



Internationally Trained
Workers Project – Ottawa

Projet des professionnels
de formation internationale – Ottawa

Draft Report

MOVING FORWARD

A Strategy for the Integration of
Internationally Trained Workers in Ottawa

February, 2004



INTRODUCTION

In recent years, immigration has become the major contributor to Canada’s population and labour force growth. Each year the province of Ontario receives over 100,000 immigrants, which is approximately 60% of all immigrants to Canada. After Toronto, the city of Ottawa is the destination of choice.

The percentage of Canada’s immigrants who settle in Ottawa has remained at about 3% of all immigration to Canada over the past few years. Between 1996 and 2001, immigration made up 38% of Ottawa’s population growth. More remarkable is the fact that 51% of those who immigrated to Ottawa in 2002 held a university degree. In the same year, 5.7% of all Canada’s new immigrants with a Ph.D. intended to settle in Ottawa, almost twice the overall Ottawa settlement rate of 3.1% – the number of immigrants with a doctorate in that year exceeded the annual number of Ph.D.s granted by the two local universities combined.

However in Ottawa, as in many other urban centres across the country, recently landed immigrants have a considerably lower labour force participation rate and a significantly higher unemployment rate than the Canadian-born. This is despite a high level of language knowledge, and education levels on par with, or higher than, those of the Canadian-born. The failure to recognize their credentials contributes to higher levels of unemployment among them and to a poor match between jobs and skills. Recent Ottawa immigrants aged 25 to 44 with a university degree were four times more likely than their Canadian-born counterparts to be unemployed. Even more alarming is the fact that for some recent immigrants, the transition from immigration to employment never happens. In light of the above, the case is increasingly clear that more can be done to facilitate the integration of immigrants and members of visible minorities into local labour markets.

An analysis of the 2001 census data reveals that the length and intensity of unemployment among recent immigrants have worsened compared to the Canadian average and to the situation that prevailed twenty years ago, amounting to “a transition penalty” (Canadian Labour and Business Centre, 2003). Another study observes that despite an average level of education that was higher than that of previous immigrant cohorts and of Canadians as a whole, recent immigrants’ employment rate and earnings are lower than the Canadian average (Misact, 2003).

In an effort to address these labour market integration issues, the Ottawa Internationally-Trained Workers project has been developed under the partnership of United Way/Centraide Ottawa, the Canadian Labour and Business Centre, and LASI¹ World Skills. The project’s overall goal is to develop a community-based strategy aimed at facilitating the accreditation and integration of internationally-trained workers into the Ottawa economy.

¹ Local Agencies Serving Immigrants: an umbrella group of six settlement agencies in Ottawa which have come together to sponsor World Skills.

Barriers to the successful integration of internationally-trained workers

Barriers to the integration of internationally-trained workers into the labour market are well documented. The following are the most commonly cited:

- Difficulty in gaining recognition of international credentials due to unfamiliarity of regulatory bodies, employers, and academic institutions with international educational, training, technological, and professional standards;
- Lack of information for newcomers about how to access a profession or trade;
- Difficulty in gaining recognition of international work experience by occupational regulatory bodies and employers;
- The absence of appeal processes for those unfairly denied entry to regulated occupations;
- Lack of access to adequate, occupation-specific educational/training upgrading, language training and testing;
- Lack of uniformity of standards in regulated occupations across provinces and territories;
- Lack of Canadian experience making it difficult to access employment;
- Piecemeal nature of interventions by nongovernmental organizations in their support to internationally-trained immigrants;
- Costs and resources: not enough information about the costs and resources associated with credentials recognition;
- Complexity of the challenge: issues of translation and authentication of qualifications, and the autonomous nature of assessing institutions; and
- Attitudes and approaches: comfort with status quo, complacency and a lack of a sense of urgency, and the existence of ethnocentrism and stereotyping.

A recent article published that the ‘barriers that make access to the labour market difficult for immigrants are systemic’ (McIssac, 2003). The author singles out the non-recognition of credentials and experience by Canadian employers, educational institutions, and professional regulatory bodies as a key barrier, while noting the significance of other obstacles such as: (1) a lack of information about labour market integration provided to applicants overseas before they arrive in Canada; (2) the requirement that immigrants have Canadian work experience; (3) the lack of effective tools to assess qualifications; and (4) the lack of labour market language training and bridging programs to address specific gaps in qualifications.

Much is known about what the barriers to the integration of internationally-trained workers into the economy are. Less is known on how to successfully overcome the barriers.

Systemic approaches and local strategies

A perusal of the literature makes it clear that there is a wealth of initiatives and programs in place nationally and in a growing number of provinces – although some would argue that it is not enough – which are designed to alleviate the barriers preventing internationally-trained workers from getting their credentials and work experience recognized, and from matching their skills and qualifications to suitable employment. It is also clear, however, that most of these initiatives are either ad hoc, short term, or focused on a single occupation/trade or region. Partly as recognition of that, a few recent initiatives have deliberately been put in place with a view to promote a more comprehensive, systematic approach to removing these barriers. The following provides highlights of a recent initiative in the Greater Toronto Area.

The Maytree Foundation’s model

The Maytree Foundation (2002)² has argued for a more comprehensive approach to integrating immigrant workers into the Canadian economy. In *Fulfilling the Promise: Integrating Immigrant Skills into the Canadian Economy*, the foundation in collaboration with Naomi Alboim proposes a systemic approach to the integration of skilled immigrants into Canada’s labour markets.

The proposed approach encompasses a number of ‘system components,’ which can be summarized as follows:

- a) Incentives for stakeholders to collaborate in designing, delivering and evaluating programs and services, and for immigrants to access them.
- b) Services and programs in the areas of: information; assessment services; expert advice; and bridging programs to fill identified gaps.
- c) Leaders Council to foster collaboration, identify priorities and linkages, and communicates results.

One of the central feature of Maytree’s proposed approach is that it requires all stakeholders to work together to find and implement solutions. It thus offers an advantage over the current system of ad hoc initiatives promoted by various stakeholders without much coordination or integration.

While it is clear that some of the most significant barriers to the integration of internationally-trained workers are systemic – and their removal beyond the capacity of local stakeholders — it is also important that solutions correspond with each community’s particular demographic characteristics, labour market needs and capacities, and industry trends (McIsaac, 2003).

Adapting solutions to a local environment helps ensure that solutions reflect local priorities and foster vertical and horizontal collaboration and co-ordination between

² The Maytree Foundation is a private Canadian charitable foundation that has been active in supporting the settlement of refugees and immigrants since 1987.

governments and their various departments. It has been pointed out that ‘solutions require an approach that is coordinated and engages all the relevant stakeholders,’ and that a road map for local intervention can be suggested: convene the relevant stakeholders; identify local priorities; provide advice to federal and provincial governments; and coordinate and integrate programs and initiatives.

Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC)

The case for a local strategy to integrate internationally-trained workers into the labour market has also been made in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). As part of its efforts to more fully integrate its immigrants, the City of Toronto along with key stakeholders has promoted the concept of a *local immigrant employment council* (TRIEC).

To a large extent, TRIEC is a local adaptation of the Maytree national model, in that it brings together all the relevant stakeholders around the table and seeks to find solutions that fit the local context (the Maytree Foundation has in fact acted as a resource organization in the proposed design of the Council, and will likely coordinate the creation and operation of its secretariat). Also worth noting are the following points:

- The TRIEC represents an attempt to address the ad hoc nature of other initiatives designed to ease the integration of foreign-trained workers into the labour market. In principle, TRIEC is designed to have continuity by means of a flexible regional structure that brings to the table all the major stakeholders.
- Not unrelated to the above, the TRIEC model is trying to address the sustainability issue that has plagued so many ad hoc initiatives, by establishing a core Council and by seeking core funding for its operations. Obviously, it remains to be seen whether indeed the Council will be able to secure such funding and commitment from key stakeholders, but the approach it is using to tackle these challenges is most appropriate.
- The TRIEC is also being designed with flexibility in mind, thanks to its reliance upon working groups for tackling emerging or pressing issues, drawing as needed from the most relevant expertise and resources.

2. BUILDING A STRATEGY FOR OTTAWA

Background

This project was funded under the umbrella of the Voluntary Sector Initiative by the former Human Resource Development Canada³. The specific objectives of the project were: 1) to develop a community based strategy to support the integration of internationally-trained workers into the labour market; 2) to establish a coordinated and sustainable approach to the assessment and recognition of skills and credentials and 3) to help develop capacity in the voluntary sector. An essential project requirement was to focus efforts at the level of individual occupational groups, ensuring that there would be a match between supply of internationally-trained workers on the one hand, and demand for workers in the occupations they were trained for, on the other. The project thus involved establishing occupation-specific working groups in five areas – teachers, engineers, doctors, nurses and masons, with representation on each of the groups that includes people from the immigrant community, service agencies, employers, regulating bodies, training or educational institutions and others that who add expertise to this part of the project. These occupational groups were chosen because a reasonable level of (current or future) demand for workers in these occupations was predicted, and corresponding numbers of internationally-trained workers existed in the LASI World Skills database.

Two or three meetings were held with each group – except for the doctors for whom a focus group was held in October, 2003, which focused on the identification of barriers to labour market integration, and solutions to removing these barriers. The following provides an analysis of the process that underlies the occupational group meetings, then describes the barriers and solutions that were common to the four groups, and finally discusses recommended actions and outcomes.

2.1 Process

Beyond the specific knowledge to be derived from the identification of barriers, solutions and actions that come from the occupational group discussions, much of the project's value add originates from its original, occupation-specific approach to integrating foreign-trained workers into the local labour market. As compared to proposed models or existing strategies designed to facilitate the integration of foreign-trained workers into the economy, the Ottawa project presents some unique features that are worth discussing. The following describes the major steps that have so far been undertaken during the project's life.

Step 1: Project planning and management

One of the project's central premises is the reliance upon local partnerships as a means to design and deliver an approach sensitive to local conditions and needs, building upon

³ The former department of Human Resources Development Canada has been split into two: Human Resources and Skill Development (HRSD) and department of Social Development (SD).

local talent and resources, and applicable to other areas experiencing similar difficulties. In Ottawa, this partnership includes United Way/Centraide Ottawa, the Canadian Labour and Business Centre, and LASI World Skills as leading partners, and other key stakeholders involved at the level of specific occupational groups. As well, a Steering Committee comprised of the three levels of government, labour, and local community agencies guides and oversees the project. Members from this Committee have been working closely with those involved locally, particularly with the City of Ottawa and TalentWorks under the Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation (OCRI), to ensure that the project builds on, and integrates with other workforce development initiatives and the broad community planning exercises that are currently underway.

Step 2: Analysis of local labour market supply and demand conditions

In order to meet one of the project's requirements that it remains in line with local labour market conditions, a careful analysis of local labour market supply and demand conditions was carried out. The goal was to ensure that the professions and trades to be targeted for support meet the following conditions at the occupational level: (1) a reasonable level of demand exists – that is, supply does not exceed demand – so that internationally-trained workers would have a fair chance of finding employment in their field of expertise; (2) prognostics for growth in employment are generally favorable so that employment opportunities would reasonably exist in both the short and the mid-term; and (3) there is a sufficient pool of internationally-trained workers in the targeted occupational groups.

In order to meet conditions (1) and (2), collaboration was sought after from the local HRDC office in order to access occupational-specific data. The obtained data were combined with that from other sources – historical Census and Labour Force Survey data – in order to produce detailed, occupation-specific analyses. On the supply side, the LASI database was used to complement other secondary data, and it allowed researchers to get a sense of the number of internationally-trained workers living in the Ottawa region who were looking for employment in their field of study. Recent statistics from Citizenship and Immigration Canada were also obtained, and they were used to construct a profile of immigrants in the Ottawa region that included information on their demographic characteristics.

Step 3: Identification of occupational groups to be targeted

By combining data on trends, supply, and demand, the research team was able to come up with a short list of occupations that met the above-noted conditions. The following observations can be made about the challenges that were faced in trying to come up with a relevant list of occupations:

1. There is little by way of detailed and up-to-date labour market information that is local and occupation-specific. As a result, it is difficult to get an accurate and recent analysis of supply and demand conditions at that level;

2. It is equally difficult to accurately portray immigrants who are qualified and willing to work in any given occupation, since existing databases are not designed to meet this labour market-related purpose.

That said, access to detailed labour market information is crucial for any approach designed to facilitate the transition of internationally-trained workers on the basis of local needs and economic conditions.

Step 4: Occupation-specific stakeholder meetings

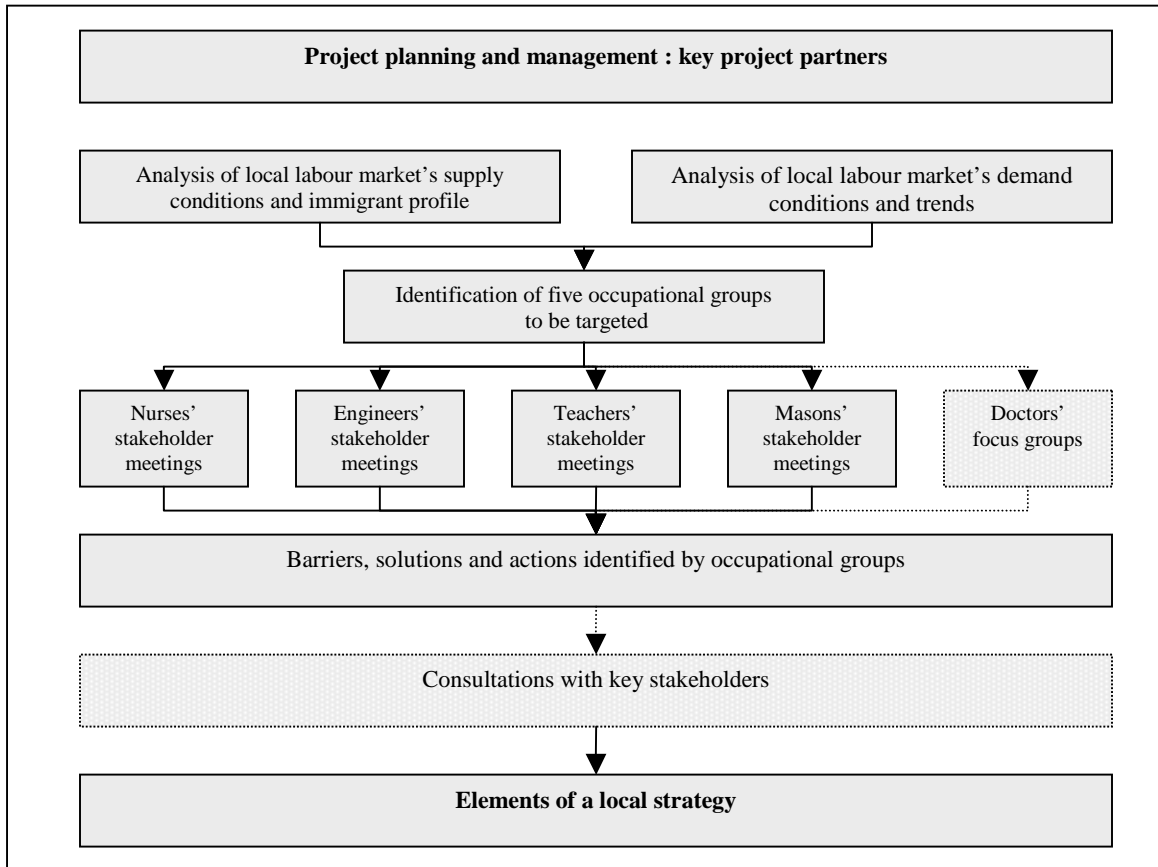
The labour market and immigrant profile analyses resulted in five groups being selected for inclusion in the project. The next step was to form working groups for each of the occupations, whose role would be to identify and discuss:

- 1) Barriers and issues affecting the integration of internationally-trained workers into the labour market;
- 2) Possible solutions to the identified barriers and issues; and
- 3) Recommendations or actions that could provide strategic direction for the integration of the workers, and elements of a local strategy.

The composition of each group varied – reflecting the specific regulatory and labour market environment of each profession/trade – but generally included representation from the following groups:

- Individuals who were internationally-trained in the highlighted profession or trade, and who are employed or not;
- Regulatory agencies or bodies responsible for accreditation;
- Educational institutions;
- Local, provincial and federal government with responsibility for employment or for professional development;
- Professional associations or unions representing the workers; and,
- Employers.

Project Framework



2.2 Barriers and solutions

A good proportion of the discussions held during the occupational group sessions focused on the specific barriers faced by internationally-trained workers in their attempt to find employment in the profession or trade. The list of barriers is long and runs the gamut from difficulties in accessing labour market information *prior* to moving into Canada, to difficulties adjusting to the workplace once established in a job. In this section, we provide an overview of these barriers, focusing on commonalities among the various occupational groups. The discussion is organized according to the various steps that exist along the immigration to labour market integration spectrum.

Table 1
Barriers identified by the four occupational group participants

<i>Type of barriers</i>	<i>Barrier identified by...</i>				
	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Engineers</i>	<i>Masons</i>	<i>Nurses</i>	<i>Doctors</i>
1. Access to information					
Lack of knowledge of/information on accreditation process	■		■	■	■
Lack of knowledge of/information on licensing requirement		■	■	■	■
Lack of knowledge of/information on job opportunities		■	■	■	
Lack of knowledge about available local agencies services	■	■	■	■	■
Lack of knowledge about available government services	■		■	■	■
2. Licensing and accreditation					
Bureaucracy	■	■	■	■	■
Difficulty in obtaining documentation from abroad	■		■	■	
Heavy/unrealistic requirements regarding documentation	■	■			
Financial cost of accreditation too high			■	■	■
Lack of availability of prior learning assessment			■	■	■
3. Access to expert advice, support					
Lack of mentoring and/or apprenticeship	■	■	■	■	
4. Upgrading and training					
Lack of financial assistance/bridging programs	■	■	■	■	■
Difficult access to/lack of academic/basic skills training		■			
Difficult access to workplace-based language training		■	■	■	■
Difficult access/availability of technical skills training			■	■	
Difficult access to internships/in-residence programs		■		■	■

■ Severe/common barrier ■ Minor/uncommon barrier

5. Knowledge of Canadian workplace practices					
Lack of Canadian experience/job opportunities	■	■	■	■	■
Lack of knowledge of Canadian standards, regulations		■	■		■
Lack of knowledge of working culture, values	■		■	■	
6. Access to labour market/employment opportunities					
Difficulty adjusting to/lack of knowledge of the culture	■	■	■	■	■
Lack of jobs/employment opportunities	■	■			■
Lack of assistance for addressing mobility issues			■		
Cultural bias, racism at time of hiring	■				
Lack of employer contacts	■	■	■	■	

Severe/common barrier
 Minor/uncommon barrier

Source: Canadian Labour and Business Centre, *Occupational Group Proceedings*, 2003.

As one can see from Table 1, the range of barriers encountered by immigrants who were trained as teachers, masons, engineers, nurses or doctors is quite broad. This observation suggests that there is not a single most important barrier that all internationally-trained workers have to face and, thus there is no single solution that can be designed to alleviate these barriers. That said, the following comments can be made:

- *Lack of information* of available programs and services was identified by many participants. In addition the importance of expert advice and support was identified as critical to success.
- *Lack of employer contacts* has been identified as a severe barrier by participants from three of the four occupational groups, ranking as one of the most important/common barrier. Clearly, working with employers will be central to designing a local strategy that can bring results.
- Equally severe is the *lack of Canadian work experience* leading to lack of employment opportunities. Again, participants from three of the four occupational groups made mention of it as a common barrier to access to employment opportunities. Participants also noted the importance of understanding the culture of Canadian workplaces.
- Barriers related to licensing and accreditation – in particular the bureaucracy, difficulty in obtaining documentation from abroad, and heavy or unrealistic requirements – have been identified by a large proportion of participants as common barriers.
- Lack of knowledge of local labour market information and employment opportunities was also cited as an impediment.

Perhaps the single most important generalization that can be derived from the above observations is that barriers are unique to each type occupation or trade and, one might suspect, they also vary widely from one local labour market to the next.

2.3 Recommended solutions and project outcomes

Given the relatively large number of specific solutions identified and recommendations made by the various occupational groups, this section of the report focuses on those solutions that may have more universal application, even if they have not necessarily been reported by all (or most of) the occupational groups. The solutions are organized according to the type of stakeholders to which they are addressed.

Table 2
Summary of specific solutions proposed to alleviate barriers
By occupational group and by stakeholder

<i>Type of stakeholder</i>	<i>Solution identified by...</i>				
	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Engineers</i>	<i>Masons</i>	<i>Nurses</i>	<i>Doctors</i>
Accreditation and licensing bodies					
• Develop simple-to-understand flowchart of the accreditation process					
• Have a 1-800 number that is widely known or a ‘government online’					
• Ontario College of Teachers to revise its orientation package					
• More effective, widespread use of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)					
Educational institutions					
• More effective, targeted language training					
• Greater consistency for training; more compulsory programs					
Employers					
• Employers to make available information about shortages early on					
• Employers to send information about openings to local agencies					
• Promote coaching to help understand cultural aspect of the workplace					
Internationally-trained workers					
• Some of them might provide mentoring to less experienced ones					
• Offer to do volunteer work to know employers/get experience					
• Form association/network to support and assist newcomers					
• Attend seminars put up by employers, job fairs					
• Try to meet employers/professors informally; strategic use of emails					
Local agencies serving immigrants					
• Form groups of local volunteers to support immigrants with process					
• Organize occupation-specific conferences/workshops					
Professional associations/unions					
• Assistance with mentoring, job shadowing					
• Have unions involved in screening/assessment of candidates					
Federal government					
• CIC to provide occupation-specific info kits to new immigrants					
• CIC to rely more upon Internet to ease access to timely info					
• CIC to provide detailed lists of local agencies serving immigrants					
• HRDC should work with accrediting body to improve recognition					
• HRDC should raise awareness about its Foreign Worker program					

Provincial government					
• Make financial assistance programs better suited to immigrants					
Others					
• Need for better coordination between government agencies					
• Develop incentive program for employers					

Source: Canadian Labour and Business Centre, *Occupational Group Proceedings*, 2003.

One can see from the above table that, at one end of the spectrum, some of the solutions identified by occupational group participants find broader acceptance. At the other, some solutions are occupation specific, to the point that they have little relevance to all occupational groups. In terms of the former, the following solutions have been put forward by four of the five groups: better access to language training adapted to the workplace; access mentoring that would be supported by more established, experienced internationally-trained workers; and availability of financial assistance programs that are better suited to the particular needs of internationally-trained workers.

Beyond that, Table 2 shows that a significant proportion of the proposed solutions are of relevance to only one or two of the five groups – which is hardly surprising. It is clear, thus, that solutions to the barriers identified by the various occupational group participants need to closely match the particular needs, conditions and circumstances of these individual groups, making it difficult to suggest a set of solutions that will address the needs of all groups and, at the same time, that would be specific/detailed enough to be useful.

3. LESSONS LEARNED

By and large, one of the central lessons to be learned from the project is that *the process* of planning together, forming partnerships, and gathering in the same room stakeholders on an occupation-specific basis can bring nearly as much value as the information on barriers and solutions that is generated from these meetings.

There were few surprises in terms of the nature of the barriers and the solutions that were identified by occupational group participants, although this type of information should not be discounted as unimportant. Clearly, the information can and should be used to provide a focal point for intervention at the level of individual stakeholders, on an occupation-specific basis. Beyond that, however, much value was derived from planning and undertaking a local process of identifying and removing barriers for the integration of internationally-trained workers. In particular:

- *Informal information exchange:* during the course of several meetings, misconceptions about, for instance, accreditation or university admission requirements were cleared simply by having representatives from the various stakeholder groups present in the room and explaining their position. Such exchanges proved more effective at conveying important, often complex information, than relying upon other means of communication.
- *Direct project-related outcomes:* As a result of the project, formal and informal networks of contacts were developed, stakeholder visibility increased, and some specific outcomes emerged:
 - The Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation (OCRI) has received funding from HRSD to conduct research on Immigrant Needs Assessment in Ottawa.
 - Bridging Program: The Ontario College of Education, The Ontario Teacher's Federation, LASI/World Skills and Skills for Change in Toronto, along with partners among a number of school boards and faculties of education will develop an 18-month bridging program for international teachers who are already licensed but need to supplement their training with some Canadian experience
 - CAN: Building on the experience of this project LASI/World Skills has offered Career Access for Newcomers (CAN). CAN will provide sector specific employment services for health care professionals, non-IT engineers, trades accounting/finance and teachers. The partnership includes licensing bodies, educational institutions, employers, professional associations, community partners and government.
- *Creation of local linkages:* Although more difficult to measure, several of the stakeholders that were involved in the project have created linkages with other organizations, as a result of their participation in the occupational group discussions and subsequent trust building. The local HRDC office, the local

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities office, OCRI, the local colleges and universities, to name a few, are some of the organizations with which linkages were established.

- *Building of local capacity:* By pooling together resources and sharing expertise, several of the occupational group’s participating organizations have been able to develop their own capacity, either by internalizing newly-acquired knowledge and information, or by adapting their practice to account for new, more collaborative ways of ‘doing things.’ Again, such capacity building is difficult to measure but anecdotal evidence suggests that it represents a significant project outcome.

Another crucial lesson to be learned from the project is the importance of targeting project interventions according to sound labour market analysis. There would be little point of designing interventions for occupations for which there is little demand, or where there is no available supply of internationally-trained workers. Likewise, broad-based strategies designed around a universal approach – with little consideration for occupation-specific supply and demand conditions – would have, in our view, little chance of succeeding.

It is clear, despite some of these concerns, the process of bringing all the stakeholders together yielded innumerable benefits.

4. A STRATEGY FOR OTTAWA

As seen in previous chapters, there is widespread recognition of the problems. However, there is less agreement of what strategy needs to be put in place to provide a comprehensive solution. The settlement and integration process for immigrants is complex, involving many parties. It is fragmented and confusing. What is needed is a comprehensive local strategy designed to remove barriers to the integration of internationally-trained workers.

The Current Situation

Over and above the specific barriers experienced by immigrants and described previously, policy and services lack vertical coordination. And although the cities and larger municipalities are where immigrants settle, there is no formal and effective mechanism for municipalities or other key stakeholders to engage in the integration process.

There are currently many levels of government engaged in some form of support. For the Federal Government, participation involves the Departments of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Human Resources and Skills Development, Industry Canada, and Heritage Canada. At the provincial level, it is the Ministries of Training, Colleges and Universities and Citizenship and Immigration. The City of Ottawa provides a variety of support and services as well. Within governments there are often a number of departments involved, but there is clearly a lack of planning and coordination.

There are also the various requirements of educational institutions such as colleges and universities and the regulatory and licensing bodies for each occupation or profession.

The end result is frustration, underemployment and unemployment. Many immigrants to our city feel that those involved in facilitating their labour market integration have not lived up to their promises. Immigrants find despite their best efforts, they are prevented from practicing the profession or trade for which they trained.

Ottawa needs a local strategy to help integrate internationally-trained workers into the labour market, a strategy that builds on existing programs and services, a strategy that would also serve reinforce current linkages and create new ones. Ottawa needs a strategy that can be sustained over the long term.

Such a strategy would:

- Encompass a multi-stakeholder approach;
- Build on existing services and programs;
- Reinforce existing linkages and create new ones; and,
- Be flexible to respond to changes in the economy.

It is important that all stakeholders be engaged as no one body or group can, by itself, implement solutions to overcome the identified barriers. The strategy envisions a role for everyone.

Governments:

- Greater co-ordination among all levels: City of Ottawa, Government of Ontario (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, Ministry of Education), Government of Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Heritage Canada, Human Resources and Skill Development, and Industry Canada);
- Interdepartmental coordination;
- Providing accurate, up-to-date labour market information.

Education and Licensing Bodies:

- Greater coordination among stakeholders;
- Work with provincial bodies to develop mechanisms for mutual recognition and portability of assessments across sectors;
- Develop competency-based assessment tools;
- Collaborating to bridge gaps.

Employers:

- Become champions;
- Sponsor work experience programs (internships, job shadowing);
- Develop mentorship programs;
- Work with labour to develop workplace language programs;
- Identify specific requirements of public and private sector employers.

Labour:

- Must be active participants in strategy;
- Work with employers to develop workplace language programs;
- Engage members in mentorship programs.

Voluntary Organizations:

- Facilitate greater coordination among programs and services;

- Provide information and links to immigrants about training, accreditation, programs and services;
- Respond quickly to changes in the community.

Proposal

In accordance with the research underlying this project *it is suggested that a local leadership council be established to engage all stakeholders in the Ottawa region in an integrated and collaborative approach.* The objective would be to enhance immigrant access to the labour market. Members would include employers, labour, postsecondary institutions, occupational regulatory bodies, immigrant associations, community agencies, and all levels of government.

Possible roles of the council

1. To help create a vibrant and sustainable bridge that links immigrant skills with labour market needs in Ottawa.
2. To convene leaders from a broad range of stakeholders to work collaboratively on action oriented solutions.

The council would help to champion labour market integration of immigrants among region's employers and residents.

As a means of advancing the discussion on what to do next and lay the foundation for a short- to mid-term action plan for a possible Leadership Council, the following provides some guidance as to what actions or initiatives might be carried out by it:

- *Establish Working Groups that will help champion and establish programs to provide internships, mentoring and financial supports.*

An example of this is CareerBridge, an innovative internship program designed to help Canadian organization across all sectors recruit highly skilled recent immigrants who hold valuable international experience and education. CareerBridge works with employers to provide paid internships to new immigrants who qualify for mid-senior level positions. Is it possible to develop similar programs in the regulated professions, taking into account the regulators' requirements? Is it possible to create similar experiences within the unions?

- *Co-ordinate activities with existing groups including TalentWorks and the City of Ottawa*

Both the City of Ottawa through The Ottawa Partnership (TOP) and OCRI's TalentWorks have initiatives underway to address the future labour force requirements of the City of Ottawa. It will be important to co-ordinate the activities of the proposed leadership council with these activities.

- *Develop an inventory of existing programs and services.*

There are many activities across the city, the province, and the country. The challenge will be to build on these activities and not duplicate efforts. One priority should be to map existing programs and services and identify the gaps. From there, it could be possible to fill gaps through the design and delivery of innovative labour market integration programs through current service delivery framework.

- *Co-ordinate the Ottawa initiative with those of other cities.*

Ottawa should build on the experience of similar initiatives currently underway in a number of Canadian cities such as Toronto and Halifax. A number of innovative programs have been funded through the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Could those programs be undertaken in Ottawa? The recent announcement of Teachers Bridging Program sponsored by the Ontario College of Education, and World Skills is a good example of this approach.

- *Estimate level and possible sources of funding that would be required to run the Council on a more permanent basis.*

It was clear from the discussions that the issue of sustainability needs to be addressed if the issue of integration is to be adequately dealt with in both the short and the long term. In this context, it is essential to develop a good understanding of what is required to make the Council a reality.

- *Undertake local labour market analysis to help identify intervention priorities.*

While a proposed Leadership Council would likely be involved in all aspects of integrating internationally-trained workers into the Ottawa labour market, it clearly would not have the resources – nor would it be appropriate – to adopt a blanket approach to integration. In this context, it could make sense for it to focus its attention on the occupations for which there is current or anticipated demand AND an available pool of internationally-trained, unemployed or underemployed workers. This will require up-to-date local labour market information.

- *Carry out needs assessment activities for specific occupations or ethnic groups.*

While this project has shed much light about the specific barriers faced by certain occupational groups, there are gaps remaining in our knowledge of barriers faced by other occupational groups that attract a sizable proportion of internationally-trained workers. Likewise, it may be that some groups of internationally-trained workers as

defined by ethnic or linguistics characteristics face particular barriers that other groups don't face. In light of that, it may be appropriate to gather further evidence for these groups, with a view to design and implement appropriate labour market strategies.

Conclusion

The challenge will be to develop a framework that is transparent and welcoming to all the stakeholders. It will be important to define a strategy that fits all but is still flexible to accommodate individual needs. The future growth of the City of Ottawa will be dependent on the successful integration of the internationally-trained workers into the labour market. This will require a commitment of time and resources from all the stakeholders, as we all have a role to play.