FCR IN KEY SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY

ABSTRACT

This article outlines the role of sector councils in foreign credential recognition. Sector councils are permanent organizations that bring together key stakeholders in an industrial sector. The authors provide examples of some of the activities being undertaken by various councils.

Research suggests that by 2011, Canadians alone will be unable to fill the country's job openings, and immigration will be the source of all net labour force growth. In short, we are fast running out of people.

The recognition of newcomers' competencies and credentials is key to complete integration, both economically and socially. Immigrants face a complex process that includes an overseas application, settlement, and eventual entry into the workforce. Employers' recognition of newcomers' abilities, through a validation of their skills, competencies and credentials, is essential.

According to figures from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), in 2005, 156,310 newcomers arrived in Canada as Economic Immigrants, which includes skilled workers, business immigrants and those who enter under the Provincial and Territorial Nominee Program. There were also 99,141 newcomers to Canada through the Temporary Foreign Workers Program. Finally, another 99,120 immigrants came to Canada through the Family Class or Refugee programs. Newcomers in all of these categories provide a crucial labour supply for the Canadian economy.

Role of sector councils in foreign credential recognition

Sector councils are permanent organizations that bring together key stakeholders in an industrial sector. They typically involve five main partners: employers, employees, educators, governments and other relevant stakeholders (such as regulators). They work closely with the federal government, through Human Resources and Social Development Canada and CIC. Sector councils provide industry-driven labour solutions and are well-placed to provide key insights to governments on the demand for skilled workers in their industries.

Various sector councils have documented critical skills shortages in their industries. For example:

- The Canadian Trucking Human Resource Council estimates that they will require 37,000 truckers a year over the next five years;
- The Construction Sector Council forecasts that they will have 150,000 retiring workers between 2005 and 2014;
- The Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council projects there will be 300,000 new jobs over the next decade in their industry; and
- The Mining Industry Human Resource Council estimates that approximately 81,000 workers will be needed in the next decade.

The solution to these skills shortages lies both in the education of Canadians and in increased labour participation by immigrants. Young Canadians have not been educated and trained to sufficiently match the skills gaps that Canada now faces, and the results of a new, more focused approach to education and training will not be immediate. Immigration thus offers a partial solution. The efficient recognition of international training is a win-win situation for the immigrant and employer alike, and will allow Canada to remain competitive.

The industries represented by Canada's sector councils, numbered at more than 30, cover some 50% of the Canadian economy and require skilled workers at all points in the education and training spectrum. This includes lower-skilled and frontline workers, to mid-level skilled workers and tradespersons, to highly educated workers in business management, science, technology and international trade.

The Alliance of Sector Councils (TASC), through its Working Group on Foreign Credential Recognition and Immigration, brings sector councils together to address common issues and challenges in the integra-

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tion of internationally trained individuals into their industries. With the help of this Working Group, TASC has recently published *Who Does What in FCR*, a report that provides an overview of the wide range of federal, provincial, municipal, educational and other non-governmental organizations involved in the recognition of internationally trained workers.

Highlights from selected sector councils

Several councils have begun to address the recognition of foreign credentials and competencies. While foreign credentials are generally understood as paper-based qualifications, such as certifications or degrees, foreign competencies include work experience and other assets. The following is a thumbnail sketch of what some sector councils are doing to address the needs of their particular industries:

Canadian Aviation Maintenance Council (CAMC)

The CAMC has developed Prior Learning and Foreign Credential Assessment and Recognition System (PLFCAR), a program built on integrating two key processes: Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) and Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR).

Canadian Tourism Human Resources Council (CTHRC)

The CTHRC is conducting research on FCR for non-regulated professions. Areas of research include: overview of federal immigration programs; immigrant-serving agencies; educator engagement and review of existing credit transfer/credential recognition systems; review of foreign systems; review of regulatory practices; review of legal concerns in creating a FCR model; and employers' views.

Canadian Trucking Human Resources Council (CTHRC)

The Trucking Foreign Competency Recognition Project is designed to review Canada's need for foreign-trained workers in the trucking industry, to ensure that there exists a mechanism that recognizes the competencies of foreign-trained workers; and to establish a system to create seamless work transitions for new Canadians whose competencies have been recognized.

Environmental Careers Organization of Canada (ECO Canada)

ECO Canada's work includes the administration of a nationally recognized environmental certification program that demonstrates an environmental practitioner's level of competency to employers, clients and peers. A CEPIT designation verifies foreign credentials and allows newcomers to gain a Canadian designation, which increases their chances of employment (see Moss and Trump in this volume).

Information Communications Technology Council (ICTC)

ICTC developed a report on barriers to recruitment and integration of internationally educated professionals (IEPs) to better understand the issues as they pertain to Canada's ICT sector. In this first phase of the IEP initiative (entitled Building the IT Framework for Internationally Educated Professionals), ICTC has conducted research and developed partnerships to build a framework to enable Canada to become a worldwide leader in the attraction, retention and integration of IEPs into the ICT sector.

Construction Sector Council (CSC)

This council conducted a Study of Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Credentials in the construction industry and has established a Construction Industry Immigrant Employment Program.

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Canadian Plastics Sector Council (CPSC)

In early 2005, the CPSC engaged in a series of four consultation sessions, Profitability in Diversity, with plastics industry representatives as well as representatives of four employment groups: Aboriginal peoples, newcomers to Canada, persons with physical disabilities and women.

Textiles Human Resources Council (THRC)

The Foreign Workers Program will develop industry-wide surveys to benchmark the skills required in various textile occupations. Based on industry benchmarks, a survey tool is being developed to compare skills and experience of incoming foreign workers.

Canadian Automotive Repair and Service Council (CARS)

CARS' Research Study on Internationally Trained Workers is an in-depth study that investigates how well internationally trained automotive repair and service workers are able to integrate into the Canadian workforce, what supports are available to them and where gaps exist.

Two associate members of TASC, who work closely with all sector councils, also have projects underway. These include:

Canadian Council of Professional Engineers

The Canadian Council of Professional Engineers has introduced From Consideration to Integration (FC2I), aimed at developing new processes and/or improving current processes by which international engineering graduates (IEGs) are able to obtain an engineering licence without compromising public safety or lowering professional standards, and to find meaningful engineering employment (see Lemay in this volume).

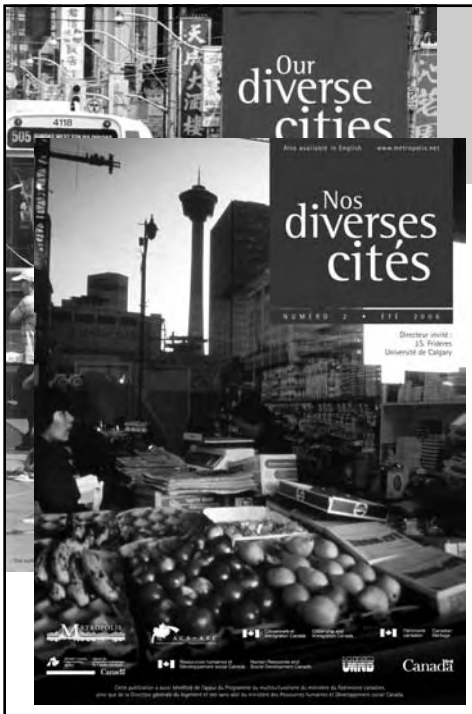
Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC)

ACCC has developed a program that will conduct pre-assessment of immigrants after they have been accepted to migrate, but before they leave their country of origin. Offices are being opened in New Delhi, Hong Kong and Manila. This is a pilot project that could be replicated elsewhere (see Murray in this volume).

For more information on any of these councils, please visit the TASC Website (www.councils.org), which features a listing of all sector councils and relevant links.

Conclusion

As a range of economic stakeholders now address the urgent need to bring in immigrants with a variety of skills, the debate has changed. Twenty years ago, foreign credential recognition was only about helping the immigrant in their new land. Today it has taken a major additional step as it has also become a matter of keen interest for business and hence for the Canadian economy. The opportunity for long-lasting solutions is enormous and should be seized.



Our Diverse Cities
Nos diverses cités

Our Diverse Cities is a special Metropolis series that examines issues related to diversity, integration and immigration in cities. Research findings, policy approaches and community-based initiatives are highlighted in concise articles contributed from across the country. Volume 1 (Spring 2004) focuses on immigration and diversity and its impact on larger Canadian cities. It includes articles on housing and homelessness, infrastructure and planning, policing and justice, parks and recreation, political participation, health, arts and culture, and demographics. Volume 2 (Spring 2006) focuses on immigration and diversity in so-called second- and third-tier Canadian cities. It includes cases studies from cities in every province and is aimed at increasing awareness about the impact and response to immigration and diversity in different sized cities. Two future volumes are planned. One will look at immigration to cities in Ontario, while another will look at immigration to small towns and rural communities. The series has been disseminated to more than 60,000 policy-makers, researchers and NGOs. It has also been assigned as course reading in university classes across the country.

Nos diverses cités est une série spéciale de Metropolis qui examine les questions liées à la diversité, à l'intégration et à l'immigration dans les villes. Les résultats des études, les approches politiques et les initiatives communautaires sont mis en évidence dans des articles concis auxquels contribuent des personnes de tout le pays. Le volume 1 (printemps 2004) porte sur l'immigration et la diversité et leurs répercussions sur les grandes villes canadiennes. Il comprend des articles sur le logement et les sans-abri, l'infrastructure et la planification, le maintien de l'ordre et la justice, les parcs et les loisirs, la participation politique, la santé, les arts et la culture, ainsi que la démographie. Le volume 2 printemps 2006) porte sur l'immigration et la diversité dans les villes canadiennes de taille moyenne et de petite taille. Il comprend des études de cas de villes de chaque province et vise à accroître la sensibilité à l'égard de l'impact et de la réponse à l'immigration et à la diversité dans les villes de différentes tailles. Deux futurs volumes sont prévus. L'un portera sur l'immigration dans les villes de l'Ontario, et l'autre, sur l'immigration dans les petites villes et collectivités rurales. Cette série a été distribuée à plus de 60 000 décideurs, chercheurs et ONG. Elle a également été distribuée comme documents à lire pour des cours universitaires, dans tout le pays.

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