survey asked employers about their experiences with “recent immigrants,” who were defined as immigrants who had arrived in Canada within the last 10 years. To confirm and validate the findings, an additional 10 focus groups were conducted in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Moncton.

The survey revealed that employers have a positive attitude toward immigrants and immigration. Employers see many positives and few negatives in hiring recent immigrants and welcome the opportunity to participate in strategies that seek to better integrate immigrants into the workforce.

However, the survey and focus groups also found that employers:

- overlook immigrants in their human resource planning;
- do not hire immigrants at the level at which they were trained; and
- face challenges integrating recent immigrants into their workforce.

To address these continuing challenges, the Public Policy Forum developed several recommendations.

1. Employers in regions with a high concentration of immigrants should be informed and engaged in discussions about selection and levels.
2. Employers should be engaged in regionalization strategies.
3. Employers should be encouraged to develop strategies to hire immigrants more

effectively.

4. Hiring practices that may discriminate against immigrants should be addressed.
5. Promote existing credential recognition services and develop new services or procedures where appropriate.
6. Improve language training, especially occupation-specific language training.
7. Promote and create tools to encourage cultural understanding.
8. Provide Canadian work experience for immigrants, especially in small and medium-sized companies.

Conference Presentations

To probe the research findings more deeply, the Public Policy Forum convened a multi-stakeholder conference on November 4, 2004. The survey research findings were presented to employers, government officials and representatives from the non-profit sector and business.

The roundtable sought to:

- give a multi-stakeholder audience an opportunity to listen to and comment on the detailed research findings;
- share best practices to engage and assist employers and immigrants; and
- discuss the next steps for researchers, business, government, policy makers and others in helping to integrate immigrants into the workforce.

The conference began with introductory remarks by Zabeen Hirji, Senior Vice President, Human Resources, RBC Financial Group. Ms. Hirji described several reasons why immigration is important to Canada, including an aging population, the benefits of cultural diversity, and the potential to ensure growth and competitiveness in the Canadian economy. Ms. Hirji emphasized that employers need to assume a leadership role on this issue.

What are the implications of the research findings for employers and business?

Ms. Hirji chaired a panel which identified the implications of research findings for employers and business.

James Milway, Executive Director, Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity, said that Canada is not as competitive as it should be when compared to the U.S. in part because it has lower rates of educational attainment. Ensuring that highly educated and skilled immigrants are integrated into the workforce will help to address this prosperity gap.

David Onyalo, National Director, Canadian Labour Congress, highlighted the importance of including unions in strategies to train immigrants and integrate them into the workforce.

Deborah Wolfe, Director, Education Outreach and Research, Canadian Council for Professional Engineers, suggested that Public Policy Forum research findings were consistent with the findings of her organization's research. In particular, their research also found obstacles relating to language.

Ratna Omidvar, Executive Director, Maytree Foundation, said that the Public Policy Forum research confirms some of the learnings of the Toronto Regional Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC).

Keynote Luncheon Address

The keynote lunch speaker was the Honourable Judy Sgro, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The Minister described the skills that immigrants bring to the Canadian workforce and the problems that some immigrants face integrating into the labour market. She also described some initiatives being undertaken by Citizenship and Immigration Canada to address these challenges, including enhanced language training, providing more information to immigrants prior to arrival, and foreign credential recognition. Her speech has been included as an annex in both English and French.

What are some employers, governments and agencies doing to help immigrants?

Bohdan Bodnar, Vice President Human Resources, Duke Energy chaired a session on best practices.

Eric Gervais, Directeur de la Direction des politiques et des programmes d'intégration, Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et Immigration Québec, described several initiatives, including the creation of the Centre de la reconnaissance des formations et des compétences, which compares and evaluates foreign training and education, the creation of a centre for intercultural relations to help employers support diversity in the workplace, and subsidized work placements for immigrants.

Barbara Nowers, Director, Career Bridge, described a paid internship program. This program is currently only available in Toronto, but it will be expanded to other immigrant destination areas.

Julie Ball, Consultant for Talent Pool, Calgary Chamber of Commerce, described a program that focuses on five under-utilized pools of talent: youth, older workers, new immigrants, aboriginal people, and people with disabilities. Talent Pool is developing a Web site to help employers access pools of talent which they sometimes overlook.

Terry Anne Boyles, Vice-President, Member Services and Public Policy, Association of Canadian Community Colleges, said that community colleges in Canada provide training

in English and French as a second language, occupation-specific language training, certificates, diplomas, applied degrees and university transfers, bridging programs, co-op and work placements, workplace training, and community-based training. She described how governments, colleges and others could work together to better integrate immigrants into the workforce.

What should be done next and who should do it?

Hicham Adra, Senior Vice President, CGI, chaired a session dedicated to answering the questions: What should be done and who should do it?

Faviola Fernandez, Project Coordinator, Policy Roundtable Mobilizing Professions and Trades, expressed her confidence in projects that engage employers, but she reminded participants that any policies and initiatives undertaken must also support the hopes and aspirations of immigrants and other Canadians. Policy makers should be careful not to focus on immigration solely from the employers' perspective.

Hal Davies, President, PerformPlus Inc., described the growing skills shortage of civilian naval staff in Nova Scotia and suggested that immigration would become an important way to fill these gaps. He made several suggestions to improve the immigration process which emphasized the importance of consulting with industry.

Murray Coolican, Vice President, Corporate Affairs, Manulife Financial noted that Canada cannot take for granted the large numbers of immigrants who seek to come to Canada. As more countries begin to think about immigration as a tool to address their human resource strategies, Canada will increasingly be competing for a limited pool of highly skilled immigrants.

John Knuble, Vice President, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency described several challenges that need to be overcome to better recruit and integrate immigrants in Nova Scotia including: insufficient structures and resources to implement an immigration strategy; lack of engagement of the private sector and employers; and difficulty raising public awareness about the benefits associated with immigration. He also described several initiatives being undertaken to address these challenges.

Roger Gibbins, President and CEO, Canada West Foundation said it is important for governments to communicate to the public how immigration can fill specific labour market needs. Dr. Gibbins suggested that the immigration program needs to be reconceptualized to reduce restrictive selection criteria and focus more on integration. He noted that engaging employers is important, but emphasized that governments must continue to play an active role.

Conference Conclusions

The conference presentations and participant discussions supported the Public Policy Forum's recommendations presented in *Bringing Employers Into the Immigration*

Debate: the Public Policy Implications of Research Findings.

In addition, the discussion highlighted several other areas for future research and action. These include:

1. Encourage employers to provide more training opportunities for immigrants.

Participants noted that employers do not dedicate enough resources to providing training opportunities for their employees. They recommended that employers should be encouraged to see the benefits of re-training their current workforce (such as better retention and increased productivity). They suggested that governments could develop programs to assist employers to improve training for all employees.

2. Re-examine immigration selection criteria.

Many participants were concerned that the selection process currently used in the economic class overemphasizes educational attainment at the expense of skilled trades. They noted that there are already labour shortages in the skilled trades and that immigration could be used to fill these gaps.

Participants also thought that the relative numbers of immigrants in the family class, refugee program and economic class should be re-examined vis-à-vis each other.

3. Provide more information and services to immigrants prior to arrival.

It is important to be fair to potential immigrants by describing the obstacles they may face when trying to practice their profession in Canada, and how long it may take to receive accreditation. Participants said that, when possible, immigrants should be able to receive their credential recognition prior to arrival in Canada.

4. Rethink how temporary foreign students can become a bigger part of the overall immigration strategy.

Many participants felt that the foreign student worker program could provide Canada with a steady supply of highly skilled immigrants. Because we have foreign students in universities across the country, it would also be a way to regionalize immigration. To encourage the permanent settlement of students in Canada, they should be encouraged to develop off-campus work experience while studying and should be able to apply for permanent residency upon graduation.

5. Continue to engage employers and industry, especially at the community level.

Participants emphasized that employers need to be more engaged in issues relating to immigration. They noted that both private and public sector employers are essential partners in immigration discussions. Many participants highlighted work being undertaken at the community level which coordinates and engages multi-stakeholder

groups on immigration-related issues. They felt that it is important to support and promote these types of initiatives.

SOMMAIRE

Contexte du projet

L'immigration contribue largement à l'économie canadienne. En 2011, elle sera à l'origine de toute la croissance de la population active de notre pays. Toutefois, les employeurs sont encore insuffisamment représentés dans les stratégies visant à aider les immigrants à s'intégrer au monde du travail.

Pour mieux comprendre les façons de faire participer les employeurs au débat sur l'immigration, le Forum des politiques publiques a entrepris un projet de recherches en plusieurs étapes dans le but de :

- déterminer dans quelle mesure les employeurs pensent que les personnes formées ou éduquées à l'étranger peuvent combler leurs besoins de main-d'œuvre actuels ou futurs;
- déterminer quels problèmes ou préoccupations peuvent avoir les employeurs lorsqu'ils embauchent ces personnes et (ou) évaluent leurs compétences;
- déceler tous les obstacles à l'intégration de ces personnes dans la population active;
- enfin, mieux comprendre l'importance des employés formés ou éduqués à l'étranger selon plusieurs facteurs dont la ville, la province et la taille de l'entreprise.

Ce projet a commencé par un sondage auprès de 2 091 employeurs de tout le pays. On les invitait à décrire leur expérience avec des « immigrants récents », c'est-à-dire arrivés au Canada au cours des 10 dernières années. Pour confirmer et valider les conclusions, on a également convoqué 10 groupes de discussion à Toronto, Montréal, Vancouver et Moncton.

Le sondage a révélé que les employeurs ont une attitude positive envers les immigrants et l'immigration. Ils voient de nombreux avantages et peu d'inconvénients à engager des immigrants récents et participeraient volontiers à des stratégies visant à mieux intégrer ces personnes à la population active.

Toutefois, le sondage et les groupes de discussion ont aussi révélé que les employeurs :

- négligent les immigrants dans la planification de leurs ressources humaines;
- n'engagent pas les immigrants au niveau de leur formation;
- rencontrent des difficultés lorsqu'ils veulent intégrer des immigrants récents à leur effectif.

Le Forum des politiques publiques a formulé plusieurs recommandations pour relever ces défis constants :

1. Dans les régions à forte concentration d'immigrants, informer les employeurs

du choix et des différents niveaux qui s'offrent à eux et les faire participer à des discussions à ce sujet.

2. Faire participer les employeurs à des stratégies de régionalisation.
3. Encourager les employeurs à élaborer des stratégies pour un recrutement plus efficace des immigrants.
4. Réexaminer les pratiques de recrutement susceptibles d'entraîner une discrimination à l'endroit des immigrants.
5. Promouvoir les services actuels de reconnaissance des titres de compétence et mettre au point de nouveaux services et procédures au besoin.
6. Améliorer les cours de langue, surtout ceux qui ont trait aux professions.
7. Promouvoir et créer des outils favorisant la compréhension culturelle.
8. Fournir aux immigrants une expérience professionnelle au Canada, surtout dans les petites et moyennes entreprises.

Présentations à la conférence

Pour approfondir les conclusions de la recherche, le Forum des politiques publiques a organisé une conférence à intervenants multiples le 4 novembre 2004. Les résultats du sondage y ont été communiqués à des employeurs, des représentants des gouvernements et d'organismes sans but lucratif ainsi qu'à des entreprises.

La table ronde visait à :

- donner à un auditoire réunissant des intervenants divers une occasion de découvrir les conclusions détaillées de la recherche et de les commenter;
- faire connaître les pratiques exemplaires pour faire participer les employeurs et les immigrants et les aider;
- discuter des étapes suivantes pour les chercheurs, les entreprises, le gouvernement, les décideurs et autres intervenants, en vue de faciliter l'intégration d'immigrants à la population active.

La conférence a commencé par des remarques préliminaires de Zabeen Hirji, première vice-présidente des Ressources humaines du Groupe financier BRC. L'immigration est importante pour le Canada pour plusieurs raisons, a-t-elle expliqué, dont le vieillissement de la population, les avantages de la diversité culturelle et la possibilité de favoriser la croissance et la compétitivité de l'économie canadienne. Elle estime que les employeurs doivent assumer un rôle de chef de file à cet égard.

Quelles sont les implications des conclusions de la recherche pour les employeurs et les

entreprises?

M^{me} Hirji a présidé une tribune chargée de cerner ces implications.

James Milway, directeur exécutif, Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity, a déploré que le Canada ne soit pas aussi compétitif qu'il devrait l'être, en comparaison avec les États-Unis, en partie parce que le niveau d'instruction de la population canadienne est plus faible. L'arrivée d'immigrants très instruits et compétents contribuerait à combler cette lacune.

Il est important, selon David Onyalo, directeur national, Congrès du Travail du Canada, d'inclure les syndicats dans l'élaboration de stratégies visant à former les immigrants et à les intégrer à la population active.

Deborah Wolfe, directrice de la diffusion et de la recherche en matière d'éducation, Conseil canadien des ingénieurs professionnels, a précisé que les conclusions du Forum des politiques publiques concordent avec celles résultant de sa propre recherche, en particulier en ce qui concerne les obstacles linguistiques.

Selon Ratna Omidvar, directrice en chef, Maytree Foundation, la recherche menée par le Forum des politiques publiques confirme certaines des constatations du Toronto Regional Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC).

Discours liminaire du dîner

La conférencière d'honneur au dîner était l'honorable Judy Sgro, ministre de Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada. Elle a parlé des compétences que les immigrants contribuent à la population active canadienne et des problèmes que rencontrent certains d'entre eux pour s'intégrer au marché du travail. Elle a fait état d'initiatives entreprises par son ministère pour relever ces défis : amélioration des cours de langue, information plus complète pour les immigrants avant leur arrivée, et reconnaissance des titres de compétence étrangers. Son discours figure en annexe, dans les deux langues officielles.

Que font certains employeurs, gouvernements et organismes pour aider les immigrants?

Bohdan Bodnar, vice-président des Ressources humaines, Duke Energy, a présidé une séance sur les pratiques exemplaires. Éric Gervais, directeur de la Direction des politiques et des programmes d'intégration, ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et Immigration Québec, a exposé plusieurs initiatives dont la création du Centre de la reconnaissance des formations et des compétences, qui compare et évalue la formation et l'éducation acquises à l'étranger, d'un centre pour aider les employeurs à favoriser la diversité en milieu de travail, ainsi que des placements professionnels subventionnés pour les immigrants.

Barbara Nowers, directrice de Career Bridge, a parlé d'un programme de stages rémunérés, offert uniquement à Toronto pour le moment, mais qui s'étendra à d'autres

destinations d'immigrants.

Julie Ball, experte-conseil pour Talent Pool, Chambre de commerce de Calgary, a traité d'un programme axé sur cinq réservoirs sous-utilisés de talents : les jeunes, les travailleurs plus âgés, les nouveaux immigrants, les Autochtones et les handicapés. Talent Pool développe actuellement un site Web destiné à donner aux employeurs accès à des réservoirs de talents auxquels ils n'ont habituellement pas recours.

Terry Anne Boyles, vice-présidente, Services aux membres et politiques publiques, Association des collèges communautaires du Canada, explique que nos collèges communautaires offrent des cours d'anglais et de français langue seconde, des cours de langue spécialement conçus pour certaines professions, des programmes de transfert entre certains programmes ou universités, des programmes de transition, des programmes de coopération et des placements professionnels, une formation sur place et une formation communautaire. Elle a proposé un mode de collaboration entre les gouvernements, les collèges et d'autres intervenants pour mieux intégrer les immigrants au marché du travail.

Quelles sont les prochaines étapes et qui devrait s'en charger?

Hicham Adra, premier vice-président, CGI, a présidé une session destinée à répondre à ces questions.

Faviola Fernandez, coordonnatrice de projet, Policy Roundtable Mobilizing Professions and Trades, a exprimé son enthousiasme devant les projets faisant participer les employeurs, mais elle a rappelé aux participants que toutes les politiques et initiatives adoptées doivent aussi aller dans le sens des espoirs et des aspirations des immigrants et des Canadiens. Les décideurs doivent prendre garde à ne pas envisager l'immigration uniquement du point de vue des employeurs.

Hal Davies, président de PerformPlus Inc., a déploré la pénurie de compétences de plus en plus aiguë au sein du personnel naval civil en Nouvelle-Écosse; à son avis, l'immigration serait un bon moyen de combler cette lacune. Il a formulé plusieurs suggestions pour améliorer le processus d'immigration, soulignant l'importance de consultations avec l'industrie.

Murray Coolican, vice-président des affaires de l'entreprise, Manulife Financial, considère que le Canada ne peut prendre pour acquis le grand nombre d'immigrants qui cherchent à entrer sur son territoire. Puisqu'un nombre croissant de pays découvre que l'immigration est un outil avantageux pour leurs stratégies de ressources humaines, le Canada devra se montrer de plus en plus compétitif pour attirer des immigrants très compétents, ceux-ci étant peu nombreux.

John Knubley, vice-président de l'Agence de promotion économique du Canada atlantique, a décrit plusieurs obstacles au recrutement et à la bonne intégration des immigrants en Nouvelle-Écosse (structures et ressources insuffisantes pour appliquer une stratégie d'immigration; faible participation du secteur privé et des employeurs; difficulté

de sensibiliser le public aux avantages associés à l'immigration) et plusieurs démarches entreprises pour résoudre ces problèmes.

Roger Gibbins, président-directeur général de Canada West Foundation, estime qu'il est important pour les gouvernements de faire savoir au public comment l'immigration peut combler des besoins spécifiques du marché du travail. Il propose de remanier le programme d'immigration, surtout les critères de sélection restrictifs, et d'insister davantage sur l'intégration. Certes, la participation des employeurs est importante, mais les gouvernements doivent continuer à jouer un rôle actif.

Conclusions de la conférence

Les présentations et les discussions ont corroboré les recommandations du Forum des politiques publiques, telles que présentées dans le document *Bringing Employers Into the Immigration Debate: The Public Policy Implications of Research Findings*.

En outre, il est ressorti des discussions un certain nombre d'autres domaines dans lesquels des recherches plus poussées et des interventions s'imposent :

1. *Encourager les employeurs à offrir plus d'occasions de formation aux immigrants.*

De l'avis des participants, les employeurs ne consacrent pas assez de ressources à la formation du personnel. Il faudrait les aider à voir les avantages qu'offrirait des programmes de recyclage pour leur effectif actuel (p. ex., conserver plus d'employés et accroître la productivité). Les gouvernements devraient élaborer des programmes pour aider les employeurs en ce sens.

2. *Réexaminer les critères de sélection applicables à l'immigration.*

Bon nombre de participants craignent que le processus de sélection en usage dans la catégorie « immigration économique » n'insiste trop sur le niveau d'instruction aux dépens des métiers spécialisés. Il existe déjà une pénurie de travailleurs dans ces métiers et une immigration mieux canalisée pourrait combler cette lacune.

Il conviendrait aussi de réexaminer le nombre relatif d'immigrants acceptés dans les différentes catégories (catégorie des parents, programme pour les réfugiés et catégorie immigration économique).

3. *Fournir plus de renseignements et de services aux immigrants avant leur arrivée.*

Il est important d'être juste envers les immigrants potentiels en décrivant les véritables défis qui les attendent au Canada. En effet, les immigrants doivent connaître les obstacles potentiels à l'exercice de leur profession, ainsi que le délai d'attente avant une accréditation. Si possible, ils devraient recevoir confirmation de la reconnaissance de leurs titres de compétence avant leur arrivée au Canada.

4. Repenser comment les étudiants étrangers temporaires peuvent jouer un plus grand rôle dans la stratégie d'immigration.

Bon nombre de participants ont estimé que le programme des étudiants étrangers au Canada pourrait être une source constante d'immigrants très compétents. La présence d'étudiants étrangers dans les universités de tout le pays pourrait aussi aider à régionaliser l'immigration. Pour favoriser leur établissement permanent au Canada, il faudrait les encourager à acquérir une expérience professionnelle hors campus pendant leurs études et leur permettre de demander le statut de résident permanent lorsqu'ils obtiennent leur diplôme.

5. Continuer à faire participer les employeurs et le secteur privé, surtout au niveau communautaire.

Les participants estiment que les employeurs doivent continuer à être inclus dans les discussions et les décisions concernant l'immigration. D'ailleurs, les employeurs des secteurs public et privé sont des partenaires essentiels dans les discussions sur l'immigration. Bon nombre de participants ont souligné les efforts communautaires déployés pour susciter et coordonner l'apport de groupes à intervenants multiples aux questions touchant l'immigration. Ils estiment important d'appuyer et de promouvoir de telles initiatives.

BRINGING EMPLOYERS INTO THE IMMIGRATION DEBATE: THE PUBLIC POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF SURVEY FINDINGS

Introduction

Context

Immigration makes an important contribution to the Canadian economy. Immigrants establish businesses that create jobs, stimulate the economy by increasing the demand for local goods, and fill niches at the high and low ends of the labour market. As the Canadian-born population ages, immigration will become even more important. It is expected that by 2011, immigration will account for all of Canada's labour force growth and by 2026 for all of Canada's population growth.

Despite the potential benefits of immigration, a growing number of immigrants, are having trouble integrating into the Canadian workforce. A growing number of immigrants, who have higher educational attainment than the average Canadian in the same age groups, are unable to see their diplomas, skills and work experience recognized. Many immigrants are unemployed, underemployed or living in poverty. This is both a social and economic problem, according to a recent Conference Board of Canada study, underemployment costs the country four to six billion dollars annually.

Research conducted by the Canadian Labour and Business Centre¹ suggested many employers, even those experiencing skill shortages in regions with traditionally high levels of immigration, do not see immigration as a way to fill current or future skills shortages. There appears to be a disconnect between a concern about skills shortages and an employer's interest in immigration.

To better understand this disconnect and other issues relating to integrating immigrants into the workforce from the employers' perspective, the Public Policy Forum undertook a research project. It focused on employers perceptions of "recent immigrants" who were defined as those immigrants who had arrived in Canada within the last 10 years. The research sought to:

- determine the extent to which employers think foreign-trained/educated individuals can fill their current or future labour market shortages;
- identify any issues or concerns employers may have had when hiring and/or assessing the skills foreign-trained/educated individuals;
- identify any barriers to integrating foreign-trained/educated into the employer's labour force; and,
- better understand the importance and nature of foreign-trained/educated employment by a number of factors including city, province and company size.

¹ CLBC. Perspectives on Immigration: Findings from the Canadian Labour and Business Centre's Survey of Canadian Business, Labour and Public Sector Leaders. Available at: http://www.clbc.ca/Fitting_In/Perspectives_on_Immigration.asp.

Methodology

The Public Policy Forum created an advisory committee to oversee all aspects of this project.²

After undertaking a call for proposals, the Public Policy Forum commissioned Environics to undertake a survey of 2091 employers. This survey was conducted from June to August 2004. Environics oversaw all issues of sample design, questionnaire design, analysis and reporting in consultation with the advisory committee. To enhance the quantitative results of the survey, Environics also conducted 10 focus groups in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Moncton. For a summary of their report entitled: *Survey of Canadian Employers and Human Resource Managers*, please visit www.ppforum.ca.

To communicate and analyze the public policy implications of research findings, the Public Policy Forum:

- prepared and distributed its own analysis (this report);
- organized a multi-stakeholder conference on November 4, 2004 to discuss research findings; and
- prepared an outcomes report on the conference discussion (to be published at: www.ppforum.ca).

The *Survey of Canadian Employers and Human Resource Managers* completed by Environics revealed that employers have a positive attitude toward immigrants and immigration. Employers see many positives and few negatives to hiring recent immigrants and welcome the opportunity to participate in strategies that seek to better integrate immigrants into the workforce.

However, the survey and focus groups also found that employers:

1. overlook immigrants in their human resource planning;
2. do not hire immigrants at the level that they were trained; and
3. face challenges integrating recent immigrants into their workforce.

These findings have important public policy implications that need to be addressed in order to better integrate immigrants into the labour market. This paper will briefly

² This advisory committee consisted of representatives from: Human Resources and Skills Development Canada; Citizenship and Immigration Canada; Department of Canadian Heritage; Industry Canada; Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency; British Columbia Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services; Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities; Maytree Foundation; World Education Services; Alberta Ministry of Human Resources and Employment; Nova Scotia Department of Education; Saskatchewan Department of Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs; Alberta International Qualifications Assessment Service; Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et Immigration Québec, Manitoba Labour and Immigration and Canadian Labour and Business Centre; Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters; Conference Board of Canada; Canadian Chamber of Commerce; Canadian Council of Chief Executives; Canadian Labour Congress.

describe each of these findings and then suggest what governments and other sectors could do to address these challenges.

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

1. Employers overlook immigrants in their human resource planning.

The survey found that employers, whether located in destination cities like Toronto or non-destination areas such as Atlantic Canada, consistently rank hiring immigrants as a way to address future labour market needs lower than:

- upgrading the skills of current employees;
- implementing specific measures that will encourage current employees to stay with the organization;
- hiring more young people;
- hiring aboriginals;
- changing job descriptions to reallocate work; and
- attracting workers from other organizations or companies.

Despite these results, employers also think that Canada does a good job recruiting immigrants with the necessary skills³ and are generally happy with the skills of immigrants they do hire. Furthermore, employers are aware that immigrants play an important role in the labour force and will continue to grow as a proportion of the Canadian population.

Fifty-nine percent of survey respondents said that the majority of the recent immigrants they hire have elementary or high school as their highest education level attained. In the private sector, 63 percent indicate the majority of their recent immigrants have high school education or less. These results are surprising given that 46 percent of new immigrants arriving in 2002 held a university degree and an additional 13 percent held some other post-secondary credential.⁴

As the Environics' report describes, there are several reasons why employers overlook immigrants as a way to address their workforce needs. In traditional destination cities, especially Toronto and Vancouver, employers already think that they are hiring immigrants in numbers consistent with the existing population.

In areas where immigrants are not concentrated, employers do not feel that there are enough immigrants to hire, and although many are positive about the idea, they do not see immigration as a realistic long-term strategy because of settlement and retention challenges. In Moncton, employers suggested that immigration initiatives be targeted at a group of 6 to 10 families, so that they can support one another and not feel isolated in their new host community.

³ It is important to note that employers had more positive attitudes about Canada's success at meeting its humanitarian and family reunification objectives.

⁴ CLBC Handbook, 9.

2. *Employers do not hire immigrants at the level at which they were trained.*

Sixty-five percent of survey respondents said that most of the immigrants they hire are skilled workers. An even higher number (77 percent) think that immigrants do not have training needs that are different from Canadian-born employees. Only 32 percent see a great or slight advantage in 'salary or wages' to hiring immigrants (the lowest-ranked potential advantage).

However, 50 percent of survey respondents said that Canadian work experience is either a requirement for employment in their organization or that foreign work experience is not necessarily considered equal to Canadian experience. The public sector is much less likely to accept foreign work experience on par with Canadian work experience.

Reported requirements regarding Canadian work experience August 2004					
	TOTAL	PUBLIC	CROWN CORPORATION*	NON-PROFIT	PRIVATE
Work experience from other countries equal to Canadian work	39	29	42	43	41
Canadian work experience required	25	27	29	28	25
Work experience from other countries accepted, not necessarily considered equal to Canadian work	25	30	22	23	24
Depends on the requirements of the position	6	10	4	2	5
Depends on the experience	3	2	3	2	3
dk/na	3	2	-	3	3

* Note small sample size

Canadian work experience is seen as important because it proves that immigrants are able to work in the Canadian work environment (32 percent), that they are able to meet Canadian standards (14 percent) and because it lowers the risk of hiring employees who do not fit into the culture of the organization (11 percent). Employers who hire mostly regulated professionals are much less likely than other employers with no regulated professionals to say that foreign experience is accepted on par with Canadian experience.

These findings suggest that employers are aware that they are not hiring immigrants at levels consistent with their foreign qualifications and work experience. The survey and focus groups explored several potential reasons.

In some cases the immigrants' foreign credentials may, in fact, not be equivalent. It is beyond the scope of the PPF's research project to evaluate immigrants' education and credentials. However, the survey does suggest that if employers do feel that immigrants credentials are not equivalent, this assumption may not be based on personal experience. Almost half of all survey respondents have had no experience verifying the education or work credentials of recent immigrants. Very few can name a credential recognition company.

Some employers may also engage in hiring practices that systematically discriminate against recent immigrants. As focus group discussions explored, employers receive so many résumés that for many positions, it is easy to raise the level of education or training required for a position. It is also easy for employers to accept résumés where the qualifications and experience are familiar to them. Also, some employers, particularly large employers in the public sector, have standardized testing which all employees must undergo, but which is not necessarily related to the skills for the job. This can create a systemic barrier to entrance into the public service. For example, one employer in Vancouver noted that the hospital where she works requires that all employees, regardless of position, take a literacy test. She felt that this test is important because all employees need to be able to read and recognize signs warning of danger or hygiene requirements.

Employers may themselves be benefiting from underemploying immigrants. Focus groups said that employing immigrants in an occupation that requires less than their foreign credentials and education is a "win-win" situation because it provides immigrants with Canadian work experience and provides the employer with a qualified and loyal employee. For example, one focus group participant in Vancouver noted that an immigrant lawyer who could not be accredited in Canada was an excellent legal clerk in her firm.

Another reason that employers may be underemploying immigrants is a result of the language skills of immigrants. Forty six percent of employers think that immigrants face language and communication barriers in the application phase, 36 percent during interview phase, 22 percent during the second interview/job offer phase. In the focus groups these survey findings were reinforced by employers who complained that even when immigrants present excellent résumés and qualifications they cannot hire them because immigrants are often unable to describe their skills and experience in an interview.

3. Employers face challenges integrating recent immigrants into their workforce.

The survey findings reveal that most employers think that recent immigrants have a very easy (21 percent) or somewhat easy time (46 percent) integrating into the culture of their organizations. In Montreal, the findings are even higher with 40 percent saying immigrants have a very easy time, and 47 percent saying immigrants have a somewhat easy time. The benefits of hiring immigrants that employers emphasized were skills in

languages (31 percent), capacity to generate new ideas (25 percent), the organization's reputation (25 percent), development of products and services for multicultural markets (22 percent) and employees' commitment to the organization (21 percent). In focus groups they often praised immigrants' dedication to the organization and eagerness to please their superiors.

However, some employers do face challenges integrating recent immigrants into their organizations. Survey respondents said that they are *very likely* to experience language difficulties (18 percent), communication difficulties (14 percent), verifying foreign work experience (14 percent), lack of Canadian work experience (13 percent). Small and medium-sized companies experience more difficulties than larger companies. These challenges also appear to be lower in Quebec, and higher in Toronto.

When asked to elaborate on what they meant by language skills, focus group participants described difficulty understanding immigrants because of their accents, immigrants who nod as though they understand their instructions but do not, and poor literacy skills which affect the ability of immigrants to work even in technical positions because they are unable to write informal emails between colleagues. Focus group respondents emphasized that immigrants' technical and other skills are equal to or superior to employees born in Canada.

Focus group participants also highlighted several cultural issues relating to integrating immigrants into the workforce. In many cases, they noted that they were happy to accommodate immigrants with different cultural backgrounds. For example, companies, especially larger companies, were happy to provide prayer rooms for Muslim immigrants and accommodated their times to pray. Many had developed policies on cultural diversity and anti-racism. However, many employers felt that other requests which they categorized as cultural, were more difficult to accommodate. For example, some said that immigrant employees are more likely to need time off to visit family abroad and to deal with family issues.

Some differences, which they also defined as cultural, were contrary to company policy or Canadian values. For example, some employers said that some male immigrants were uncomfortable working for women supervisors.

Employers were also concerned that immigrant employees did not socialize or mingle with other employees. They felt that immigrants are often unavailable or unwilling to participate in workplace social activities and that they eventually become excluded from other employees. In Toronto, employers were also concerned about inter-ethnic conflict between immigrant groups.

Representatives of smaller companies who participated in the focus groups were more likely than larger companies to emphasize the importance of finding an employee who 'fits' into the organization. Survey analysis suggests that small and medium-sized companies require a higher subsidy than large companies to participate in bridging programs for immigrants.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND SOLUTIONS

The findings suggest that the economic and labour market needs of immigrants cannot be seen in isolation from their social and cultural integration. They also suggest that strategies to address issues relating to continuing challenges must be different in destination areas and non-destination areas, and different for large and small companies. The following suggestions require the involvement of all levels of governments and sectors.

1. Employers in regions with a high concentration of immigrants need to be informed and engaged in discussions on selection and levels.

In order to inform and engage employers it is important to collect human resource data in two areas.

First, employers should become aware of the foreign training and experience of immigrants in the Canadian labour market and in the area where they hire. Collecting information on these skills and communicating them to employees will help employers to better understand how they can more strategically and effectively access the skills they need from immigrants in their communities. This information could be collected by immigrants serving agencies and should be made available locally to employers through employment agencies and headhunter organizations. Information collected on employer requests would also help to identify current and future labour market needs.

Second, employers and governments should develop a better understanding of human resource needs of the labour market. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) has created the Labour Market Partnership (LMP) program which funds projects that identify human resource issues and “encourage, support and facilitate human resource planning and labour market adjustments which are in the public interest.”⁵

Creating links between labour market needs and immigration is very important, particularly in destination communities. For example, one project funded through LMP sought to identify future human resource and labour market needs in Toronto. The *Toronto Labour Force Readiness Plan* identified that labour force growth would occur in all sectors. However, it also noted that 60% of this growth would occur in occupations that require either a college diploma, an apprenticeship certificate or a high school diploma, with most of the growth in the latter.⁶ Given that Toronto is the primary destination for immigrants, Canadian university enrolment is one of the highest in the world, and most immigrants arrive with a university degree, ensuring that Canada’s immigration program reflects the skills needed by employers may facilitate immigrants’ integration into the labour market.

This is not to suggest that Canada should ignore the humanitarian and family

⁵ For more information visit:

http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/asp/gateway.asp?hr=en/epb/sid/cia/grants/lmp/desc_lmp.shtml&hs=pzp

⁶ City of Toronto. *Toronto Labour Force Readiness Plan. Overview.* p. 49.

reunification goals of the immigration program. However, in order to meet its economic objectives, particularly under the Skilled Worker program, it is important to collect accurate human resource information on both labour market needs and available skills.

2. Employers should be engaged in regionalization strategies.

How do you encourage immigrants to settle outside of Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto? How do you make regional communities more welcoming to immigrants? Given demographic trends, answering these questions is very important to future regional economic development.

Part of the policy answer will lie in ensuring that appropriate employment is available for immigrants and that they are welcomed into the workplace. Engaging employers to develop a regionalization strategy can help to ensure that jobs are available which use immigrants' skills and that the existing workforce has been encouraged to welcome and support the newcomers.

Another part of the answer will be encouraging the social and cultural integration of immigrants into the local community, and the development of immigrant communities themselves. According to the results of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, most immigrants choose their destination based on the existence of family and friends from the same background.⁷ Developing a vibrant immigrant community in regional areas is therefore, just as important as promoting their economic and cultural integration. The Department of Canadian Heritage would likely play an important role.

The investment in immigrant communities and cultural integration needs to be communicated to Canadians as a benefit to many stakeholders: the immigrant who settles in a traditional non-destination community; the community that benefits from the immigrant's skills and cultural diversity; and traditional destination communities, in particular Toronto, where infrastructure could be strained if the population growth exceeds its absorptive capacity.

3. Employers should be encouraged to develop strategies to hire immigrants more effectively.

The findings by Environics suggest that employers believe that they have already maximized hiring immigrants as a human resource solution.

The policy challenge is to develop a communications strategy aimed at employers that will not just promote the idea of hiring more recent immigrants, but promote the idea of strategically recruiting immigrants more effectively. This will require that policymakers communicate to employers the impact that underemployment will have on the employers' organizations. These impacts include:

⁷ For more information visit: <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-611-XIE/destination.htm>

- poor morale;
- increased turnover, which increases human resource time and costs;
- missed opportunities to increase productivity; and
- loss of some of the benefits of hiring immigrant employees that employers themselves have identified (eg: capacity to generate new ideas).

It is also important to highlight broader impacts that underemployment has on the Canadian economy.

The federal government should explore the costs and benefits of expanding the designated groups under employment equity to include recent immigrants. The data collected through the Legislated Employment Equity Program (LEEP) and the Federal Contractors Program (FCP) would be a useful tool to understanding how immigrants are being hired and to identify and address any continuing barriers.

4. Hiring practices that inadvertently discriminate against immigrants should be addressed.

Employers should be encouraged to think critically about the skills they need and their hiring practices. Policy makers should work with employers to develop familiarity with foreign credentials and credential recognition services so that recent immigrants with these skills are not automatically discounted early in the hiring process. This could mean promoting and developing a series of tools such as brochures, manuals or Web sites that would clearly and simply:

- highlight education and credential recognition services;
- give examples of equivalent education; and
- provide a list of questions that could be asked during an interview to help verify the credentials.

Any skills testing undertaken for a position by an employer should be appropriate for the position so as not to inadvertently discriminate against immigrants. They should not demand language skills that are not required in the position, nor should the tests be culturally biased.

A secondary aim of skills testing (the primary one from the employer's perspective to find a suitable candidate) should be to identify gaps in skills. Affordable educational or work training programs should be available to fill these gaps. These programs should be accessible to employers with minimal impact on their daily business. If an employer identifies a skills gap and refers an immigrant to training, it might be possible for example, to give the employer a small incentive to hire the immigrant while he or she is undergoing training.

Similarly, the requirements imposed by professional bodies and regulators should also be examined. Some employers in the focus groups complained that regulators were setting standards that are increasingly too hard to meet and that this was limiting their pool of

potential candidates.

5. Promote existing credential recognition services and develop new services where appropriate.

There is a need to promote existing credential recognition services. These services should be promoted to employers and legitimized through an employer-targeted campaign.

Immigrants should continue to be informed about how best to present their foreign education and work experience (e.g., translated documents, copies of equivalencies).

Immigrants who enter the country through the skilled worker category should be encouraged to get their credentials recognized before immigrating to Canada. In Australia this requirement is often attributed to the country's success in integrating immigrants into high-paying, highly skilled positions. This will require further coordination at the national level of accrediting and regulatory bodies and of credential recognition services.

6. Improved language training, especially occupation-specific language training.

Fully subsidized language training should be available to immigrants in all regions of the country. Additional occupation-specific language training should also be available, especially in areas where there is a concentration of immigrants.

Under the Enhanced Language Training Initiative, and through cost-sharing partnership with provinces, territories, municipalities, community organizations, employers and education institutions, Citizenship and Immigration is dedicating \$20 million per year toward work-specific language training. It is essential that the leanings and outcomes of these projects are shared.

Any new courses or tools should be developed in consultation with employers to ensure that they effectively meet employers' needs.

7. Create tools to encourage cultural understanding.

Existing manuals, diversity courses and videos that promote cultural understanding in the workplace should be promoted to employers. Other tools should be developed where appropriate. Employers may wish to use these tools with all employees as part of their regular orientation.

Additional tools, which focus on small and medium sized business, may need to be developed and distributed. These tools should be easily used by employers, effective but not time consuming, and relevant to the workplace (i.e., office versus outdoor work) or industry. These initiatives should focus on smaller companies because they have the most difficulty providing services for immigrants.

Other tools, aimed specifically at immigrants, which address and explain Canadian business culture and practices, could be provided as part of occupation-specific language training. It could also be designed as an online-tool or video to be distributed to embassies so that potential immigrants can better understand the cultural context in Canada prior to their arrival.

8. Provide Canadian work experience for immigrants, especially in small and medium-sized companies.

Most employers indicated that they would welcome the opportunity to provide work experience for immigrants, with a minimal subsidy required.

In Toronto, *Career Bridge* is an initiative of Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council, a multi-stakeholder group which includes employers, and is funded in part by the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. It has just completed a successful pilot phase consisting of 51 paid internships in 30 organizations. *Career Bridge* will be expanding its services to offer 150 new internship by March 31, 2005. Learnings from this program should be shared as it may be a model for other regions.

According to the *Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours*, in 2002, 62 percent of new jobs were small businesses (defined as less than 100 employees).⁸ Since most job creation happens in small and medium-sized enterprises, emphasis should be on assisting these companies to hire and integrate recent immigrants into their workforce. Given the time and resources required to access and arrange immigrant placements, and the strain that this might put on smaller companies, an intermediary (potentially at the local level, but with national connections to promote data sharing and learnings) should be created to facilitate the employment of immigrants in small and medium-sized companies.

⁸ Statistics Canada, *Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours* (SEPH), September 2003

FURTHER RESEARCH

The Public Policy Forum's research creates a greater level of understanding of the barriers that immigrants still face being hired and integrating into the Canadian workforce from the perspective of employers. It also provides insight into appropriate policy solutions.

However, further research is needed to better understand:

- whether there are industry-specific issues relating to employing immigrants⁹;
- the experience of employers in “second-tier” immigration cities like Ottawa, Calgary, etc.; and
- the reasons for regional differences in employers' attitudes toward immigration and immigrants.

⁹ Few industrial observations could be made in this research because of small sample size.

BRINGING EMPLOYERS INTO THE IMMIGRATION DEBATE: CONFERENCE OUTCOMES REPORT

INTRODUCTION

On November 4, 2004 the Public Policy Forum held a one-day conference of senior leaders representing employers, immigrant-serving community groups, business and government to discuss the results of a survey undertaken by Environics Research Group on behalf of the Public Policy Forum. The survey sought the views of employers on the issues they face when hiring and integrating recent immigrants into their workforce.

In particular, the roundtable sought to:

- give a multi-stakeholder audience an opportunity to listen to and comment on the detailed research findings;
- share best practices to engage and assist employers and immigrants; and
- discuss the next steps for researchers, business, government, policy makers and others in helping to integrate immigrants into the workforce.

This report describes the discussion at the roundtable. For more information about the survey itself and its findings, please visit www.ppforum.ca.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Why is immigration important to employers?

Zabeen Hirji, Senior Vice President, Human Resources, RBC Financial Group

Picture: Hirji

Please crop off the top part above her head

The conference began with introductory remarks by Zabeen Hirji, Senior Vice President, Human Resources, RBC Financial Group.

Ms. Hirji described several reasons why immigration is important to Canada. First, she noted that immigration is important because of demographics. Canada's birthrate is below what is needed to sustain the population, and the population is aging. Twenty-five years from now all of Canada's population growth will depend on immigration. Second, Ms. Hirji noted that the benefits of cultural diversity, such as knowledge about other parts of the world, are important to the workplace. Third, there is an important economic imperative to immigration. By 2011, 100 percent of net labour force growth will be from immigration. Canada's growth and competitiveness will depend on how quickly and easily immigrants can integrate into the workplace.

Ms. Hirji stated that ensuring that immigrants are effectively recruited, retained and promoted will require a multi-stakeholder effort: employers (public and private, large and small) regulatory bodies, colleges and universities, assessment providers, professional associations, and governments at all levels.

Ms. Hirji emphasized that employers need to assume a leadership role on this issue and described her company's initiatives in this area. RBC believes that diversity is a competitive advantage, a business opportunity and "the right thing to do." The company has recognized that it is important to be perceived by all potential employees as being open and forward thinking. Consequently, diversity needs to be embedded in an organization at all levels. Diversity is one of five values at RBC and is supported by senior management.

RBC has also been taking an external leadership role with respect to employment of immigrants. For example, Ms. Hirji participates in the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council, where she is working to develop a "toolkit" of promising practices to help employers recruit, retain and promote skilled immigrants.

What do employers say about hiring immigrants?

Presentation by Derek Leebosh, Environics Research Group

In order to ensure that the views of employers from all regions and industries were represented at the conference, Derek Leebosh, Senior Associate, Environics Research Group presented the findings of the survey and focus groups conducted by Environics on behalf of the Public Policy Forum.

The national phone survey of 2,091 business owners, managers, administrators, human resource managers and others responsible for hiring employees was completed between June 25 and August 18, 2004. The margin of error is plus or minus 2.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20 (but larger margins of error apply to smaller sub-samples), and results were weighted by region and community size.

Focus groups were held in Moncton, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver after the initial results of the phone survey were analyzed, to supplement the findings of the quantitative survey.

The study results confirm that employers are open to the idea of hiring immigrants and have positive attitudes toward immigration in all regions. Attitudes toward immigrant workers are more positive among those whose organizations already employ larger numbers of immigrants, suggesting that openness to hiring immigrants will increase as more of these workers enter into the Canadian marketplace.

Immigrant employees are not perceived as being a potential burden in terms of requiring additional training needs. The needs are in the area of language training, particularly job-

specific language training, much of which is provided by the organizations where they work. However, employers, especially in small companies, sometimes feel they cannot “risk” hiring newly-arrived immigrants and have concerns about language difficulties and the ability of immigrants to “fit into” their organization.

Survey results also suggest that employers are hiring immigrants in positions other than senior or middle management.

About one-quarter of Canadian employers would consider foreign work experience, but do not view it as equal to Canadian work experience. Another quarter of employers would not hire immigrants without Canadian work experience. Focus group research found several employers admitting that, all things being equal, it is often easier and less risky to hire someone with Canadian work experience. There were also complaints that the immigrants themselves often do not do all that they could to make their credentials easy to verify (for example, by providing English translations of these credentials) and that Canadian consulates in the originating countries might do more to prepare those who are emigrating about the expectations and practices of the Canadian workplace.

Employers’ experience with evaluating foreign credentials is limited, but is much more likely to have been a positive rather than a negative experience. However, very few employers can name an organization that provides credential recognition services, though most see the value of these kinds of services.

There is widespread recognition of the fact that immigrants face unique challenges, primarily language related, during the application phase of the job hunting process. However, as immigrants move through the hiring process, the challenges they face are more and more likely to be no different than those faced by Canadian-born applicants.

Although employers mostly believe that immigrant workers bring added value to their organization, few see a need for employment policies to promote the hiring of immigrants. Findings suggest that employers would hire more immigrants if they felt they were unable to find employees with the skills they need among other job applicants.

Although there is relatively little recognition of the difficulties immigrants can have in adjusting to corporate cultures, employers do express concerns that there could be difficulties related to language and communications in general, as well as cultural misunderstandings with staff or customers. These concerns were underlined in greater detail in the focus groups, where employers mentioned a number of instances in which they felt that immigrant workers did not adjust well to Canadian social and cultural mores. The focus group participants tended to split along two very different approaches to dealing with these problems—those who favoured diversity programs within the workplace that recognize and accommodate cultural and religious differences, and those who favoured encouraging immigrant employees to comply with the Canadian status quo.

In Moncton, as may well be the case in many smaller areas, focus group participants

expressed concern over the tendency of immigrant workers to stay in the region only until they could find employment in larger cities.

Employers are generally open to working with governments to provide bridging programs to help immigrant workers adjust to the Canadian workplace. Employers do not demand that wage subsidies be a major component of these programs.

Both the phone survey and the focus groups found that employers think that immigration could be an effective way to serve an English or French minority-language community. However, overall, there appears to be relatively little support for the idea that Canada should increase immigrant quotas in order to address gaps in the labour market.

For more detailed survey findings, please visit www.ppforum.ca.

Participant Discussion

Participants pointed out that some employers would have difficulty distinguishing between ‘visible minorities’ and recent immigrants. However, they noted that employers were asked about the source countries of their immigrant employees and these countries of origin mirrored the source countries of recent immigrants to Canada.

There was also some discussion about the different results that occurred in the city of Montreal and the province of Quebec for several of the questions. Participants suggested that further research may be required to better understand some of the reasons for the regional distinctions, but noted that the focus groups in Montreal revealed slightly different attitudes in that city toward the concept of multiculturalism. Montreal was the only city where employers admitted to overtly discriminatory hiring practices because of fears that immigrants would not “fit” within the organization.

Participants discussed the findings dealing with training. The findings suggest that in many cases employers are willing to provide training themselves and to refer immigrants to training. They are also very open to participating in workplace bridging programs, and these programs would require little financial subsidy.

What are the implications of the research findings for employers and business?

Following Mr. Leebosh's presentation, a panel of speakers was invited to respond to the survey results.

James Milway, Executive Director, Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity

Mr. Milway described the Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity's research on Canada's competitiveness in a global context. This research compares Canada's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, which is one of the highest in the world among countries with at least half of Canada's population, second only to the United States. The Institute has identified a prosperity gap of \$6,800 per Canadian when compared to Americans.

Mr. Milway identified some reasons for this prosperity gap. He noted that the labour supply (number of people of working age, number of people working and hours worked) could not explain this gap because Canada has a slight advantage in this area when compared to the US.

Much of this gap is because Canadians are less productive. Mr. Milway identified a few reasons that Canada is less productive, including lower rates of urbanization and lower educational attainment rates, especially at higher levels and in business degrees. This is true for the labour force as a whole and for those in management positions.

Better integration of immigrants could be an important way to address the prosperity gap, because on average immigrants have higher educational attainment rates than Canadian-born individuals. However, although many immigrants have a science or engineering background, more business degrees are needed.

Mr. Milway said employers should be engaged in trying to better integrate immigrants, and that policy makers and advocates need to appeal to employers' self interest — or “fear and greed” as he put it. A strategy aimed at employers who experiencing real labour shortages will be more successful.

One of the lessons that can be learned from the Public Policy Forum's survey findings is that policy makers need to focus on “soft” skills, including how immigrants deal with customers.

Picture: Onyalo
Crop off the green PPF sign
so that only the top of the
podium remains

David Onyalo, National Director, Canadian Labour Congress

Mr. Onyalo highlighted several findings from the survey, including employers' perception that immigrants face difficulties adjusting to the culture of the organization and their concern about the lack of Canadian work experience. He noted that employers must take a lead in training staff rather than expect that staff come fully trained. He also highlighted that many employers recognize there will be a need to replace retiring workers in the future.

Mr. Onyalo said that unions can be an important partner when employers hire and integrate more immigrants into the workforce,. They are able to engage different levels of government and put in place good training programs. Also, many unions are working to combat racism.

He noted that although most labour force growth happens in smaller companies, larger unionized companies still employ many people and as babyboomers retire, many positions may be available.

Real change can occur when there is a desire on the part of employers to work with unions to address inequality issues. He gave the example of Toronto Hydro, which decided in the 1980s that the workforce should better reflect the diversity of Toronto. By engaging unions, they were able to develop specific training programs for all levels of employees (including supervisors and senior management) on the importance of diversity.

Mr. Onyalo addressed what he called a 'myth' — that unionized environments create difficulties for new Canadians because of seniority provisions in collective agreements. In fact, most employees in unionized environments do not have seniority provisions, and those seniority provisions that do exist are usually limited to "tie breaker" situations. He noted that this myth assumes that an unfettered market would have more women, visible minorities and immigrants in supervisor and managerial positions. However, this is not the case. Greater diversity within senior ranks is usually achieved through proactive policies.

Deborah Wolfe, Director, Education, Outreach and Research, Canadian Council of Professional Engineers

The Canadian Council of Professional Engineers (CCPE) is an association representing the provincial and territorial regulators of the engineering professions. As Ms. Wolfe pointed out in her presentation, engineering is the single largest occupational group among recent immigrants to Canada.

Some challenges to hiring foreign-trained engineers are:

- the requirement of having one year of Canadian work experience before licensing;
- anecdotal accounts that there are too many immigrants with engineering degrees in some areas; and
- different cultural understandings about what constitutes "engineering work" and how different countries train their engineers.

The CCPE is currently undertaking a project to understand how regulators might better enable foreign-trained engineers to earn licenses as professional engineers in their province or territory of residence and to gain employment in the engineering field in Canada.

The first two phases of the project have been completed. These phases involved consultations with foreign trained immigrants and regulatory bodies in the provinces and territories.

Ms. Wolfe highlighted some of the project findings. Many immigrants do not understand licensing procedures, feel they take too long, and/or find the document verification process confusing. Many immigrants also find it difficult to get the one year of Canadian experience required for licensure. They suggest that future immigrants be provided with

more information prior to arrival in Canada.

From the employer's perspective, the findings were similar to the Public Policy Forum's survey findings. Employers feel that immigrants lack language proficiency, need Canadian employment experience, and do not have the necessary training in North American business practices and standards. Employers also have little difficulty accessing credentials and say they do not need large subsidies to hire more immigrants.

Ratna Omidvar, Executive Director, Maytree Foundation

Ms. Omidvar said that the Public Policy Forum research confirms some of the learnings of the Toronto Regional Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC).

TRIEC is composed of employers, labour, occupational regulatory bodies, post-secondary institutions, assessment service providers, community organizations, and all three levels of government. It is a local initiative which seeks to:

- increase access and availability of value-added services that support labour market integration of skilled immigrants;
- change the way stakeholders value and work with skilled immigrants; and
- change the way governments relate to one another in planning and programming around this issue.

Picture: Omidvar

Please cut out a little above her head and the sign below

Ms. Omidvar noted that employers are an important part of this strategy. The TRIEC model is being duplicated in Halifax, Vancouver, Waterloo, Niagara. It is successful when employers play a leadership role.

Ms. Omidvar described mentoring initiatives that TRIEC is undertaking which aim to help immigrants establish the informal networks that are often required to obtain employment, especially in highly-skilled areas. TRIEC aims to create 1,000 occupation-specific matches in the first year, which requires careful screening and matching of both immigrants and mentors.

Participant discussion

In the discussion period following the presentations, participants noted that the discourse around the integration of immigrants in the workforce is often focused on regulated professionals. However, there is a shortage of skilled workers in the trades, and immigration could be used more effectively to fill these gaps. There are not enough people immigrating to Canada with a skilled trade and that 2002 changes to the selection system, when fully implemented, will only exacerbate the challenge of recruiting these people.

There are several challenges to integrating immigrants into skilled trades. For example, the professional bodies governing many trades require written exams. A possible solution would be to allow practical and workplace testing.

Some work is underway to help being done to integrate immigrants into the skilled trades. Participants noted the work of “Skills for Change,” a not-for-profit organization that has pioneered programs for internationally-trained tradespeople. In February 2004, the program was expanded to include construction and industrial electricians and millwrights.

Participants reiterated the observations made by Deborah Wolfe regarding engineers and suggested that many immigrants who come to Canada as engineers may have been trained or practiced engineering in a very different way. In some cases, although they are thought of as engineers in their home country, in Canada they are merely technologists. Participants suggested that it would be useful to provide immigrant applicants with more accurate information about their profession in Canada prior to their arrival.

Keynote Luncheon Address

Shirley Seward, CEO, Canadian Labour and Business Centre

Ms. Seward introduced the Honourable Judy Sgro, Minister of citizenship and Immigration Canada. She also described a recent background document prepared by the Canadian Labour and Business Centre, entitled CLBC Handbook- Immigration and Skill Shortages, available at: <http://www.clbc.ca/>

Picture: Sgro
Please cut out green ppf
sign so that only the top of
the podium remains

Honourable Judy Sgro, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration

The Public Policy Forum was pleased to welcome the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration as the conference’s keynote speaker.

The Minister described the skills that immigrants bring to the Canadian workforce and the problems that some immigrants face integrating into the labour market. She also described some initiatives being undertaken by Citizenship and Immigration Canada to address these challenges including enhanced language training, providing more information to immigrants prior to arrival, and foreign credential recognition. Her speech has been included as an annex in both English and French.

What are employers, governments and agencies doing to help immigrants?

Bohdan Bodnar, Vice President, Human Resources, Duke Energy

Bohdan Bodnar acted as chair of the ‘best practices’ panel. He said that many employers are currently suffering shortages of specific skills, and many more still are aware that demographic changes will create shortages in the future. However, many employers are reluctant to focus on these long-term needs because they are too preoccupied with what they are doing now: downsizing, restructuring or trying to achieve the short-term bottom line.

He noted that to ensure the success of immigrants into the Canadian workforce, it will be important to engage employers in firms that are likely to grow and appeal to their self interest.

Eric Gervais, Directeur de la Direction des politiques et des programmes d'intégration, Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et Immigration Québec

Mr. Gervais spoke about Quebec’s initiatives to help immigrants integrate more effectively into Canadian society. He noted that one of the most important aspects of this integration is finding suitable employment.

Since the 1991 Canada-Quebec accord, Quebec has the responsibility to select immigrants in the skilled worker and business class. However, Quebec, like many other parts of the country, continues to face challenges integrating immigrants into the workforce. Mr. Gervais noted that immigrants face challenges relating to the recognition of foreign skills and credentials and their lack of language skills in English or French.

The Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et Immigration Québec has undertaken several initiatives to help integrate immigrants into the workforce. Mr. Gervais highlighted:

- An agreement that has been developed with Emploi-Québec to allow work placements for foreign trained immigrants.
- An action plan called *Des valeurs partagées, des intérêts communs* which proposes to integrate immigrants more quickly into the workforce:
 - To ensure the recognition of foreign training and education, immigrants can access the services of the *Centre de la reconnaissance des formations et des compétences*, which compares and evaluates foreign training and education.
 - A working group of parliamentarians was created to identify the difficulties associated with recognizing foreign credentials and propose solutions.
- Actions to encourage business and public sector groups to ensure a diverse workforce including the creation of:

- A center for intercultural relations, accessible by a 1-800 number, helps employers to access services and tools to support diversity in the workplace; and,
- Financial incentives for small and medium-sized organizations to hire immigrants and visible minorities (for immigrants this takes the form of a paid internship, subsidized for the first Canadian job).

Picture: Nowers
No changes required

Barbara Nowers, Director, Career Bridge

Ms. Nowers described Career Bridge, a paid internship program for highly qualified, professional-level new immigrants to Canada. Career Bridge is a program of Career Edge Organization, a not-for-profit that has operated youth internship programs since 1996.. Career Bridge began in November 2003 out of a recommendation of the Toronto City Summit Alliance. The Career Bridge program reports to TRIEC as a working group. Start-up funding for the program was provided by the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Access to Professions and Trades Unit. It is expected that by March 31, 2005 Career Bridge will have created over 200 paid professional-level internships for immigrants, in more than 70 host employer organizations. Current results indicate that at least 75% of the Career Bridge interns go on to permanent employment in their field upon completion of their internships, either by being hired by the host employer or by finding permanent employment elsewhere as a result of the internship experience and Canadian reference it provides. As well, 80% of the host employers participate again by offering additional Career Bridge internships after the first trial.

Although the program currently operates only in the Toronto area, it will be expanded to other centres within Ontario and across Canada. Locations for the program will be chosen based on the degree of skilled immigrant settlement and the demand from local host employers for internships.

Ms. Nowers noted that the program is aimed at helping break the cycle of “no Canadian job, no experience- no Canadian experience, no job.” She said that employers do not have enough time, expertise and resources to effectively process the applications of internationally qualified professionals.

Career Bridge helps employers by ensuring that candidates:

- are landed immigrants;
- are tested for workplace fluency in English;
- have completed international post-secondary education at the Bachelor's level or above;

- have undergone an assessment of educational credential equivalency; and
- have a minimum of three years of international work experience (the average candidate has eight years of experience).

Once a candidate has been selected, he or she is placed in an appropriate internship. These internships are four to 12 months in length and interns earn a minimum stipend of \$20,000 per year. Career Edge remains the official employer of the interns and hosts are invoiced for internship costs. Many hosts choose to increase the minimum stipend. Interns can be hired as permanent employees at any time.

Ms. Nowers notes that the program reduces perceived hiring risks for employers by allowing employers to “test drive” the candidates. Sometimes employers use the internships to develop special projects or to cover parental leaves.

Julie Ball, Executive Director, Talent Pool, Calgary Chamber of Commerce

Julie Ball said that Calgary is a workforce magnet with a booming economy. It has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country at 4.9 percent and receives about 10,000 immigrants each year.

The Talent Pool was created to bridge the gap between the demand for skilled workers and skilled people who were under-employed or unemployed. It is a non-profit organization which conducts research and provides employers with information and contacts. It also identifies best practices and influences decision-makers.

The Talent Pool identified five under-utilized pools of talent: youth, older workers, new immigrants, aboriginal people, and people with disabilities. Talent Pool has developed a Web site and provides other information to employers to help them access pools of talent they typically overlook, like new immigrants.

To deal with issues relating to immigrants in the workforce Talent Pool:

- encourages organizations to hire new immigrants and give them Canadian experience;
- has developed a Web site (www.chambertalentpool.com) and provides other information for employers to help them access underutilized pools of talent such as new immigrants; and
- provides employers and others with information on how to evaluate foreign credentials and international education.

Ms. Ball identified several benefits for employers including:

- easy access to information and contacts to tap into the new immigrant talent pool;
- quick, cost effective access to qualified candidates;
- knowledge of and familiarity with new immigrant talent pool;
- knowing how to build a reputation as a firm that hires and welcomes the business

- of new immigrants;
- an understanding of the impact of Canadian workforce demographics on their business; and
- new perspectives on business issues and innovative solutions.

Terry Anne Boyles, Vice-President, Member Services and Public Policy, Association of Canadian Community Colleges

The Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) represents 150 educational institutions in 900 communities. Ms. Boyles said that community colleges in Canada provide training in English and French as a second language, occupation-specific language training, certificates, diplomas, applied degrees and university transfers, bridging programs, co-op and work placements, workplace training, and community-based training.

Ms. Boyles identified several challenges and barriers facing colleges when offering relevant programs and services for immigrants:

- effective delivery of language training;
- Application processes that are slow and costly;
- The high cost and resource requirements for delivering assessment services such as Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR);
- Intra-institutional awareness of the needs of immigrants and inter-cultural sensitivity;
- Adequate integration and support services for immigrants;
- Financial and funding limitations that limit the ability of colleges and institutes to develop new programs and services for a specific target group, such as immigrants;
- Effective promotion of college and institute programs and services to the immigrant community; and,
- Positioning for federal, provincial and municipal funding programs.

Ms. Boyles also identified challenges and barriers from the perspective of immigrants:

- Limited funding for higher level Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) and equivalent programs, as well as gaps between LINC-type programs and English as a Second Language and English for Academic Purposes programs;
- A lack of assessment and Foreign Credential Recognition services affects admissions standards for immigrants and their eligibility for financial assistance;
- Cultural adaptation to new academic environments;
- Restrictions and cutbacks to support services such as daycare beyond the LINC or equivalent -type training;
- Financial challenges such as rising tuition fees, insufficient support for part-time and evening studies, insufficient bursaries and scholarships for immigrants,

- reductions to grant funding in some provinces, and restrictions to the number of hours immigrant students are allowed to work without losing access grant funding opportunities; and
- Application and enrolment processes can involve long waiting lists, while intakes, transitions and progressions through programs can be complicated and lengthy.

With the financial support of the HRSDC workplace unit, the Association undertook a survey of members to better understand what more could be done to help integrate immigrants into Canadian society. The ACCC had developed a model for colleges' support of the integration of immigrants which includes:

- Information for immigrants through the Immigration Portal and Overseas and In-Canada Orientation Sessions;
- Assessment services that can begin overseas and continue in Canada: language skills, PLAR, academic credentials and professional work experience;
- Advising and counseling services to facilitate program entry and completion and entry into the labour market;
- Education and training programs that range from English and French as a second language to occupation-specific programs; and
- language training, support for entry into career, technical, applied degree and university transfer programs, bridging programs, co-op and work placement programs, workplace training and community-based training.

The results of this research led to the development of a pilot project to determine the feasibility of providing assessment services overseas of language, academic credentials and professional work experience.

The results and recommendations from this research can be found at: http://www.accc.ca/ftp/pubs/2004immigrant_needs.pdf

Participant Discussion

Participants had the following suggestions and comments:

- 1) The Public Policy Forum's study suggests that employers don't require a wage subsidy to participate in bridging programs. However, Quebec's initiatives do offer subsidies for jobs to newcomers in an effort to involve small enterprises. A better way to assist small business might be to help them with the paper work and procedures often required to participate in initiatives of this type.
- 2) "Sifting" through hundreds of resumes can be a challenges for employers. Developing tools to screen underrepresented labour should be a priority.
- 3) One participant noted that more can be done to maximize the strengths of the college and the university system. It is important to find better ways to recognize the credentials

of highly educated immigrants to ensure that immigrants can enter the workforce at a senior level.

What should be done next and who should do it?

Hicham Adra, Senior Vice President, CGI

Mr. Adra, began the session on next steps by introducing CGI. CGI is one of Canada's largest firms with about 17,000 of its 25,000 employees in Canada. As a large employer, Mr. Adra noted that his company has a vested interest in human resource issues and in addressing the gaps. Interestingly, he noted that the trend towards “outsourcing” work in the IT industry could benefit Canada because of its many advantages, including proximity and similar business practices to the U.S.

Faviola Fernandez, Project Coordinator, Policy Roundtable Mobilizing Professions and Trades

Ms. Fernandez is a coordinator of PROMPT, a policy roundtable of 20 immigrant professional and trade associations and community groups. It seeks to:

- become the collective immigrant voice on policy issues related to access to professions and trades / employment;
- develop policy recommendations to increase access to professions and trades; and
- promote the social and economic integration of immigrants.

Although Ms. Fernandez expressed her excitement about projects that engage employers, she reminded participants that any policies and initiatives undertaken must also support the hopes and aspirations of immigrants and Canadians. Policy makers should be careful not to “depersonalize” the issue or to focus on immigration solely from the employers' perspective as an economic planning tool. Policies should be “human-centred.”

From an immigrant perspective, there should be:

- policy coherence and cooperation among jurisdictions;
- greater public accountability for success or failure with regard to the recognition of credentials and experience of internationally-trained immigrants;
- a sharing the definition of ‘workplace norms’ with immigrants who are also part of the workplace;
- requirements that are accessible and can be reasonably met (Canadian experience, accent requirements, culture-specific communication strategies often place unreasonable expectations on immigrants);
- training and employment initiatives, only if necessary and only if relevant to well-determined needs of immigrants (many newcomers believe they qualify directly for employment);
- a shift in culture around workplace orientation (e.g., more opportunities for

- mentoring within the workplace); and
- a re-examination of the concept of equity from a global perspective.

Ms. Fernandez emphasized that requirements placed on immigrants for participation in the Canadian workforce need to be accessible, reasonable and able to be reasonably met. She suggested greater questioning around requirements. For example, when one asks for “accent reduction” what is really being asked is that the immigrant takes on the accent of the Canadian speaker. This appears ideologically regressive because it makes a value judgment about accents – with the claim that there is a correct or desirable accent and that the Canadian accent (if there is one) is a universal standard for it. More importantly, this requirement creates a justification for the exclusion of people from the labour force who do not speak with a Canadian accent. Communication is a two-sided activity and forms the basis of relationships. People need to be more open to different accents. Many more countries in the world are bi- and multi-lingual than monolingual, and their populations have different accents. These are successful countries in their own right.

As a requirement, the term ‘Canadian experience’ is a retroactive condition placed on new immigrants, impossible to fulfil without first being part of the workforce. Furthermore, the term ‘Canadian experience’ has never been satisfactorily defined and yet it has such wide currency. As a requirement, it can only be valued if Canada has no plans to trade or connect with the rest of the world.

Hal Davies, President, PerformPlus Inc.

Davies
(no cropping required)

Mr. Hal Davies described the growing shortage of skilled civilian naval staff in the naval dockyards in Nova Scotia. He noted that the naval dockyard will lose 56 percent of its civilian workforce in the next five years – 1,178 of 2,000 people – and that the current average age of employees is 50. To address this kind of shortage, Nova Scotia is looking at several underemployed groups including aboriginals, but immigrants are increasingly being thought of as part of the possible solution. This is but one example of a growing and serious skills shortage in Atlantic Canada.

Mr. Davies suggested that Nova Scotia might not be doing enough to recruit and retain immigrants. He compared Nova Scotia to Manitoba. Nova Scotia has recruited very few people through its nominee program, whereas Manitoba has recruited many skilled workers. He said that part of the challenge to recruitment to Canada is that the immigration process is too long and too complicated. He thinks that Canada needs a new immigration model and new proactive and comprehensive policies. The model needs to take into account the views of industries, industry associations and sector councils.

He suggests that the following needs to be done to improve the immigration process for

the benefit of the economy:

- speed up all processes to meet the timing of industries;
- simplify processes and procedures for employers;
- recognize that policies must be flexible to meet the needs of different regions and industries;
- involve industry when establishing priorities in federal and provincial programs;
- prioritize classes of immigrants (e.g., within the economic class, prioritize industry sectors in accordance with needs and contribution to the Canadian economy);
- use industry as a resource for establishing competencies and credential standards for internationally trained workforce candidates;
- involve industry when establishing quotas and priorities in the Provincial Nominee Program; and
- put more emphasis on foreign student programs and ensure that these students get Canadian work experience while studying.

Murray Coolican, Vice President, Corporate Affairs, Manulife Financial

Mr. Coolican said that Manulife Financial, which is headquartered in Toronto, will likely face a skills shortage in the near future because of demographic changes. Accessing human resources skills will be important for the health of the company.

Mr. Coolican argued that it is important for Canada to develop policies that enable immigrants to enter the workforce immediately. One approach would be to ensure that as much transition work as possible happens abroad. Also, practical solutions for employers need to be developed. Manulife has joined TRIEC to support the implementation of programs such as internships and mentoring which can start to make a difference quickly.

Canada cannot take for granted the large numbers of immigrants who seek to come to Canada. As more countries begin to think about immigration as a tool to address their human resource strategies, Canada will increasingly be competing for a limited pool of highly skilled immigrants. He noted that even in Japan some opinion leaders are beginning to show interest in recruiting immigrants to fill human resources needs.

Mr. Coolican expressed his pleasure in participating in the conference, but noted that more employers need to be engaged. In particular, he suggested engaging public sector organizations as employers who can often lead the way on these types of issues.

John Knubley, Vice President, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency

Mr. Knubley began his presentation by stating that immigration to Nova Scotia has been decreased from 3,600 in 1995 to 1,400 in 2003, and only 50 percent of immigrants stay in the province. This is the second-lowest retention rate in Canada.

However, immigration is becoming more important to Nova Scotia because the labour

force is aging. Some occupations that may face labour shortages in the future include: health professionals, engineers, finance, managers, academics and skilled tradespeople.

There has been renewed interest, community effort and collaboration in Nova Scotia to enhance the outcomes of immigration attraction, integration and retention. In many cases, Manitoba has been used as a practical model for Nova Scotia because the provinces have a similar population size, similar demographics and similar socio-economic challenges.

However some challenges persist including:

- insufficient structures and resources to implement an immigration strategy;
- lack of engagement of the private sector and employers;
- difficulty raising public awareness about the benefits associated with immigration (although the public's attitudes have improved and may be more favourable than the Canadian average).
- the need to engage universities in immigration attraction, integration and retention (currently there are approximately 3,500 international students in Nova Scotia).

Initiatives currently being undertaken in Nova Scotia include:

- the Provincial Nominee Program;
- establishment of Atlantic Metropolis Atlantique (AMA);
- active immigration settlement and integration programming by immigrant settlement service providers and NGOs; and
- a consultation on a government immigration discussion paper entitled, *A Framework for Immigration*.

Roger Gibbins, President and CEO, Canada West Foundation

Earlier in 2004, the Canada West Foundation conducted research which asked people to prioritize 13 public policy areas. Like the Public Policy Forum's survey, this research revealed that although people see a skilled labour force as very important, they do not see attracting immigrants as important. People do not recognize the connection between a skilled labour force and immigration.

Dr. Gibbins said this suggests that it is important for governments to communicate to the public how immigration can fill specific labour market needs.

Engaging employers is also very important. They can help to identify shortages, identify occupation-specific terminology and provide training. However, Dr. Gibbins noted that employers need to understand that "employees cannot just be purchased off the shelf." Employers need to put more resources into workplace training. Often, when policy makers and others think of training, they have big firms in mind. However, since most of the employment growth occurs in small and medium-sized companies, more emphasis needs to be placed on helping these companies train employees.

Dr. Gibbins reiterated Mr. Davies' point that the immigration process is too slow to keep up with the human resource needs of business.

Dr. Gibbins suggested that the immigration program needs to be reconceptualized. It is unrealistic to think that Canada can continue to "cherry pick" the best and the brightest with the right language skills. Instead, he suggests reverting to an older model that emphasized attracting people with character and ambition and investing heavily in their integration into Canadian society.

He noted that engaging employers is important, but emphasized that government must continue to play an active role. "Taxpayers can not be taken totally off the hook. It is our task, our future."

Participant Discussion

Participants said that the selection process in Canada needs to be reexamined. One participant noted that in the United States, the system was never designed to attract skilled immigrants. Instead, the focus is on family reunification. In Canada, the system has focused on highly-skilled immigrants, but this emphasis has ignored that Canada could benefit from more people with other skills.

Another participant suggested that a higher percentage of immigrants should come to Canada through the family reunification and refugee program and that the focus of policy should be on the long-term integration of these people. Skilled immigration could be achieved by focusing on integrating international students because they are young, often speak one official language well, and are distributed across the country.

Picture: Crowd

No cropping required

CONCLUSIONS

The conference presentations and discussions supported the Public Policy Forum's recommendations presented in *Bringing Employers Into the Immigration Debate: the Public Policy Implications of Research Findings*, available at www.ppforum.ca.

In addition, the discussion highlighted several other areas for future research and action. These include:

1. *Encourage employers to provide more training opportunities for immigrants.*

Participants noted that employers do not dedicate enough resources to providing training opportunities for their employees. They suggested that employers should be encouraged to see the benefits of re-training their current workforce (such as better retention and increased productivity). They suggested that governments could develop programs to assist employers to improve training for all employees.

2. *Re-examine immigration selection criteria.*

Many participants were concerned that the selection process currently used in the economic class overemphasizes educational attainment at the expense of skilled trades. They noted that there are already labour shortages in the skilled trades and that immigration might be better used to fill these gaps.

Participants also thought that the numbers of immigrants in the family class, refugee program and economic class should be reexamined vis-à-vis each other.

3. *Provide more information and services to immigrants prior to arrival.*

It is important to be fair to potential immigrants by describing the real challenges they will face when they arrive in Canada. Participants said that immigrants should be aware of the obstacles they may face when trying to practice their profession, and how long it may take to receive accreditation. When possible, participants said that immigrants should be able to receive their credential recognition prior to arrival in Canada.

4. *Rethink how temporary foreign students can become a bigger part of the overall immigration strategy.*

Many participants felt that the foreign student worker program could provide Canada with a steady supply of highly skilled immigrants. Because we have foreign students in universities across the country, it would also be a way to regionalize immigration. To encourage the permanent settlement of students in Canada, they should be encouraged to develop off-campus work experience while studying and should be able to apply for permanent residency upon graduation.

5. *Continue to engage employers and industry, especially at the community level.*

Participants emphasized that employers need to be more engaged in issues relating to immigration. They noted that both private and public sector employers are essential partners in immigration discussions. Many participants highlighted work being undertaken at the community level which coordinates and engages multi-stakeholder groups on immigration-related issues. They felt that it is important to support and promote these types of initiatives.

ANNEX 1 – AGENDA

Bringing Employers Into the Immigration Debate

November 4, 2004

Delta Hotel and Suites, Ottawa, Ontario

Project/Conference Sponsors:

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada; Citizenship and Immigration Canada
Department of Canadian Heritage; Industry Canada; Atlantic Canada Opportunities
Agency; British Columbia Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services;
Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities; Maytree Foundation; World
Education Services; Alberta Ministry of Human Resources and Employment; Nova
Scotia Department of Education; Saskatchewan Department of Government Relations
and Aboriginal Affairs; Alberta International Qualifications Assessment Service;
Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et Immigration Québec, Manitoba Labour and
Immigration

Associate Partners:

Canadian Labour and Business Centre; Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters;
Conference Board of Canada; Canadian Chamber of Commerce; Canadian Council of
Chief Executives; Canadian Labour Congress

AGENDA**7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. REGISTRATION & CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST****8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. INTRODUCTION & KEYNOTE MORNING
ADDRESS**

WELCOME

Jodi White, President, Public Policy Forum

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Conference Chair

Zabeen Hirji, Senior Vice President, Human Resources,

RBC Financial

Group

9:00 a.m. – 10:10 a.m.

PLENARY: What do employers say about hiring immigrants?

Environics will present the results of the *Bringing Employers into the Immigration Debate* survey. They will highlight findings at a national, provincial, city and sectoral level. Q & A will follow the presentation.

- Derek Leebosh, Senior Associate, Environics Research Group

10:10 a.m. – 10:25 a.m.

HEALTH BREAK

10:25 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

PLENARY: What are the implications of the research findings for employers and business?

Chair:

- Zabeen Hirji, Senior Vice President, Human Resources, RBC Financial Group

Panellists:

- James Milway, Executive Director, Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity
- David Onyalo, National Director, Canadian Labour Congress
- Deborah Wolfe, Director, Education, Outreach and Research, Canadian Council of Professional Engineers
- Ratna Omidvar, Executive Director, Maytree Foundation

11:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

LUNCH – KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Introduction: Jodi White, President, Public Policy Forum

Presentation of Canadian Labour and Business Centre Immigration Handbook:

Shirley Seward, CEO, Canadian Labour and Business Centre

Keynote Address:

Hon. Judy Sgro

Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada

1:00 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.

**PLENARY: What are best practices and initiatives?
What should we be doing more of?**

Chair: Bohdan Bodnar, Vice President, Human Resources,
Duke Energy

Panellists:

- Éric Gervais, Directeur de la Direction des politiques et des programmes d'intégration, Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et Immigration Québec
- Barbara Nowers, Director, Career Bridge
- Julie Ball, Consultant for Talent Pool, Calgary Chamber of Commerce
- Terry Anne Boyles, Vice-President, Member Services and Public Policy, Association of Canadian Community Colleges

2:15 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

HEALTH BREAK

2:30 p.m. – 3:45 pm.

PLENARY: What should be done and who should do it?

- Chair: Hicham Adra, Senior Vice President, CGI

Panellists:

- Faviola Fernandez, Project Coordinator, Policy Roundtable Mobilizing Professions and Trades
- Hal Davies, President, PerformPlus Inc
- Murray Coolican, Vice President, Corporate Affairs, Manulife Financial
- John Knubley, Vice President, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
- Roger Gibbins, President and CEO, Canada West Foundation

3:45 p.m.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Observations by the conference chair:

- Zabeen Hirji, Senior Vice President, Human Resources, RBC Financial Group

Thank you: Jodi White, President, Public Policy Forum

ANNEX 2 – PROGRAMME

Impliquer les employeurs dans les discussions sur l'immigration

Le 4 novembre 2004
Hôtel Delta, Ottawa, Ontario

Commanditaires du projet/de la conférence :

Ressources humaines et Développement des compétences Canada; Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada ; Patrimoine Canada; Industrie Canada; Agence de promotion économique du Canada Atlantique; British Columbia Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services; Ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités de l'Ontario; Maytree Foundation; World Education Services; Alberta Ministry of Human Resources and Employment; Ministère de l'Éducation de la Nouvelle-Écosse; Ministère des Relations gouvernementales et des Affaires autochtones Saskatchewan; Alberta International Qualifications Assessment Service; Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et Immigration Québec; Travail et Immigration Manitoba

Partenaires associés :

Centre syndical et patronal du Canada; Manufacturiers et exportateurs du Canada; Conference Board du Canada; Chambre de commerce du Canada; Conseil canadien des chefs d'entreprise; Congrès du travail du Canada

PROGRAMME

7h30 – 8h30

**INSCRIPTIONS ET PETIT DÉJEUNER
CONTINENTAL**

8h30 – 9h00

**INTRODUCTION ET DISCOURS LIMINAIRE DE
LA MATINÉE**

MOT DE BIENVENUE

Jodi White, Présidente-directrice générale, Forum des politiques publiques

MOT D'OUVERTURE

Présidente de la conférence: Zabeen Hirji, vice-présidente principale, Ressources humaines, Groupe financier BRC

9h00 – 10h10**SÉANCE PLÉNIÈRE : Que disent les employeurs de l'embauche d'immigrants?**

Environics présentera les résultats du sondage *Impliquer les employeurs dans le débat sur les politiques d'immigration*. Ils mettront en lumière les résultats aux niveaux national, provincial, municipal et sectoriel. Des questions et réponses suivront l'exposé.

- Derek Leebosh, associé principal, Environics Research Group

10h10 – 10h25**PAUSE SANTÉ****10h25 – 11h45****SÉANCE PLÉNIÈRE : Quelles sont les implications de cette étude pour les employeurs et les entreprises?**

Présidente: Zabeen Hirji, vice-présidente principale, Ressources humaines, Groupe financier BRC

Tribune d'experts :

- James Milway, directeur en chef, Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity
- David Onyalo, directeur national, Service des droits de la personne et de la lutte contre le racisme, Congrès du travail du Canada
- Deborah Wolfe, directrice, éducation, Assistance et Recherche, Conseil canadien des ingénieurs
- Ratna Omidvar, directrice en chef, Maytree Foundation

11h45 – 13h00**DÉJEUNER – DISCOURS-PROGRAMME**

Présentation : Jodi White, présidente-directrice générale, Forum des politiques publiques

Présentation du guide du Centre syndical et patronal du Canada sur l'immigration :

Shirley Seward, chef de la direction, Centre syndical et patronal du Canada

Conférencier principal :

L'hon. Judy Sgro, Ministre de la Citoyenneté et de l'Immigration Canada

13h00 – 14h15

PLÉNIÈRE : Quelles sont les pratiques et initiatives exemplaires? Que devrait-on faire davantage?

Président : Bohdan Bodnar, vice-président, Ressources humaines, Duke Energy

Tribune d'experts:

- Éric Gervais, directeur de la Direction des politiques et des programmes d'intégration, Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et l'Immigration Québec
- Barbara Nowers, Directrice, Career Bridge
- Julie Ball, Consultante, Chambre de commerce de Calgary
- Terry Anne Boyles, Vice-présidente, Association des collèges communautaires du Canada

14h15 – 14h30

PAUSE SANTÉ

14h30 – 15h45

PLÉNIÈRE : Que faut-il faire et qui doit le faire?

Président : Hicham Adra, vice-président sénior, CGI.

Tribune d'experts :

- Faviola Fernandez, coordinatrice de projets, Policy Roundtable Mobilizing Professions and Trades
- Hal Davis, président, PerformPlus Inc.
- Murray Coolican, vice-président, affaires corporatives, Manulife Financial
- John Knuble, vice-président, L'Agence de promotion économique du Canada atlantique (APECA)
- Roger Gibbins, président, Canada West Foundation

15h45

CONCLUSIONS

Commentaires de la présidente de la conférence :

- Zabeen Hirji, vice-présidente principale, Ressources humaines, Groupe financier BRC

Remerciements : Jodi White, présidente-directrice générale, Forum des politiques publiques

ANNEX 3- CONFERENCE PARTICIPANT LIST

Speakers

Mr. Hicham N. Adra
Senior Vice-President
CGI Group Inc

Ms. Julie Ball
Coordinator
Calgary Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Bohdan Bodnar
Vice-President Human Resources &
Administration
Duke Energy Gas Transmission Canada

Ms. Terry Anne Boyles
Vice President, Member Services and
Public Policy
Association of Canadian Community
Colleges

Mr. Murray Coolican
Vice President, Corporate Affairs
Manulife Financial

Mr. Hal Davies
President
PerformPlus Management Inc.

Ms. Faviola Fernandez
Project Coordinator
PROMPT

M. Éric Gervais
Directeur de la Direction des politiques et
de programmes d'intégration
Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens
et Immigration Québec

Dr. Roger Gibbins
President and Chief Executive Officer
Canada West Foundation

Ms. Zabeen Hirji
Senior Vice President, Corporate Human
Resources
RBC Financial Group

Mr. John Knublely
Vice President
Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency

Mr. Derek Leebosh
Senior Research Associate
Environics Research Group Ltd

Mr. James Milway
Executive Director
The Institute for Competitiveness and
Prosperity

Ms. Barbara Nowers
Director
Career Bridge

Ms. Ratna Omidvar
Executive Director
The Maytree Foundation

Mr. David Onyalo
National Director
Canadian Labour Congress

Ms. Shirley B. Seward
Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Labour and Business Centre

The Honourable Judy Sgro
Minister
Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Ms. Deborah Wolfe P.Eng.
Director, Education, Outreach and
Research
Canadian Council of Professional
Engineers

Ms. Jodi White
President
Public Policy Forum

Participants

Ms. Kate Acs
Executive Director
Colleges Integrating Immigrants to
Employment

Ms. Naomi Alboim
Fellow
School of Policy Studies
Queen's University

Dr. Abdurrahman Aydemir
Senior Research Economist
Family & Labour Studies
Statistics Canada

Ms. Judith Bacon
Senior Policy Analyst
Human Resources and Skills
Development Canada

Mr. Cecil Bradley
Director of Policy
Toronto Board of Trade

Mr. Mike Bradshaw
Project Director
Motor Carrier Passenger Council of
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Ms. Jennifer Calhoun
Project Manager
BHRC - Biotechnology Human
Resource Council

Mr. Andrew Cardozo
Principal
Cardozo Policy Consulting

Ms. Diana Carter
Executive Director
Child Care Human Resources Sector
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Ms. Karen Clark Verbisky
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Senior Vice President
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Ms. Catherine Cottingham
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Canadian Electricity Association

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Mr. Michel Doiron
Manager Operations, Foreign Credential
Recognition
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Mr. Peter Donkers
Executive Director
Campus Canada

Mr. Dale Dorn
President
Vancouver Community College

Ms. Jean Durjan
Senior Policy Analyst
Industry Canada

Mr. Kien Duy Ai
Senior Analyst
Metropolis Canada

Ms. Peggy Edwards
Executive Director
Skills for Change

Mr. David El Charif
Student
Fulbright Scholar

Mrs. Carole Gagnon
Director, Community Wide Initiatives
United Way

Mr. Barbatus Gatoto
Project Manager
Textiles Human Resources Council

Ms. Linda Gauthier
Executive Director
Canadian Trucking Human Resources
Council (CTHRC)

Mr. Renald Gilbert
Director
Economic Immigration Policy and
Programs
Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Ms. Cheryl Gorman
Executive Director
OCRI

Mme Chantal Goyette
Analyste à la planification et à la
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Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Ms. Sherri Haigh
Director of Communications
Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Mme Irvine Henry
Agente de recherche Direction de la
population et de la recherche
Ministère des relations avec les Citoyens
et de l'Immigration
Government of Quebec

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Social Development Policy
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Ms. Karen Jackson
Assistant Deputy Minister
Human Resources and Skills
Development Canada

Mr. Daniel Jean
Assistant Deputy Minister Policy and
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Ms. Pari Johnston
Manager, International Relations
International Affairs Branch
Association of Universities & Colleges
of Canada

Ms. Swetha Kannan
Employment Coordinator
World Skills

Mr. Sohail Khan
Project Manager
SkillsInternational.ca

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Team Leader Campus Connection &
Skill Net
Marketplace Strategy
Industry Canada

Ms. Tina Kremmidas
Senior Economist
The Canadian Chamber of Commerce

Ms. Harjeet Lamba
Research Analyst
Labour Market Policy Research
Human Resources and Skills
Development Canada

Mr. Kaili Lévesque
Policy Research Officer
Policy Research Initiative

Mr. Clarence Lochhead
Senior Researcher
Canadian Labour and Business Centre

Dr. Jean Lock-Kunz
Associate Project Director
Policy Research Initiative

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Project Manager
Colleges Integrating Immigrants to
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Project Developer, Special Initiatives
World Skills

Ms. Elizabeth McIsaac
Project Manager Toronto Region
Immigrant Employment Council -
TRIEC
The Maytree Foundation

Mrs. Colleen Meloche
Synergy Stream Leader
ESWL/HRP/Work Place Skills Branch
Human Resources and Skills
Development Canada

Mr. Collin Mercer
Manger, International Qualifications
Program Aboriginal, Settlement and
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Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and
Women's Services
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Manitoba Labour and Immigration
Government of Manitoba

Ms. Christine Nassrallah
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PROMPT

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Mme Paula Santos
Economiste
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Mr. David Stewart-Patterson
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Canadian Council of Chief Executives

Mr. Jeff Stull
Senior Assessment Consultant
International Qualifications Assessment
Service (Alberta Learning)
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Mr. Colin Sun
Economic Development Officer
Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency

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Jason Alexander Valentin
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Chief Opposition Critic,
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Mr. Tom Van Camp
A/Director
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Alberta Human Resources and
Employment
Government of Alberta

Mr. Paul Watson
Communications Manager
BHRC - Biotechnology Human
Resource Council

Mr. Timothy Welsh
Program Director
Affiliation of Multicultural Societies
and Service Agencies of BC

Mrs. Janet Whillans
Senior Vice President, Community
Building Initiatives
United Way

Ms. Nancy Worsfold
Executive Director
Ottawa-Carleton Immigrant Services
Organization

Dr. Soojin Yu
Research Officer
Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Public Policy Forum Staff

Mrs. Rose-Marie Bernardo
Project Assistant

Ms. Sandra Lopes
Research Associate

Mr. Yves Poisson
Director, Special Projects

ANNEX 4– SPEAKERS’ BIOGRAPHIES

(IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

Jodi White
President
Public Policy Forum

Jodi White is President of the Public Policy Forum, an independent, national, not-for-profit organization with a mandate to promote better public policy and better public management through dialogue among leaders from the public, private, labour and voluntary sectors.

Ms. White’s career combines experience in journalism, in politics and government, in the private sector and in international affairs.

As a journalist, she spent six years at the CBC, first as a television news reporter and subsequently as a network radio producer.

Her experience in government and politics includes positions as chief of staff to the Minister of External Affairs (1984 – 1988) and chief of staff to the Prime Minister (1993).

From 1994 – 2000 Ms. White was vice-president, Corporate Affairs, at Imasco Ltd. in Montreal where she was responsible for issues management and strategic positioning across the spectrum of public affairs, government relations and public policy. From 2000 – 2003 she was president of Sydney House, a public affairs consulting firm.

Ms. White has been and continues to be an active participant on a number of boards including the National Theatre School, the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, the Stratford Festival, the Southern Africa Education Trust Fund, Bishop’s University and the Ottawa General Hospital. She served on the board of the Public Policy Forum from 1989 – 1998, including three years as chair, and has participated as both a member and chair of numerous juries for national awards including the Pearson Peace Medal, the Hy Solomon Award for Public Policy Journalism and the Michener award for journalism studies.

Ms. White is a graduate of the University of Toronto with a Bachelor’s degree in political science and Carleton University with an honours Bachelor of Journalism.

Zabeen Hirji
Senior Vice-President, Human Resources
RBC Financial Group

Zabeen Hirji is Senior Vice-President Human Resources at RBC Financial Group in Toronto, Canada. Her major areas of responsibility are enterprise-wide HR Strategy, Talent Management, Learning and Development and Employee Services. The Talent Management portfolio includes Employee Research, Recruitment, Development and Retention Strategies and Diversity, all within the context of managing employee relationships to build employee capability, performance and engagement to successfully execute business strategies.

Zabeen has been with RBC for 27 years and prior to joining HR, she spent her career in Retail Banking, Operations and Credit Cards starting in British Columbia, then moving to Toronto. Her Retail Banking experience includes numerous management roles in Branch Banking and her Operations experience includes both Strategic and Line roles in progressively larger operating units. She has been in Human Resources since 1998 in progressively more senior roles.

Zabeen is a Fellow of the Institute of Canadian Bankers and has a Masters of Business Administration from Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. She is a member of the York University HR Advisory Board and a

member of the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council. She is a frequent speaker on HR and Diversity related topics.

Derek Leebosh
Senior Associate
Environics Research

Derek Leebosh began a career in public opinion research in 1989, after having received an undergraduate degree in International Relations and a Master's degree in History from the University of Toronto. Derek joined Environics Research in 1990. Over the past 14 years as a Senior Associate, Derek has directed a wide variety of both syndicated and custom research projects. These have involved quantitative and qualitative research projects on public policy issues for a variety of provincial governments, federal government departments, as well as private sector clients. Derek has also moderated over 500 focus groups in both English and French across Canada, most recently these have included such issues as warning messages on cigarette packages, constitutional reform, the treatment of term employees in the federal public service and correctional issues. Derek Leebosh is Associate Director of Environics' Focus Canada quarterly national study on public policy issues in Canada.

James Milway
Executive Director
J.Milway@CompeteProsper.ca

James Milway is the Executive Director of the Institute for Competitiveness & Prosperity. The Institute is an independent not-for-profit organization established in 2001 to serve as the research arm of Ontario's Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity, and Economic Progress. The Institute measures and monitors Ontario's competitiveness and prosperity against other North American jurisdictions.

Jim brings more than 25 years' business and public policy experience to the Institute. He began his career in marketing management with General Foods (now Kraft) and Unilever. For most of his career he has consulted to senior decision makers in areas of business strategy as a partner in The Canada Consulting Group and The Boston Consulting Group, and in his own firm. Along the way, Jim served as CEO of a specialized insurance firm.

In the public policy area Jim has advised the Government of Ontario in its technology centre program, assessed the potential impact of Canada/US Free Trade in services, and advised central agencies and line ministries on management and accountability issues. At the federal level Jim's work was primarily in the areas of culture and communications.

Jim graduated from the University of Toronto, St Michael's College with a bachelor's degree in Political Economy and the University of Western Ontario with an MBA (Dean's List).

David Dapto Onyalo
National Director of the Anti-Racism and Human Rights Department
Canadian Labour Congress

Currently, David is the National Director of the Anti-Racism and Human Rights Department of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). His public policy and advocacy work includes Human Rights, Immigration, Refugee Rights, Anti-Racism and Employment Equity. The CLC is one of the front leading central labour bodies around the world in these areas of work.

BEFORE JOINING THE CLC:

As a Vice-President, Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local One, David was a major contributor in changing the face of the Toronto Hydro Electric Utility workforce in the mid 1980s that

brought about a significant increase in the hiring practices and critical access to some of the best paid “trades” occupations in the entire country by women and People of Colour.

As a Vice-President, Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) - Ontario Division, David chaired the Provincial Human Rights Committee and the Health and Safety Committee. As Senior Education Officer, CUPE National, he developed a number of training modules, workshop guides, course revisions and facilitated numerous labour and adult education classes.

A graduate of the University of Toronto, David was also a past President of the University of Windsor, African Students Association (ASA), which was active in anti-Apartheid solidarity activities in South-Western Ontario and Michigan State. In his term, 1982-83, the ASA had a strong political, cultural, and social presence at the university and the broader Windsor community.

INTERNATIONAL WORK INCLUDES:

A member of a Trade Union/Church Delegation to Columbia in 1997 which investigated human rights abuses including the murder of hundreds of union leaders and human rights activists.

David was invited to the first University of Harvard Economic Summit for Black Trade Union Leaders in 1999, which was jointly organized with the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), USA.

He Chaired the International Labour Organization (ILO) Expert Meetings in Geneva on Migrant workers which brought together representatives of government, business and labour in the year 2000. David also Chaired an International Plenary Session on the same issue in Los Angeles in 1999. He also participated in this years’ (2004) ILO discussions on ILO and UN Conventions on Migrant workers.

David was a member of the official Canadian Delegation to the UN World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, 2001 and the Preparatory Conference in Geneva.

DEBORAH WOLFE

**Director, Education, Outreach and Research
Canadian Council of Professional Engineers**

DEBORAH WOLFE, P.Eng., is the Director, Education, Outreach and Research at the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers. Her responsibilities include accreditation of university engineering programs, research into engineering demographics and emerging engineering disciplines, and the integration of international engineering graduates. She received a degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Western Ontario and served in the Canadian Armed Forces as a construction engineer. Ms. Wolfe serves on a number of boards including the Canadian Engineering Memorial Foundation, the Association of Accrediting Agencies of Canada and the Accreditation Council for Canadian Physiotherapy Academic Programs.

**Ratna Omidvar
Executive Director
The Maytree Foundation**

Ratna Omidvar is the Executive Director of The Maytree Foundation, a private charitable foundation committed to social justice and the reduction of poverty.

Previously, Ratna was the Executive Director of Skills for Change, a Toronto based not for profit organization from 1988 - 1997. Ratna has served as Vice-Chair of the Ontario Human Rights Code Review Task Force in 1992; as President of the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants from 1991 - 1994; and as a Director of the Ontario Training and Adjustment Board from 1993 - 1995.

Currently, Ratna is a steering committee member of the Toronto City Summit Alliance (TCSA), a coalition of over 40 civic leaders from the private, labour, voluntary and public sectors in the Toronto region.. One of the recommendations on immigration put forward by the TCSA is to establish a Toronto Region

Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) to improve access to employment for immigrants in the region. Ratna is the Executive Director of TRIEC and has been charged the responsibility of establishing and managing the TRIEC.

In October, 2003 Ontario's Premier-designate Dalton McGuinty appointed Ratna as a member of the Transition Advisory Board to provide advice regarding best practices for policy implementation, and identification of potential individuals and other resources that can aid with the transition process of the new provincial government.

Ratna currently serves as a Member of Prime Minister Martin's external advisory committee on Cities and Communities. She is also a Member of the Board of Directors for The Philanthropic Foundations of Canada, The Toronto Community Foundation, Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement and IMPACS. Ratna was a Director of the Laidlaw Foundation for eight years. Ratna Omidvar serves as an advisory member to York University's Volunteer Sector Management Program and was granted the honorary title of Fellow of Centennial College in 2003

SHIRLEY SEWARD

Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Labour and Business Centre,

SHIRLEY SEWARD is Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Labour and Business Centre, which has evolved as a centre for business-labour dialogue and consensus building. The Centre's mission is to improve business and labour practices in Canada and to provide public policy advice on labour market, and skills and learning issues. She has over 25 years experience in the field of public policy both at the national and international levels.

During the period 1974 to 1985 Ms. Seward held a number of positions of increasing responsibility at the International Development Research Centre, promoting social and economic development in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the Caribbean. She worked as Director of the Studies in Social Policy Program at the Institute for Research on Public Policy between 1985 and 1991.

Appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Labour and Business Centre in August 1991, Ms. Seward has established a strong reputation as an effective builder of consensus between the business, labour, government and education communities in Canada, notably in the areas of economic restructuring, labour market, and skills and learning issues. Ms. Seward is the Chair of the Board of Voluntary Service Overseas Canada (VSOC), and is affiliated with a wide range of professional associations. She is the editor and author of several books, journal articles, and discussion and conference papers in the areas of immigration, human resource development, labour management relations, social policy and economic development. Ms. Seward holds a M.A. in International Affairs, Carleton University and a Bachelor of Education, McGill University.

JUDY SGRO

Minister of Citizenship and Immigration

Riding: York West

Judy Sgro was first elected to the House of Commons in a by-election on November 15, 1999. She was appointed Minister of Citizenship and Immigration on December 12, 2003.

Most recently, she was Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and held membership on the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates and on the Sub-Committee on Public Service Renewal.

She served as Chair of the Prime Minister's Caucus Task Force on Urban Issues, Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee on Health, Chair of the GTA Sub-Committee on the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization project, and member of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

From 1987 to 1994, Judy Sgro served on the North York City Council and from 1994 to 1997, she was a regional councillor on the Metropolitan Toronto Council. In 1997, she was elected to the Toronto City Council where she served as Deputy Mayor and Vice-Chair of the Toronto Police Services Board until her election as Member of Parliament for York West in November 1999.

Judy Sgro was born in Moncton, New Brunswick. She is married to Sam Sgro and they have three children.

BOHDAN I. BODNAR

Vice President Human Resources and Administration

Duke Energy Gas Transmission

Bohdan Bodnar is Vice President Human Resources and Administration of Duke Energy Gas Transmission and Chief Privacy Officer. In this capacity his focus is on company-wide matters such as organizational effectiveness, labour and employee relations, people services and human resource development across the Westcoast group of companies. Since 1985, Bohdan has held positions in several Westcoast subsidiaries: Vice President Human Resources (Union Gas Limited); Vice President Corporate Services (Centra Gas British Columbia Inc.); Manager Human Resources (Centra Gas Alberta Inc.)

Bohdan graduated from the University of Manitoba with a Bachelor of Arts degree and has Advanced Industrial Relations Certification from Dalhousie University.

Bohdan is a member of the Canadian Gas Association; American Gas Association; Canadian Society of Safety Engineering; Canadian Association of Human Resources Systems Professionals; and the Council of Human Resources Executives and the Corporate Responsibility and Ethics Council of The Conference Board of Canada; Director Family Services of the North Shore; Past Director of McMahon Power Holdings Inc. and Past Director of Junior Achievement.

Éric Gervais

Directeur des politiques et programmes d'intégration

Ministère des Relations avec les Citoyens et de l'Immigration

360, rue McGill, bureau 2.14

Montréal (Québec) H2Y 2E9

Téléphone : (514) 873-6440, poste 20389

Sommaire

Je suis entré en fonction au gouvernement du Québec en 1985 au ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale où j'ai occupé différents postes professionnels dans le domaine des politiques et programmes de sécurité du revenu, de la recherche et comme conseiller auprès des entreprises.

En 1992, j'ai joint le ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration. J'y ai acquis des expériences diversifiées dans des activités liées à l'intégration des nouveaux arrivants. En particulier, en tant que conseiller en développement des partenariats auprès des organismes qui offrent des services d'accueil et d'intégration aux nouveaux arrivants.

Depuis 2000, j'ai occupé différents postes de direction qui m'ont amené à gérer l'organisation et la dispensation des services d'accueil et d'intégration des nouveaux arrivants ainsi que le partenariat avec les institutions de la société d'accueil et le milieu communautaire.

Barbara Nowers
Director, Career Bridge
Career Edge Organization

Barbara Nowers is the Director of the Career Bridge program, a paid internship program designed to overcome the workplace barriers often faced by internationally qualified professionals seeking to build their careers in Canada.

Prior to graduating with an MBA from the University of Western Ontario (now the Ivey School), Barbara began her career in banking, where she spent three years with the Royal Bank of Canada in branch banking and small business lending. In 1987, she joined McKinsey & Company as a management consultant, and later joined Rogers Cablesystems where she was a member of the strategy team that launched pay-per-view television in Canada. After a hiatus from the workforce to raise her three children, Barbara joined Career Edge in January, 2003 to direct the eCorps pilot project, an Industry Canada funded internship program helping small and medium business enterprises increase their ebusiness capabilities with the skills of recent ICT graduates from Canadian colleges and universities.

The Career Bridge Program is managed by Career Edge, Canada's Internship Organization. Since its inception in 1996, Career Edge has provided more than 6000 internships to recent Canadian university and college graduates in more than 900 organizations across Canada.

Barbara is an F.I.C.B., past chair of South Drive Children's Circle, Past Chair, Rosedale United Church Board, and founding board member of Big Sisters of Toronto.

JULIE BALL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
TALENT POOL DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY OF CALGARY

As Executive Director of the Talent Pool, Julie works to close the gap between employers who are seeking skilled workers and workers who have skills and who are often overlooked by employers. Most often these overlooked workers are young people, older workers, new immigrants, Aboriginal people and people with disabilities. She developed a Web site and provides information to employers who want to know where and how to find these workers.

The Talent Pool is a not for profit Society that is a collaboration between business, education and government to develop solutions to the labour and skills shortages faced by employers in Alberta.

Julie is a human resources professional with many years experience in the oil industry in a variety of leadership positions. Most recently involved in workforce planning, diversity and employment equity roles she understands the barriers to employment for people who are members of the groups being addressed by the Talent Pool.

As co-chair of the Board of the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, she has in-depth knowledge of the new immigrant population in Calgary and the services they need to settle, find work and integrate into the community.

Julie has been working as a Consultant to a number of employers advising them on planning, workforce demographic, workplace conflict, diversity and related issues.

Terry Anne Boyles
Vice-President, Member Services and Public Policy
Association of Canadian Community Colleges

Terry Anne has been Vice-President, Member Services and Public Policy, with the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) since 1999, following on her serving as Vice-President, National Services.

Prior to joining the Association, Terry Anne was President, Saskatoon Region Community College for 5 years. She was also employed for a number of years as Director, Continuing Education, Red Deer College.

Terry Anne has served as President, Alberta Association for Continuing Education; President, Saskatchewan Association for Lifelong Learning; and President, Red Deer Family Service Bureau. She has been a member of several national boards including the Canadian Association for Adult Education, the Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women, the Canadian Transportation Institute, and the National Educational Organizations Committee, which she also chaired. She served as a member of the Industry Canada SchoolNet Advisory Board and on the Learnware sub-committee. In addition she sat on the Board of Directors of the Ottawa Art Gallery. Terry Anne currently serves on the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Council Board of Directors and is a member of the Sandrine's Gift of Life National Organ Donor Awareness Board of Directors.

In addition to her work within Canada, she has worked on a number of overseas projects primarily in the areas of program design, evaluation, strategic planning, and institutional strengthening with government ministries, associations and post-secondary institutions.

Hicham Adra
Senior Vice President and General Manager, National Capital Region
CGI

Hicham Adra is Senior Vice President and General Manager, National Capital Region for CGI and is also Leader of the CGI Executive Council on Public Sector. Hicham has greatly contributed to the tremendous growth CGI has experienced over the past several years. He is involved in Corporate strategic planning activities, as well as developing and managing strategic alliances and acquisitions both in North America and internationally.

Hicham has been instrumental in making CGI one of the more caring companies in the National Capital Region. Since 1998 he has chaired the High Tech Division of the United Way / Centraide Campaign in the Ottawa-Carleton Region. He is also a member of the Board of the Ottawa Hospital Foundation and a member of the National Arts Centre Theatre Renewal Campaign.

Hicham obtained his Bachelor of Engineering degree in Systems and Computer Engineering, from Carleton University in 1987, at which point he joined CGI. He is a member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM), the Professional Engineers of Ontario and the Public Policy Forum.

Faviola Fernandez
Project Coordinator
PROMPT

Faviola Fernandez is the PROMPT Project Coordinator. She is an internationally-educated professional with degrees in linguistics and literature. She has many years of experience in the field of education. Since coming to Canada, she has been very involved in community and policy advocacy work to address the social and economic integration of immigrants, especially in access to professions and trades issues.

Hal Davies
President
PerformPlus Management Inc

Hal Davies is a graduate of the University of Toronto and holds a degree in economics.

He served in the Navy for 29 years. He served at sea, commanding four of HMC Ships. When serving ashore, he assumed progressively more important staff positions responsible for delivering and managing major training programs and establishing policy in training, education and human resource matters.

Hal left the Navy and with a partner formed a company to develop and deliver large customized workplace training systems using technology as the delivery, evaluation and personnel qualification system. This company was eventually folded in to Tecslut Eduplus, where Hal became the Vice President of Technology and Training. Principal clients were in the aerospace, defence, marine and transportation sectors.

After ten years he sold his interest in Tecslut Eduplus and formed PerformPlus Management Inc, a Workforce Strategy consultancy.

He serves on the Board of the Aerospace and Defence Industry Association of Nova Scotia, the Human Resource Partnership, and the Executive Committees of both. For many years, he was a member of the Executive Committee of the Telelearning Network, one of Canada's foremost National Centers of Excellence.

Murray Coolican
Vice President, Corporate Affairs

Mr. Coolican was appointed to his current position in June 2004, following the merger of Manulife Financial and John Hancock, including its Canadian subsidiary Maritime Life. Murray joined Maritime Life in 2001 where he served as Senior Vice President of Corporate Resources. In this role, Murray led the corporate service areas of the company including, legal, human resources, corporate communications and research, and corporate business services to support the business operations of Maritime Life.

Mr. Coolican's career has spanned the public and private sectors including: Vice-President, Public Affairs, Nova Scotia Power Inc. (1996 – 2001); Senior Vice President, Corporate Communications Ltd. (1994 – 1996); and Deputy Minister, Ontario Government, Native Affairs Secretariat (1992 – 1994).

Mr. Coolican earned a Bachelor of Arts from York University (1969); a Masters of Divinity from the University of Toronto, St. Michael's College (1977); and most recently took the Executive Program with the University of Western Ontario. He is fluent in French and holds a French Certificate from the University of Grenoble.

An active and dedicated volunteer, Mr. Coolican shares his leadership skills with the community. He has served as Vice-Chair, Board of Governors, Dalhousie University, Halifax; Director, Halifax Metro United Way; President, Halifax Chamber of Commerce and Director, World Wildlife Fund Canada. His work with the United Way was recently acknowledged by United Way/Centraide Canada with the Chair's Award of Distinction, which recognizes superior achievement and sustained dedication to United Way/Centraide.

John Knubley
Vice-President (Nova Scotia)
Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency

John Knubley is Vice-President (Nova Scotia) for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA). He came to ACOA from Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) in April 2002. Mr. Knubley has over 20 years of experience in the Government of Canada at Industry Canada, the Privy Council Office and the Economic Council of Canada; and he has also worked as a consultant for business in the private sector.

As Vice-President of ACOA Nova Scotia, Mr. Knubley plays a leading role in the economic development of the province. He assists in fulfilling the Agency's mandate to improve the economy of Atlantic Canada promoting leading-edge innovation and healthy communities. To this end, Mr. Knubley is committed to building strong partnerships among governments, businesses, educational and research institutions, and communities. He serves as Chair of the Nova Scotia Federal Council, which is an organization that brings together senior federal officials to collaborate on policies and services of common interest to Canadians. In these various capacities, Mr. Knubley helps to promote a better understanding of Atlantic Canada and Nova Scotia in Ottawa.

Mr. Knubley co-chairs, with the Province of Nova Scotia, federal-provincial committees on economic development, innovation and infrastructure. He is a Board Member of InNOVAcorp and the Greater Halifax Partnership, an Executive Committee Member of the Petroleum Research Atlantic Canada Board, and is Chair of the Board of Directors for the Canada/Nova Scotia Business Service Centre. He is also a member of the Public Service Pension Advisory Committee.

A native of Ottawa, Mr. Knubley obtained degrees in philosophy, politics, and economics from Yale and Oxford Universities. He also holds a Masters in Public Administration from Harvard University and a post-graduate diploma in International Relations from the University of Nice.

John and his family live in Halifax.

DR. ROGER GIBBINS
President and CEO
Canada West Foundation

Dr. Roger Gibbins was born in Prince George, British Columbia, and received his university training at UBC and Stanford University, California. He joined the University of Calgary in 1973, where he served as department head from 1987 to 1996 and is currently a Faculty Professor of Political Science. Dr. Gibbins has authored, co-authored or edited 21 books and over 100 articles and book chapters, most dealing with western Canadian themes and issues. In 1998, Dr. Gibbins joined the Canada West Foundation, a non-partisan public policy research group based in Calgary, as its President and CEO. Dr. Gibbins was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1998, and served as President of the Canadian Political Science Association from 1999 to 2000.

ANNEX 5- NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY JUDY SGRO, MINISTER OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Let me begin by thanking the Public Policy Forum (PPF) for hosting this event, and especially for inviting me to share some thoughts with you today. The PPF has played an important role in helping us improve government and chart a stronger course for Canada. So I'm delighted to be here as a keynote speaker and to have had this chance to hear your views and listen to your ideas.

Introduction

I'm especially pleased that you've chosen today to talk about bringing employers into the immigration debate. Public and private sector employers in many cases provide the opportunities for immigrants to build new lives.

They also help to offer the economic means to support the types of lives that we as a society cherish. So we need to make sure that our immigration efforts are aligned with employer needs. We also need to help employers ensure their priorities remain consistent with present and future realities.

I'd therefore like to extend a very warm welcome to you all as well as my hope that this forum will mark yet another step forward in our efforts to better understand employer needs and how we can work better together to make sure Canada reaches its true potential.

Today I want to speak with you about how we can ensure everyone benefits from our immigration program. Specifically, I'd like to talk about how we can work together to remove the barriers to full labour market participation that many newcomers – and indeed many Canadians – face in this country each year. All of us here today and many more partners across Canada have a role to play. All of us have a stake in the outcome.

I followed with great interest the recent speech by RBC Financial Group President and CEO Gordon Nixon to the Women's Canadian Club of Montreal in this regard. Tapping human potential is or should be, he noted, one of the primary goals of every great nation. And Canada, as one of the most diverse nations on earth has more to gain from working toward this goal than most other countries.

I think these comments help to underscore the need for action on many fronts. More importantly, however, I think they help to underscore a growing consensus that we can only achieve our true potential as a society if inclusiveness, participation, diversity, and respect all form the cornerstones of our public and private institutions. That's what's really important. And that's what we as equal partners and stakeholders need to work together to achieve.

Skills businesses need

Research tells us that many newcomers have the skills businesses will need to compete in today's knowledge economy – with 60 percent of immigrants coming to Canada in 2001, for example, possessing a university degree, compared to 43 percent of Canadian born adults. What's more, a higher proportion of newcomers than native born Canadians are educated and skilled in areas such as computer science, engineering and natural science occupations – all occupations critical for today's leading businesses.

Their performance in the economy, however, suggests that many newcomers face severe barriers when it comes to fully participating in Canada's national growth and are unable to find appropriate employment commensurate with their education and skills. The Conference Board of Canada estimates that this underemployment costs the Canadian economy from \$3.5 to \$5.0 billion annually. Many researches suggest that this problem is getting worse – not better.

At the same time, groups like the Canadian Federation of Independent Business' report that the future growth of small and medium-sized businesses is being hampered by skill shortages – and that these shortages exist across provinces, industries and all types of firms.

Nearly 80 percent of 75 industry associations in the Canada West Foundation also report that businesses in their sectors say they have moderate to severe difficulties in finding qualified employees.

And the Manitoba Association of Business Economists is warning that companies there will not be able to expand as quickly as they would like unless we can find a way to get more skilled workers into the labour market.

No quick fixes

How can we address this disconnect? How can we ensure that newcomers who have the skills businesses today so desperately need can contribute to our national growth? I think there are no quick fixes. There are no easy answers. The solutions will be complex, multifaceted and include everyone here today as well as many other partners and stakeholders across Canada. That's why forums such as this are so important.

Research from the Public Policy Forum hints at the importance of language training and suggests that one impediment to hiring newcomers might be the perception among business leaders that they lack the appropriate language skills. Research from Statistics Canada also suggests there's a link between language skills and immigrant outcomes – with one study indicating that nearly one-half of the current earnings disadvantage among university educated immigrant workers would disappear if they had the same average literacy scores as non-immigrants.

Enhanced Language Training

My Department is currently working very hard to address these issues by expanding the Enhanced Language Training and Bridge-to-Work initiative using the additional funding announced in the February 2004 budget. This will help us reach up to 20,000 new immigrants a year in need of job specific language skills. The program will also help provide work placement, mentoring, cultural orientation, preparation for licensure exams, internships and professional mentoring for immigrants and refugees.

The Enhanced Language Training initiative is a wonderful program that we can all point to as an example of what we can achieve together. It's implemented through cost-sharing partnerships with provinces, territories, municipalities, community organizations, non-governmental organizations, employers and educational institutions. For the current fiscal year, Citizenship and Immigration Canada has entered into cost-sharing agreements with partners to fund 31 agreements at a cost of \$5.6 million. \$2.4 million of this amount covers agreements that my Department has with provincial and territorial partners.

These projects will help immigrants acquire the language skills they need to pursue careers in fields such as nursing, engineering, policing, customer service, and administrative assistance, or to manage a small business or become entrepreneurs.

But, of course, this by itself will not be enough.

As partners, we must ensure the appropriate infrastructures are in place to fully integrate foreign-trained skilled workers into Canada's business and social institutions. Employers in this case, for example, could offer language and extra vocational training as needed in conjunction with provincial associations using a variety of flexible arrangements.

We know that language ability is one of the key determinants of successful integration. We need to ensure that immigrants get the appropriate level of training to get them jobs on par with their experience and education. These are important considerations for making Canada a truly inclusive society that values the contribution of each newcomer.

Access to early information

Access to early information about the Canadian labour market as well as our business or employer practices can also be an important factor in helping newcomers integrate more quickly.

Immigrants need to have access to comprehensive and targeted information on occupational requirements, the labour market, settlement services, qualifications assessment and recognition and job search assistance. This means they can make informed decisions about immigrating to Canada, including where they should settle.

That's why Federal Departments are working together to develop a strategy to improve online information and services so that immigrants can prepare for Canada's labour market and start the integration process even before their arrival. This strategy includes

partnerships with provinces, employers and other stakeholders. Once again, the Federal Government can play a lead role in these initiatives, but we cannot act alone.

Foreign credentials

Once newcomers get here, of course, many find their foreign credentials and work experience are not properly recognized. That's why Citizenship and Immigration Canada has been working hand in hand with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Health Canada and various other Departments over the past few months to find a way of improving the way Canada recognizes foreign credentials.

The Speech from the Throne commits this government to redoubling our efforts in cooperation with provinces, territories and professional bodies to improve the recognition of foreign credentials and help integrate newcomers into the workforce. Work has already begun on several fronts. And I think you'll see us begin to move forward with even more concrete initiatives very, very soon. But we need your input, your ideas and your commitment to help us succeed.

We're making progress. But there's still much work to do.

Conclusion

I'd like to conclude these remarks by noting that research is an equally important component of our strategy to help better integrate newcomers into the labour market as each of the others I've touched on today. We need to continually improve our language training initiatives. We need to find new and innovative ways to better prepare newcomers for the Canadian experience before they depart. And we need to find a way to improve the way we recognize foreign credentials. The quality of our research will have an impact on how successful we are in each of these activities.

Organizations such as the Public Policy Forum and many others here today all have a vital role to play in helping us shape what kind of country we live in today and what kind of country we will leave for future generations. Research such as your employer survey is impressive in its own right. But even more so when you consider how important it will be in guiding our next steps. We can build a legacy of exclusion and missed opportunities. Or, with the help of everyone here this morning, we can give to all Canadians a strengthened legacy of respect, diversity, inclusiveness and world leadership.

I'm reminded in this regard of the words of a former leader who noted that the time had come to focus our energies not just on creating a rich society; nor on simply creating a powerful society. The time had come, he noted, to pour all of our hearts, all of our minds, all of our resolve, and to focus all of our energies into creating the Great Society.

Ladies and gentlemen, honourable colleagues, honoured guests: now is that time, and together we will succeed.

Thank you.

ANNEX 6– NOTES D’ALLOCATION POUR JUDY SGRO, MINISTRE DE LA CITOYENNETE ET DE L’IMMIGRATION

Je souhaite tout d’abord remercier le Forum des politiques publiques (FPP) d’avoir organisé cette activité, et surtout de m’avoir invitée à venir vous parler. Le FPP a joué un rôle important pour améliorer le gouvernement et tracer la voie pour le Canada. C’est donc un plaisir pour moi d’être parmi vous et d’avoir l’occasion d’entendre vos points de vue et vos idées.

Introduction

Je suis particulièrement contente que vous ayez choisi de parler aujourd’hui d’inclure les employeurs dans le débat sur l’immigration. Dans bon nombre de cas, les employeurs des secteurs public et privé sont ceux qui offrent la possibilité aux immigrants de se bâtir une nouvelle vie.

Ils nous offrent également les moyens économiques de mener le genre de vie auquel nous tenons. Nous devons donc veiller à ce que nos efforts en matière d’immigration s’alignent sur les besoins des employeurs, et nous devons également aider les employeurs à faire en sorte que leurs priorités cadrent avec les réalités actuelles et futures.

J’aimerais donc vous souhaiter à tous la bienvenue et j’espère que ce forum nous aidera à mieux comprendre les besoins des employeurs et comment nous pouvons travailler ensemble pour que le Canada réalise son énorme potentiel.

Je veux vous parler aujourd’hui des mesures à prendre pour faire en sorte que tous puissent profiter du programme d’immigration. J’aimerais, notamment, discuter des façons de travailler ensemble pour supprimer les obstacles à l’accès au marché du travail auxquels doivent faire face chaque année bon nombre de nouveaux arrivants, et même de nombreux Canadiens. Chacun de nous ici aujourd’hui, et bien d’autres partenaires partout au Canada, a un rôle à jouer. Il est dans notre intérêt à tous de supprimer ces obstacles.

J’ai écouté avec grand intérêt le récent discours à ce sujet de Gordon Nixon, président et PDG de RBC Groupe Financier, au Cercle canadien des femmes de Montréal. Exploiter le potentiel humain est ou devrait être, selon lui, l’un des principaux objectifs de toute grande nation. Et le Canada, qui est l’une des nations les plus diversifiées au monde, en tirerait un plus grand avantage que la plupart des autres pays.

Ces commentaires soulignent l’importance des mesures à prendre à divers points de vue. Et surtout, ils font ressortir le fait que nous ne pouvons réaliser notre plein potentiel comme société que si l’inclusivité, la participation, la diversité et le respect forment la pierre angulaire de nos institutions publiques et privées. Voilà ce qui est réellement important. Et c’est ce que nous, comme partenaires et intervenants à part entière, devons réaliser ensemble.

Compétences dont les entreprises ont besoin

Des recherches montrent que bon nombre de nouveaux arrivants possèdent les compétences dont les entreprises ont besoin pour affronter la concurrence dans l'économie d'aujourd'hui qui est axée sur le savoir. Par exemple, 60 % des immigrants arrivés au Canada en 2001 possédaient un diplôme universitaire, comparativement à 43 % Canadiens d'âge adulte. De plus, un pourcentage plus élevé de nouveaux arrivants que de personnes nées au Canada possèdent des connaissances et des compétences dans des domaines comme l'informatique, le génie et les sciences naturelles – tous des domaines essentiels pour les grandes entreprises actuelles.

Leur rendement sur le plan économique, toutefois, montre que bon nombre de nouveaux arrivants doivent faire face à d'importants obstacles pour ce qui est de participer pleinement au marché du travail au Canada et qu'ils ne réussissent pas à trouver des emplois correspondant à leur niveau d'études et à leurs compétences. Le Conference Board du Canada estime que ce sous-emploi coûte à l'économie canadienne de 3,5 à 5 milliards de dollars par année. En outre, de nombreuses recherches révèlent que le problème s'aggrave.

Parallèlement, des groupes comme la Fédération canadienne de l'entreprise indépendante signalent que les pénuries de main-d'oeuvre qualifiée nuisent à la croissance future des petites et moyennes entreprises – et on relève des pénuries de main-d'oeuvre dans toutes les provinces, toutes les industries et tous les genres d'entreprise.

Près de 80 % des 75 associations industrielles de la Canada West Foundation signalent également que les entreprises dans leur secteur ont assez ou beaucoup de difficulté à trouver des employés qualifiés.

Et la Manitoba Association of Business Economists a déclaré que les entreprises au Manitoba ne pourront pas prendre de l'expansion comme prévu à moins qu'on trouve une solution pour accroître le nombre de travailleurs qualifiés sur le marché du travail.

Aucune solution simple

Comment pouvons-nous remédier à cette situation? Que faut-il faire pour que les nouveaux arrivants possédant les compétences dont les entreprises ont grand besoin puissent contribuer à la croissance nationale? Je ne crois pas qu'il y ait de solution simple ou de réponse facile. Les solutions seront complexes, et tous ici aujourd'hui ainsi que de nombreux autres partenaires et intervenants au Canada devront contribuer à leur réalisation. Voilà pourquoi les forums comme celui-ci sont si importants.

Des recherches du FPP font état de l'importance des cours de langue et suggèrent que l'un des obstacles à l'embauche de nouveaux arrivants pourrait être la perception qu'ont les chefs d'entreprise que ceux-ci ne possèdent pas les compétences linguistiques nécessaires. Des recherches effectuées par Statistique Canada font également ressortir un lien entre les compétences linguistiques et les résultats obtenus par les immigrants – une étude montre que le désavantage sur le plan des gains subit par les travailleurs immigrants possédant un diplôme universitaire disparaîtrait de moitié s'ils obtenaient des

notes semblables à celles des non-immigrants pour les compétences linguistiques.

Cours de langue de niveau avancé

Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada travaille très fort en ce moment pour régler ces problèmes en élargissant l'initiative des Cours de langue de niveau avancé, qui comprend des cours axés sur des professions particulières, et a recours, pour ce faire, aux fonds supplémentaires annoncés dans le budget de février 2004. Nous serons ainsi en mesure d'aider jusqu'à 20 000 nouveaux immigrants par année qui ont besoin de cours de langue adaptés à une profession précise. Le programme comprend également diverses formes d'aide, dont le placement professionnel, le mentorat, l'orientation culturelle, la préparation aux examens pour obtenir le droit d'exercer une profession, les stages et le mentorat professionnel pour les immigrants et les réfugiés.

L'initiative des Cours de langue de niveau avancé est un programme formidable qui peut servir d'exemple pour ce que nous pouvons accomplir ensemble. Les coûts sont partagés par les provinces, les territoires, les municipalités, les organisations communautaires, les organisations non gouvernementales, les employeurs et les établissements d'enseignement. Pour l'exercice actuel, Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada a conclu avec des partenaires des ententes de partage des coûts pour financer 31 ententes, à un coût de 5,6 millions de dollars. De ce montant, 2,4 millions de dollars visent des ententes que le Ministère a conclu avec ses partenaires provinciaux et territoriaux.

Ces projets permettront aux immigrants d'acquérir les compétences linguistiques dont ils ont besoin pour poursuivre leur carrière dans des domaines comme les sciences infirmières, le génie, le maintien de l'ordre, le service aux clients et l'aide administrative, ou encore pour gérer une petite entreprise ou devenir entrepreneurs.

Bien sûr, cela ne sera pas suffisant.

Comme partenaires, nous devons veiller à ce que les infrastructures nécessaires soient en place pour favoriser l'intégration complète dans les entreprises et les institutions sociales canadiennes des travailleurs qualifiés formés à l'étranger. Les employeurs pourraient offrir, par exemple, des cours de langue et une formation professionnelle supplémentaire en collaboration avec des associations provinciales et proposer un régime de travail souple.

Nous savons que les capacités linguistiques constituent l'un des facteurs déterminants pour la réussite de l'intégration. Nous devons faire en sorte que les immigrants obtiennent la formation nécessaire afin qu'ils puissent, par la suite, obtenir un emploi correspondant à leur expérience et à leur formation. Il faut tenir compte de ces éléments pour faire du Canada une société réellement ouverte à tous et pour laquelle la contribution de chaque nouvel arrivant est importante.

Accès à l'information en temps opportun

Avoir accès en temps opportun à l'information sur le marché du travail canadien et les pratiques commerciales est aussi un facteur important dont il faut tenir compte pour aider les nouveaux arrivants à s'intégrer plus rapidement.

Les immigrants doivent avoir accès à de l'information exhaustive et ciblée sur les exigences professionnelles, le marché du travail, les services d'aide à l'établissement, l'évaluation et la reconnaissance des compétences ainsi que l'aide à la recherche d'emploi. Avec cette information, ils peuvent prendre des décisions éclairées concernant leur immigration au Canada, notamment sur l'endroit où ils devraient s'établir.

C'est pourquoi les ministères fédéraux élaborent ensemble actuellement une stratégie visant à améliorer l'information et les services offerts en direct pour que les immigrants puissent se préparer au marché du travail canadien et commencer le processus d'intégration avant leur arrivée. Cette stratégie comprend des partenariats avec les provinces, les employeurs et d'autres intervenants. Une fois de plus, le gouvernement fédéral peut jouer un rôle dans ces initiatives, mais il ne peut pas le faire seul.

Diplômes internationaux

Une fois au Canada, bon nombre de nouveaux arrivants constatent que leurs diplômes et leur expérience de travail obtenus à l'étranger ne sont pas reconnus à leur juste valeur. C'est pourquoi Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada a collaboré avec Ressources humaines et Développement des compétences Canada, Santé Canada et divers autres ministères au cours des derniers mois afin d'améliorer le processus de reconnaissance des diplômes internationaux.

Le discours du Trône engage le gouvernement à redoubler ses efforts de collaboration avec les provinces, les territoires et les ordres professionnels afin d'améliorer le processus de reconnaissances des diplômes internationaux et d'aider les nouveaux arrivants à s'intégrer dans le marché du travail. Des travaux à cet égard ont déjà commencé et nous prévoyons amorcer des initiatives très bientôt. Mais pour réussir, nous aurons besoin de vos commentaires, de vos idées et de votre engagement.

Nous faisons des progrès. Mais il y a encore beaucoup à faire.

Conclusion

J'aimerais conclure en soulignant que la recherche est un élément tout aussi important de notre stratégie pour aider les nouveaux arrivants à mieux s'intégrer dans le marché du travail que les autres éléments dont j'ai parlé aujourd'hui. Nous devons continuer d'améliorer les initiatives concernant la formation linguistique. Nous devons trouver des façons nouvelles et novatrices pour mieux préparer les nouveaux arrivants avant leur départ pour le Canada. Et nous devons améliorer notre processus de reconnaissances des diplômes internationaux. La qualité des recherches effectuées aura des répercussions sur notre réussite pour chacune de ces activités.

Des organisations comme le Forum des politiques publiques et de nombreuses autres ici

aujourd'hui jouent un rôle essentiel dans l'orientation du pays dans lequel nous vivons aujourd'hui et du genre de pays que nous voulons léguer aux générations futures. Les initiatives comme votre enquête auprès des employeurs est remarquable, mais elle l'est encore davantage lorsqu'on tient compte du fait qu'elle servira à orienter les prochaines étapes. On peut léguer aux Canadiens une politique d'exclusion et des occasions ratées ou, avec l'aide de chacun ici ce matin, nous pouvons leur léguer une politique axée sur le respect, la diversité, l'inclusivité et le respect des responsabilités à l'échelle internationale.

Je me rappelle les paroles d'un ancien dirigeant qui disait que le temps était venu de concentrer nos efforts sur autre chose que la création d'une société riche et puissante. Selon lui, le temps était venu de nous donner corps et âme à la création d'une grande société.

Mesdames et messieurs, chers collègues et invités, il faut agir maintenant, et, ensemble, nous réussirons.

Merci.

ANNEX 7 - ENVIRONICS RESEARCH GROUP'S PRESENTATION

Survey of Canadian Employers and Human Resource Managers

BRINGING EMPLOYERS INTO THE IMMIGRATION DEBATE

Presented by Derek Leebosh at the Public Policy Forum's Bringing Employers Into the Immigration Debate Conference on November 4, 2004.