



**Kwantlen**  
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

**Access to Trades for Internationally  
Trained Tradespersons**

**FINAL REPORT**

Prepared by Jas Parmar  
June 2003

Funded by the Ministry of Community,  
Aboriginal and Women's Services



BRITISH  
COLUMBIA

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Purpose and Scope.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Project Approach .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Advisory Committee .....	4
Central Questions .....	5
Selection of Interview Participants.....	5
Profile of Interview Participants .....	6
<b>Project Findings and Analysis.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Experience with Assessing International Trades Qualifications .....	6
Process for Assessing International Trades Qualifications .....	7
<i>Review of Documents .....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Conducting Interviews.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Examination Process.....</i>	<i>10</i>
Successful Strategies Used to Assess International Trades Qualifications.....	12
Ineffective Strategies Used to Assess International Trades Qualifications.....	12
Most Common Countries of Origin for Internationally Trained Tradespersons.....	13
Resources for Benchmarking International Trades Credentials against Canadian Standards .....	13
Awareness of Related Projects and Initiatives.....	13
Language.....	13
<i>Trade-Specific Terminology.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Reading and Writing Skills .....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Communication Skills.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Exam Writing Skills .....</i>	<i>14</i>
Assessment Procedures That Support Internationally Trained Tradespersons.....	15
<i>Practical Exams .....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Self-Assessment Tools.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Use of Interpreters .....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Temporary Qualification / Permit.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<b>Related Projects, Papers, and Initiatives.....</b>	<b>16</b>
Ontario .....	16
<i>Bridges to Employment Program.....</i>	<i>16</i>

<i>Preparation for Apprenticeship, Trades and Technology (PATT) Program</i> .....	17
<i>Occupational Fact Sheets</i> .....	19
Manitoba .....	19
<i>Manitoba Qualifications Recognition Initiative</i> .....	19
<i>Language Benchmarking</i> .....	19
British Columbia.....	20
<b>Recommendations for Successful Assessment Strategies .....</b>	<b>20</b>
Fact Sheets.....	20
Interviews.....	20
Documents.....	21
Written Exams.....	21
Practical Exams .....	21
<b>Recommendations for Appropriate Responses .....</b>	<b>21</b>
Trade-Specific English Language Upgrading .....	21
<i>Implications</i> .....	22
Trades Benchmarking Data Bank.....	22
<i>Implications</i> .....	22
Practical Assessment Tests .....	23
<i>Implications</i> .....	23
Bridging Pilot Program .....	23
<i>Implications</i> .....	24
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>24</b>
Appendix I.....	25
<i>Role of Advisory Committee</i> .....	25
Appendix II.....	26
<i>Interview Questions</i> .....	26
Appendix III.....	27
<i>Introduction Letter</i> .....	27
Appendix IV.....	28
<i>Interview Consent Form</i> .....	28
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>30</b>

## **Executive Summary**

### **Purpose and Scope**

Kwantlen University College initiated the Access to Trades for Internationally Trained Tradespersons project in order to address the impending industry specific skills shortage by providing strategies for a smooth transition of international tradespersons into the Canadian labour market. This project is the first phase of a potentially four-phase project and is funded by the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services.

The overall goal of the Access to Trades project is to enhance the access and success rate of internationally trained tradespersons applying for apprenticeship and writing trades qualification examinations. This report examines the issues related to accessing the electrical, carpentry, plumbing, and refrigeration trades in BC. These four trades have both national and provincial codes and knowledge of these codes is imperative for success in entry to practice.

This report summarizes and analyzes perspectives on assessment strategies provided through interviews. Next, a review of projects, papers, and initiatives linked to the issue of internationally trained tradespersons is outlined. Following, it provides recommendations for successful assessment strategies. Finally, recommendations for appropriate responses to meet the needs of internationally trained tradespersons are presented.

### **Project Approach and Findings**

A project Advisory Committee was formed to include stakeholders who could guide the project process. Eleven individuals who had experience in conducting assessments were interviewed in person in order to obtain perspectives and experiences on assessing international qualifications. The interview questions were structured with respect to three central questions: (1) What strategies have been used by key trades individuals to assess internationally trained tradespersons? (2) What have been the primary challenges and successes related to utilizing the current strategies? (3) What are the key factors that need to be considered in developing recommendations for appropriate assessment strategies and responses to meet the needs of internationally trained tradespersons?

The project findings indicate that despite the fact that no specific assessment tool is used to assess the qualifications of internationally trained tradespersons, there appears to be consensus on the components of the assessment process. The general steps in assessing the training and experience of internationally trained tradespersons include reviewing documents, conducting interviews, and written and oral exams.

All of the participants interviewed identified the interview process as the most valuable and effective method to gather background information, assess internationally trained tradespersons, and to establish an understanding about their trade. Participants identified the sole use of written technical exams to be ineffective in assessing the tradespersons' complete abilities within their trade. Also, the lack of a formal assessment process was described as being ineffective. Although the lack of formal assessments gives flexibility and latitude to the person conducting assessment, participants indicated that without a consistent assessment procedure, inconsistent assessment results could be obtained.

Ninety per cent of the interview participants reported that they are unaware of any existing resources for benchmarking international trades qualifications against Canadian standards. Ten out of eleven participants indicated that they are unaware of any recent or current projects related to the issue of internationally trained tradespersons.

Insufficient English language skills were consistently identified as an impeding factor on successfully accessing trades qualifications or retraining programs. The common language challenges reported were trade-specific terminology, reading and writing skills, communication skills, and exam writing skills.

In order to get a broad and current perspective on projects addressing the issue of international qualifications recognition, most recent related initiatives in Ontario, Manitoba, and British Columbia were reviewed. There are several key projects in the provinces of Ontario and Manitoba that are related to this project. The province of Ontario is currently funding the delivery of two bridging initiatives, which are specifically targeting trade occupations. These are the Bridges to Employment Program and the Preparation for Apprenticeship, Trades and Technology (PATT) Program. Both of these initiatives involved key stakeholders, including regulatory bodies, employers, community organizations, and educational institutions to guide the project processes. Both programs produced how-to-manuals, which are excellent resources that can be utilized as a model to develop projects targeting the trades.

The most recent related initiative is currently being developed in the province of Manitoba. The government of Manitoba has taken a leadership role in developing a strategy to address the issues of international qualifications recognition. A Ministerial Committee on Qualifications Recognition was established and an extensive consultation process occurred. The Committee produced an interim report titled *Manitoba Qualifications Recognition Initiative*, which was released June 2003. This report outlines several guiding principles for a framework for Manitoba's strategy on qualifications recognition. Also in Manitoba, Red River College has completed a number of benchmarking projects, whereby the language demands of six occupations have been benchmarked. The reports from these projects expressly outline the process requirement to benchmark an occupation. This approach could be used for any trade.

## Recommendations

Although there are no standardized assessment procedures for assessing the qualifications of internationally trained tradespersons, there are some similarities in how assessments are currently being conducted. Based on the successes and challenges experienced in conducting assessments, a number of effective strategies are recommended. These strategies include the development of fact sheets, use of interviews, review of documents, written exams, and practical examinations. The use of these strategies can provide a holistic and accurate assessment of the experiences and training of internationally trained tradespersons.

In addition to adopting these assessment strategies, there is a need to develop flexible and innovative programs that support the integration of internationally trained tradespersons into the trades industry. There are a number of possible approaches that can be used to address the needs of internationally trained tradespersons. Such approaches are trade-specific English language upgrading classes, trades benchmarking data bank, practical assessment tests, and a bridging pilot program. The findings of this report can inform the

goals and objectives of subsequent phases of this project, which will enable internationally trained tradespersons to overcome the challenges of attaining recognition of their international qualifications, access employment within their related trade, and contribute to BC's industry.

## Purpose and Scope

Kwantlen University College initiated the Access to Trades for Internationally Trained Tradespersons project in order to address the impending industry specific skills shortage by providing strategies for a smooth transition of international tradespersons into the Canadian labour market. This project is the first phase of a potentially four-phase project and is funded by the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services.

The overall goal of the Access to Trades project is to enhance the access and success rate of internationally trained tradespersons applying for apprenticeship and writing trades qualification examinations. The purpose of the project is to research and recommend a process for appropriate responses to meet the needs of internationally trained tradespersons.

The specific project activities and outputs are:

- ❖ To conduct interviews with key trades personnel
- ❖ To summarize responses from the interviews and analyze collected data
- ❖ To identify resources required to benchmark trades credentials against Canadian standards
- ❖ To collect data on related projects, papers, and initiatives and identify linkages with related national / provincial level initiatives
- ❖ To make recommendations related to successful assessment strategies
- ❖ To make recommendations related to appropriate responses to meet the needs of internationally trained tradespersons

## Project Approach

This report summarizes and analyzes perspectives on assessment strategies provided through interviews. Next, a review of projects, papers, and initiatives linked to the issue of internationally trained tradespersons is outlined. Following, it provides recommendations related to successful assessment strategies. Finally, recommendations for appropriate responses to meet the needs of internationally trained tradespersons are presented.

This report examines the issues related to accessing the following four trades in BC:

- Electrical
- Carpentry
- Plumbing
- Refrigeration

These four trades have both national and provincial codes and knowledge of these codes is imperative for success in entry to practice.

It has been well documented <sup>1</sup> that immigrants face numerous challenges in entering their professions and trades in Canada. Following are examples of some barriers immigrants face in obtaining trades certification and employment:

- Canadian code information  
Lack of knowledge of municipal, provincial, and national Canadian codes creates a barrier in successfully completing apprenticeships and trades qualifications challenges.
- English language skills  
Insufficient language proficiency can be a major obstacle in accessing trades qualifications, training, and employment, as well as integration into the workplace.
- Recognition of international work experience  
The lack of recognition of international work experience and the cost and time required for assessments and retraining can result in underemployment or employment in an unrelated field.
- Lack of information on health, safety, and Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) Act  
Lack of knowledge on specific WCB regulations pertaining to the trade, such as WHMIS and the Transportation of Dangerous Goods, can result in potential safety concerns.

It should be noted that this report does not attempt to further identify the barriers faced by immigrants.

### **Advisory Committee**

During the initial stage of the project, it was determined that the project would benefit from the input of key individuals who are familiar with the issues related to internationally trained tradespersons accessing trades in BC. A project Advisory Committee was formed to include stakeholders who could guide the project process. In order to ensure a broad representation on the Advisory Committee, individuals from the electrical, plumbing, refrigeration, and carpentry trades and funders from the both the provincial and federal levels of government were contacted.

The following stakeholders agreed to participate as committee members:

- Harpreet Bachra, Training Consultant, Kwantlen University College
- Manjit Brar, Program Officer, Human Resources Development Canada, Surrey
- Matt Buss, Director of Training, Joint Apprentice Refrigeration Training School Ltd. (JARTS)
- Ron Coreau, Director of Venture Programs, Kwantlen University College
- Rod Goy, Training Director, IBEW Local 213 / E.C.A. of BC – Electrical Construction Industry Joint Training Committee
- Sue Grewal, Program Consultant, Human Resources Development Canada, BC / Yukon Region, Employment Programs Branch
- Ian Hodgetts, (Former) Supervisor, Trade Certification Programs, Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.mcaws.gov.bc.ca/amip/igp/research\\_reports.htm](http://www.mcaws.gov.bc.ca/amip/igp/research_reports.htm)

- Gerry Lengert, Dean, Applied Technology, Trades & Career Technical, Kwantlen University College
- Collin Mercer, Acting Manager, International Qualifications Program, Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services
- Veronica Osborn, Industry Training Coordinator, Industry Training Branch, Ministry of Advanced Education
- Bill Walters, Director, Settlement and Multiculturalism Branch, Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services
- Bob Whitaker, Coordinator, Carpentry Apprenticeship & Training Committee

The key function of the committee members was to act as resource persons and to advise and support the project in meeting its objectives and deliverables. The role of the committee members was defined and discussed at the first meeting (see Appendix I).

### **Central Questions**

A list of open-ended questions was developed and finalized with feedback from the Advisory Committee members. The interview questions were structured to obtain perspectives and experiences on assessing internationally trained tradespersons (see Appendix II).

A total of fourteen questions were asked during the interviews. The questions were structured to address the following central questions:

1. What strategies have been used by key trades individuals, experienced in conducting assessments, to assess internationally trained tradespersons?
2. What have been the primary challenges and successes related to utilizing the current strategies?
3. What are the key factors that need to be considered in developing recommendations for appropriate assessment strategies and responses to meet the needs of internationally trained tradespersons?

### **Selection of Interview Participants**

Members of the Advisory Committee were asked to identify key individuals who had experience in conducting assessments of internationally trained tradesperson. During the interviews, participants were asked an additional question, *"Is there anyone else that we should interview or contact regarding this project?"*

An introduction letter (see Appendix III) was sent via email to the individuals identified by the Advisory Committee members. The letter was followed up with a telephone call to clarify or answer any questions and to determine willingness to participate in the interview. Prior to the interview, copies of the Consent Form (see Appendix IV) and the list of Interview Questions were emailed to the participants.

Eleven individuals were interviewed in person, and the interview sessions were audiotaped. The interviews ranged from 45 to 90 minutes in length. The tapes were transcribed for the purposes of analysis.

## Profile of Interview Participants

Following is the background profiles of the eleven individuals interviewed:

1. All eleven of the individuals interviewed have a background in trades. Two individuals identified themselves as internationally trained tradespersons.
2. The following occupations were represented:
  - Carpenter
  - Electrician
  - Plumber
  - Refrigeration Mechanic
  - Automotive Mechanic
  - Automotive Service Technician
  - Dry Wall Finisher
  - Floor Covering / Carpet Installer
  - Glazier
  - Mechanic / Machinist
  - Steep Roofer
3. The following organizations were represented:
  - Carpentry Apprenticeship & Training Committee
  - IBEW Local 213 / E.C.A. of BC – Electrical Construction Industry Joint Training Committee
  - Industry Training Centre
  - Former Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission (ITAC)
  - Joint Apprentice Refrigeration Training School Ltd. (JARTS)
  - Kwantlen University College
  - Pacific Vocational College
  - Roofing Contractors Association of BC (RCABC)
  - T.R.A.D.E.S. – Trade Referral Assessment, Direct Employment Strategy

## Project Findings and Analysis

The following is a summary and analysis of the perspectives and experiences provided by the project participants during the interview sessions. This section of the report is structured with reference to the interview questions.

### Experience with Assessing International Trades Qualifications

All eleven of the individuals interviewed reported having some experience in reviewing international qualifications. However, the extent of the experience varied amongst individuals. Four individuals stated that their experience in reviewing international qualifications was limited and, as a result, they frequently directed internationally trained tradespersons to the Industry Training Centre for the purpose of having their qualifications

reviewed. Participants who indicated having limited experience in conducting assessments stated:

*I haven't done a lot of assessments to be quite honest. Again, with a compulsory trade, they have to be assessed and then pass the provincial trade qualification exam. Most of the contact I've had is with persons coming in (...) and are looking for information on how to transfer their qualifications to BC. I will give them what information I can, and it usually means directing them to the apprenticeship branch.*

*In the past, my experience has been that an ITAC counsellor is responsible for this. A lot of people come to me for test preparation, rather than an assessment.*

*It is difficult to place those people (...) I would certainly refer them to an entry-level trades program. So at least they have some job ready skills when they leave the program. So I refer them to an entry level, [with the] understanding if they successfully graduate, I can bring them into an apprenticeship.*

All of the individuals interviewed identified the Industry Training Centre (formally Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission) as the most likely place where tradespersons have their qualifications reviewed. It is imperative that internationally trained tradespersons have their qualifications assessed in order to determine if they are eligible to write a qualifying examination. The reason provided for this was that, as required by the Industry Training and Apprenticeship Act, if someone wanted to work in a compulsory trade, they must hold a Certificate of Qualification (C of Q). Despite this requirement, four participants stated that many new immigrants do not know the process involved in attaining a Certificate of Qualification in BC. Furthermore, the participants stated that some new immigrants are not aware of the existence and role of the Industry Training Centre.

### **Process for Assessing International Trades Qualifications**

Ten out of the eleven participants stated that no specific assessment tool was used for assessing international qualifications. Four participants stated that it was important to distinguish between the process for reviewing qualifications in order to determine eligibility to become certified in BC and the actual examination process. Five participants expressed that the assessment was not the examination itself, but rather, it was the process that led to the written exam.

Generally, all of the individuals interviewed outlined a similar protocol for assessing and reviewing international qualifications. Five participants indicated that the review of qualifications and experience was carried out in the same manner as it would be for someone coming to BC from another province. All of the individuals interviewed concurred that the purpose of the assessment was to determine what the person had previously done. In doing so, the assessment generally begins with finding out what training and work experience the person has from their previous country.

Despite the fact that no specific assessment tool is used to assess the qualifications of internationally trained tradespersons, there appears to be consensus on the components of the assessment process. With varying detail, nine participants described the following steps in assessing the training and experience of internationally trained tradespersons:

## Review of Documents

Participants reported that whether internationally trained tradespersons apply for a Certificate of Qualification, an apprenticeship program, or an entry-level training program, tradespersons need to provide written documentation to demonstrate their previous training and work experience. All of the participants stated the key aspect of the assessment was determining the hands-on experience of the person. In the case of applying to write a C of Q examination, internationally trained tradespersons also complete an application form. The assessment begins with a review of the application and the documents provided in order to determine the type and length of training and work experience the individual has from their previous country. These documents include letters from employers and certificates of training or apprenticeship. The primary purpose of this step is to determine whether the documentation proves that the individual was in fact a tradesperson for at least the required qualifying time. With respect to educational institutions, the documents are reviewed in order to determine the appropriateness of the training and the applicant's readiness for a training program.

Four participants reported that in cases where the applicant was close to meeting the eligibility requirements to challenge an examination, they would inform the applicant of what further documentation was required. Seven out of eleven participants also stated that in certain circumstances where applicants, such as refugees, were unable to provide documentation supporting their training and work experience, statutory declarations were accepted at times. In such cases, the assessor would outline the process for obtaining a statutory declaration.

## *Challenges*

The interview participants identified the following challenges related to reviewing applications and documents:

- ❖ Many internationally trained tradespersons are confused about how trades are organized and designated in Canada. For example, what they understand to be an automotive mechanic in their home country can be quite different from what an automotive mechanic actually does here in Canada. As a result, internationally trained tradespersons may apply for a Certificate of Qualification for the inappropriate trade or training program.
- ❖ Prior to coming to Canada, many internationally trained tradespersons are not aware that they will need letters of documentation from their employer(s). Most tradespersons arrive with letters of reference, which do not detail their work experience and length of service.
- ❖ Many of the documents that immigrants bring with them need to be translated. Those documents that are translated in the home country are often more difficult to understand. Many new immigrants are unaware of services that assist in translating their documents. One participant stated:

*Generally, if the translation is done in China or India, for example, the translation may not be straight across. Whereas if it was done here in Canada, then the translations seem to be easier to understand. In order to do an accurate assessment, the documents must be understandable.*

- ❖ Three of the eleven participants stated that although a statutory declaration was sometimes the only means for someone to demonstrate their training and work experience, in some cases there was a question about the validity of some of the declarations submitted. Two participants stated that this was particularly an issue when the declaration reflected the exact training and work experience required.
- ❖ Six of the eleven participants reported that they had encountered situations where falsified documents had been submitted. This posed the challenge on the part of the person reviewing the documents in establishing the knowledge and ability to recognize what type of documents were being issued from what country. This issue was qualified by the statement that although the falsification of documents did not happen frequently, it did occur from time to time.

### Conducting Interviews

Seven participants stated that review of the application and documents alone does not provide sufficient information to achieve an accurate understanding about the background of the applicant. Consequently, an informal interview with the internationally trained tradesperson is often necessary. The primary purpose of the interview is once again to ascertain the training and work experience of the applicant. By asking information-seeking questions, all eleven participants stated that they were able to clarify any questions about the documents submitted and gain an understanding of the type of work the individual was involved in. Participants made the following comments about the role of informal interviews:

*Well, I sit down and I ask the person: What is your experience? Tell me about your experience. Give me your resume. By talking to them one-to-one, I determine what the next step should be.*

*Sometimes, because of translation and unclear documentation, what we think the person may be eligible for, is maybe not what he or she actually did. I'll give you an example of that. I had a translated document from Bulgaria, which said the person is an ironworker. He was actually an auto mechanic. But because of the translation, it was translated in Bulgaria, instead of coming to Canada to be translated into English. So the translation wasn't quite right. We often talk to the people themselves and ask them what they actually did.*

*I look for technical training that they have received. Even the way it's worded, it may be hard to make a comparison. They'll have a date and title on a certificate or possibly even a transcript, which may or may not give me enough information to make a comparison between their education and our program. So I will try to supplement that with an interview and try to fill in some of the blanks to see what they've done.*

All of the participants indicated that the interview process is an integral component of the assessment procedure in determining what the applicant actually did in their previous country. Nine of the eleven participants stated that interview process enabled them, as the assessor, to identify the trade equivalence between the home country and Canada. In respect to matching trades, one participant made the following comments:

*Occasionally we would bring in representatives from the industry to sit with us and, in their opinion, tell us whether or not a person falls within a particular trade category. We would often find that the person is trained in only one aspect of the trade, and we were not sure if they'll be able to function in the capacity of a fully trained tradesperson.*

All eleven participants stated that when the English language skills of the applicant impacted their ability to take part in an interview, applicants were permitted to use an interpreter. It was reported that applicants would frequently bring in a child, friend, or relative to interpret on their behalf.

### *Challenges*

The interview participants identified the following challenges related to conducting interviews:

- ❖ Parallel to the internationally trained tradespersons' lack of understanding about trade designations in Canada, many participants identified their lack of understanding about how trades are organized in certain countries. As a result, seven participants reported that this limited their ability to establish an equivalency between the international qualifications to BC qualifications. However, six participants did state that when they did encounter this challenge, they would use the support of some key personnel, within ITAC, who had over the years through experience developed a level of expertise on apprenticeship systems in certain countries.
- ❖ The successful assessment of international qualifications is often dependent on the experience of the person conducting the assessment. Without a consistent assessment procedure for reviewing international documents and conducting interviews, the assessment process can result in inconsistent outcomes. One individual made the following comment about conducting interviews:

*I think interviews are the most valuable, but again you had to do a really good job. We had an example of somebody who was assessed as a commercial transport mechanic. He didn't work out, couldn't do the work, and was fired from a number of jobs. He passed the test, but wasn't a commercial transport mechanic. So we finally sat down and had a long chat and realized that he was a millwright, but because of the terminology that was used and whoever did the initial interview did not pursue it far enough. So the problem with the verbal assessment is that it depends on the thoroughness and the knowledge of the person doing the interview.*

- ❖ Nine participants reported that the English language ability of the applicant was an influencing factor on the success of the interview. Although the use of interpreters was permitted and often encouraged by the person conducting the assessment, seven participants reported that, at times, it was still a challenge to get the right information from the applicant. The primary reason provided for this was the issues of specific trades language required to describe the job duties.

### Examination Process

Six out of eleven participants described that the examination process was the most formal component of the assessment procedure. Four individuals stated that when determining

eligibility to write the qualifying examination, they preferred to give the applicant the benefit of the doubt since the actual examination was the last step in which the applicant had to demonstrate that they have the technical skills in the trade.

Six participants reported that when the applicant is not able to successfully pass the examination due to language barriers, assistance during exams was permitted. However, the applicant had to demonstrate, by being unsuccessful on their own, that they required an assisted exam. In such cases, the applicant was responsible for providing their own interpreter. Eight participants reported that often the interpreter was a family member or a friend. The interpreters had to provide a notarized document stating that they are not a tradesworker or have knowledge or experience in that particular trade. However, when individuals use the assistance of an interpreter to write an exam, they are eligible for BC certification only. According to the Interprovincial Standards (Red Seal) Program's requirements, assisted exams are not permitted. The Red Seal certification provides greater mobility for tradespersons across Canada.

On rare occasions, when the person is unsuccessful in completing the exam even with the use of an interpreter, an oral exam is administered. Through this process, the exam is administered orally by an examining board member. A sampling of 33 per cent of the questions from the Interprovincial Examination is administered, totaling approximately 32 to 40 questions. Similar to the written exam, an interpreter can be used to assist during an oral exam.

For one particular trade, one of the interview participants reported that a standard entrance exam is used for individuals applying for an apprenticeship. An interview is not conducted, and the exam is used instead as a diagnostic tool. In cases when the individual is not successful at achieving the required 75 per cent, one participant stated:

*I give them a diagnostic sheet, which they take to someone who could help them with those specific areas.*

When determining the training needs of applicants, in addition to conducting an informal interview, one participant stated:

*Quite often, I would give them an exam to write, or part of an exam. I then evaluate how they did on the exam in order to determine what training or test preparation is needed.*

### *Challenges*

- ❖ Although applicants are permitted to use an interpreter when completing an examination, an interpreter who is not familiar with the trade cannot effectively translate the terms, since some trades terminology is very specific to the trade. As a result, six out eleven interview participants stated that the success rate of completing an examination with an interpreter is extremely low.
- ❖ Seven participants stated that a written exam measures only the individual's technical knowledge. Since written exams do not measure the applicant's practical skills, many participants stated that this tool measured only one aspect of the applicant's abilities.

## Successful Strategies Used to Assess International Trades Qualifications

Through the interviews, participants identified the following as the most successful aspects of the assessment process used:

1. All of the participants interviewed identified the interview process as the most valuable and effective method to gather background information, assess internationally trained tradespersons, and to establish an understanding about their trade. Despite possible language barriers, eight participants reported the interviews, with the assistance of interpreters, were the best method to establish an accurate understanding of the international qualifications. Referring to the interview process, one participant stated:

*That was probably the best way to determine what they did. They're usually happy to talk about their experiences and where they have been. So generally, you get a straight answer. That was probably more useful than looking at the certificate itself, because each country would be quite different.*

2. Six out eleven participants stated the combination of both reviewing the documents and conducting informal interviews was an effective approach in gaining an understanding about the background of the applicant.

## Ineffective Strategies Used to Assess International Trades Qualifications

From their experience in conducting assessments, the interview participants described the following as the ineffective aspects of the assessment process used:

1. Five out eleven participants identified the use of interpreters to write the examination to be ineffective. Seven participants stated that, since trade language can be very specific to the trade, it would be virtually impossible for someone outside of the trade to translate accurately. Furthermore, having an interpreter to interpret every question became a very time-consuming process, hence making it difficult to complete the exam in time. Also, four participants commented that the need for an interpreter to write the exam raised the question as to how the individual would function on the work site. One participant commented:

*So the other issue around that is if the individual needed an interpreter to pass the exam, how would they be able to communicate on the job? This could raise safety issues for the employee.*

2. Five participants identified the sole use of written technical exams to be ineffective in assessing the tradesperson's complete abilities within their trade. More specifically, they stated that the written exam gives no indication of the person's practical capabilities. One participant stated:

*The written exam demonstrates only the trade knowledge as opposed to the trade skill. Someone may be able to get through an exam and not be able perform in the workplace. A written exam will not tell you this.*

3. Four out of eleven participants commented that the lack of a formal assessment process was ineffective. Although the lack of formal assessments gives flexibility and latitude to

the person conducting an assessment, without a consistent assessment procedure for reviewing international documents and conducting interviews, inconsistent assessment results can be obtained.

### **Most Common Countries of Origin for Internationally Trained Tradespersons**

The participants identified China, Taiwan, India, and the Philippines as the top four countries of origin for internationally trained tradespersons. This was based on the observations of the individuals interviewed as no statistical information about the backgrounds of international tradespersons is maintained by their respective organizations.

### **Resources for Benchmarking International Trades Credentials against Canadian Standards**

Ten of the eleven individuals interviewed reported that they are unaware of any existing resources for benchmarking international trades qualifications against Canadian standards.

One individual stated that he is aware of the International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES) provided by the Open Learning Agency, which offers some credential evaluation services with a focus on academic credentials.

### **Awareness of Related Projects and Initiatives**

All eleven participants indicated that they are unaware of any recent or current projects related to the issue of internationally trained tradespersons.

One individual identified the Human Resources Development Canada's (HRDC) Essential Skills Research Initiative, although it is not specifically related to international credentials. This research outlines the required primary skills for some 180 occupations. Skill areas included are reading, writing, numeracy, and thinking skills. Detailed information regarding the Essential Skills research project is available on HRDC's web site at: <http://www15.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/english/general/es.asp>.

### **Language**

In their experiences with assessing internationally trained tradespersons, all of the participants identified English language skills as an impeding factor on successfully attaining a Certificate of Qualification or accessing training programs.

#### Trade-Specific Terminology

All of the participants identified technical / trade-specific language as the most common language challenge for internationally trained tradespersons. This insufficiency can be as basic as being unable to identify trade names to being unable to interpret trade codes. In respect to the challenges of interpreting codes, participants stated:

*They come here and they are introduced to conversational and functional English. But trades language is very different. Even people coming from England or Australia, where English is spoken, find the terminology to be different. Also, in*

*many of these particular trades there are codes involved. Code books are specific to Canada and are not easy to work with.*

*They just don't have the language skills. If there is an interpretation in the code book that we may take for granted, often they just don't get it.*

Within the four trades – electrical, plumbing, carpentry and refrigeration – there are several code books for each trade. For example, in the refrigeration trade, three code books are used: refrigeration code, electrical code, and gas code. In order to work in these particular trades, the tradesperson must be able to read and interpret the code book.

### Reading and Writing Skills

Eight out of eleven individuals identified that they have frequently observed many internationally trained tradespersons to have low reading and writing skills and high speaking skills. One person stated:

*There is a huge gap between oral and written skills. In many cases, the written English skills are not even recognizable. For example, I had a person from Kenya and I could understand him perfectly well. However, he couldn't read four words of English. That was probably the worst case scenario that I ever ran across, but the same kind of disparities existed in many different people.*

Five participants stated that reading and writing skills are as important as oral skills. The primary reason provided was the possibility of safety concerns. One participant stated:

*They really do need the basic literacy skills. In the workplace, you must be able to read and understand safety bulletins.*

### Communication Skills

In addition, four participants identified the increasing need for good communication skills for all tradespersons. With the four particular trades becoming increasingly service-based industries, many tradespersons are required to have the language skills to deal with customers, wholesalers, and employers. Referring to the communication skills of internationally trained tradespersons, one participant stated:

*Initially the training program for most of these people is one-to-one tutoring. Having a person who does not have English as a first language sitting in a class of people that are fluent in English is very difficult for them.*

### Exam Writing Skills

Furthermore, one participant suggested that exam writing skills should also be taught. He stated that:

*For many individuals, they have never written a multiple-choice exam. Multiple-choice exams can be tricky even for those whose first language is English. It would be useful to give them the practice and skills to write multiple-choice exams.*

## Assessment Procedures That Support Internationally Trained Tradespersons

Given the opportunity to develop an assessment that would support the needs of internationally trained tradespersons, participants stated that they would include the following:

### Practical Exams

Participants most commonly stated that they would include a practical test in the assessment process. Referring to the value of a practical testing, the participants made the following comments:

*One of the things I always felt was limited or lacking was that there was no practical component to that evaluation. Although a person might be very intelligent, we still don't know if he is skilled. Or he might be very skilled and not very intelligent when it comes to writing an English language technical test.*

*I would bring in practical testing. You couldn't do it for all trades, but practical tests could be used for the more hands-on trades. The welder program is actually a good program to look at just the way it's designed simply because it does cover theory and practical, and it is also done in components.*

*Practical testing is the absolute best way to do it. If you did a practical, you can tell if the person can actually do the work. But practical exams are expensive and at what level do you test, which is another issue.*

*Although it could be very expensive, but if you could have somebody show up in a room where all the materials are there and give him a real lab that required him to run through some of the questions that might be asked on the Interprovincial Exam. This would allow him to show his ability to use a code.*

Nine out of eleven participants concurred that ideally adding a practical component to the assessment of internationally trained tradespersons would support them to demonstrate their hands-on skills. At the same time, the participants raised a concern about the time, resources, and costs related to carrying out practical tests.

### Self-Assessment Tools

In order to support internationally trained tradespersons, two participants stated they would develop a self-assessment tool for tradeworkers. This tool would enable a tradesperson to identify how their experience and training fits into the trades system in BC. They would also be able to identify any gaps in their training and determine how to address those gaps. Referring to a self-assessment tool, one participant stated:

*Maybe it would be like a curriculum that they go through and say, do we do this or this I have done. How much have I done? Maybe it's some sample exams for those levels of the trade. And actually, welding does this very well. They have learning guides and modules that have learning objectives. At the end of the learning objectives, it has a self-exam. So they are great and I wish they were available for all trades.*

### Use of Interpreters

Five participants stated that if use of interpreters is permitted for writing exams, they would support the use of interpreters who are aware of the trade terminology. It was suggested that a pool of professional interpreters who have knowledge about common trade terminology be available. Referring to the policy that the interpreter can not be related to the trades, one participant commented:

*I understand why they have done it, trying to ensure he's not coaching them. But if they speak the trade language, I think that is more valuable. I speak Spanish, but I couldn't possibly write a Spanish automotive exam.*

### Temporary Qualification / Permit

One participant stated that given the opportunity, he would implement the ability to issue a temporary qualification recognition permit. He stated:

*A person is either qualified or they are not – there is no halfway. There has to be some form of integration. And so I think a temporary qualification or permit offering some recognition would allow them to go to an employer and say here, I have already been through an assessment process, and I've been recognized officially in this trade. Although the person wouldn't have done the exam, their skills are recognized, and it would give them an opportunity to work in the industry.*

The temporary permit would enable the person to get Canadian work experience and learn about the specifics of the trade. When the person is ready, they would challenge the exam and obtain full qualification in the trade.

## **Related Projects, Papers, and Initiatives**

In order to get a broad and current perspective on projects addressing the issue of international qualification recognition, most recent related initiatives in both BC and other provinces were reviewed. There are a number of projects, both current and complete, in the provinces of Ontario and Manitoba that are related to internationally trained tradespersons.

### **Ontario**

There are currently eleven bridging initiatives underway across the province of Ontario. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities funds these projects, through the Access to Professions and Trades Division. Of the eleven projects, there are two initiatives that are specifically targeting trade occupations:

#### Bridges to Employment Program

The Bridges to Employment<sup>2</sup> project targets general machinists, mould makers, patterns makers, tool and die makers, and machine tool builders / integrators. Georgian College, located in Simcoe County, is currently completing the delivery of this project. The main goal of this initiative was to address the identified shortage in precision machining and tooling

<sup>2</sup> Georgian College of Applied Arts and Technology, *Bridges to Employment: How-to Process Guide*, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Government of Ontario. March 2003.

tradespeople in Ontario. The program prepared participants to get ready for and challenge the Certification of Qualification, or level 1 and 2 exemptions of apprenticeship training.

At the on-set of the program, participants were assessed in order to determine skill levels and possible gaps. As a result of this assessment, individual training plans were developed to address any deficiencies identified.

The following are the delivery components of the program:

- Prior Learning Assessment
- English language training
- Skills training
- Job placement
- Assistance in finding full-time employment

As part of the project requirements, a *How-to Process Guide* was developed and structured in such a manner that other organizations could use the project model to develop similar programs. The key learnings identified in the manual are as follows:

- During recruitment for the program, a low number of actual machinists applied for the program. Instead, a majority of the applicants were engineers. As a result, at the onset of the project, the program was modified in order to accommodate the wide range of skills of the participants. Although the primary goal of assisting participants to attain certification was maintained, the secondary goal of finding job placements that would result in an apprenticeship was determined.
- The second key learning identified was the need to provide financial support to participants in order to enable them to attend classes on a full-time basis. Although participants did not have to pay a fee for the program, their financial demands impacted their success in the program. As a result, the class schedule was modified.

As this project comes to a completion, Georgian College is currently developing a fee-paying program that will allow the program to be sustainable.

### Preparation for Apprenticeship, Trades and Technology (PATT) Program

The second bridging initiative, which targets internationally trained tradespersons, is the Preparation for Apprenticeship, Trades and Technology Program<sup>3</sup>. Fanshawe College, located in London, Ontario, is currently delivering this program. The goal of this project is to address the identified skills shortage in the manufacturing trades and to facilitate the accessibility of underemployed internationally trained individuals into the manufacturing trades.

Initially, the project was designed to target the construction (plumbing, sheet metal, and carpentry) and manufacturing (precision metal cutting) trades. However, through the initial screening of applicants, it was determined that there was a wide variety of skills amongst the applicants. It was decided that Fanshawe College would not be able to develop a

---

<sup>3</sup> Fanshawe College, *Preparation for Apprenticeship, Trades and Technology PATT Program Prototype: How-to Process Guide*, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Government of Ontario. April 2003.

construction program that would meet the needs of all participants. Therefore, the program model was revised to provide training in the manufacturing trades only.

The following are the delivery components of the program:

- Advanced English language training
- Occupational vocabulary
- Skills training within a shop environment
- Development of personal portfolios, documenting formal and informal training
- Job placements

Fanshawe College also produced a *How-to Process Guide*. It should be noted that the PATT project is expected to be completed in October 2003; therefore, the *How-to-Process Guide* is not complete. The following are the key learnings of the PATT Program:

- The use of media to market the program and recruit potential participants was not as effective as word of mouth promotion from within the ethnic communities.
- Participants required extensive training on trade-specific vocabulary and English.
- It was determined that a part-time program would be more likely to become self-sustainable.
- During the initial stages of the program, it was realized that far more than the predetermined shop time was required to identify the skill level of the participants. As a result, the number of shop hours was increased, and consequently hours in another component were decreased.
- The development of participant portfolios was instrumental in the success of securing work placements for the participants.
- The inclusion of industry organizations throughout the various stages of the project facilitated the process of finding workplace placements.

Upon conclusion of the project in October 2003, Fanshawe College will also establish a self-sustaining program on a cost-recovery basis.

Both the Bridges to Employment and PATT programs involved key stakeholders, including regulatory bodies, employers, community organizations, and educational institutions to guide the project processes. The how-to-manuals produced by these institutions are excellent resources that can be utilized as models to develop projects targeting the trades.

## Occupational Fact Sheets

The province of Ontario, in partnership with regulatory bodies, has produced fact sheets for prospective immigrants and newcomers to Ontario. These fact sheets outline information on licensure and certification requirements, and include information on the labour market. To-date, fact sheets are available for ten professions and five trades. These trades include automotive service technician, hairstylist, industrial electricians, construction and maintenance electricians, and industrial mechanics (millwrights).

The facts sheets are available on the Ontario government web site at:  
[http://www.equalopportunity.on.ca/eng\\_g/apt/occfact.html](http://www.equalopportunity.on.ca/eng_g/apt/occfact.html).

## **Manitoba**

### Manitoba Qualifications Recognition Initiative

A most recent related initiative is currently developing in the province of Manitoba. In October 2002, the Minister of Manitoba Labour and Immigration announced government's intent to take a leadership role in developing a strategy to address the issues of international qualifications recognition. A Ministerial Committee on Qualifications Recognition was established, including representation from eight provincial government departments.

An extensive consultation process occurred with a vast range of stakeholders. As a result of the consultative process, a *Framework for a Manitoba Strategy on Qualifications Recognition* was established. An interim report titled *Manitoba Qualifications Recognition Initiative* was released June 2003<sup>4</sup>. This report outlines several guiding principles for a framework for Manitoba's strategy on qualifications recognition. The Ministerial Committee will soon request feedback on the document, which will be finalized in the fall of 2003.

### Language Benchmarking

Red River College has completed a number of benchmarking projects, whereby they have benchmarked the language demands of six occupations according to the Canadian Language Benchmarks.

The following occupations have been benchmarked:

- Motor Vehicle Mechanic
- Occupational Therapist
- Pharmacist
- Early Childhood Educator
- Aircraft Maintenance Engineer
- Nurse

The reports from these projects expressly outline the process requirement to benchmark an occupation. This approach could be used for any trade.

---

<sup>4</sup> Government of Manitoba, *Manitoba Qualifications Recognition Initiative: Interim Report*. June 2003.

## British Columbia

The following is a list of related reports and projects that were reviewed:

- Kitching, Ann. *Evaluating and Matching Skills of Immigrants to British Columbia: Developing a Process to Assess Foreign Trades Credentials, Skills, Training and Work Experience Pilot Project*. Coquitlam, BC: Human Resources Centre Coquitlam. 1998.
- Mercer, CB & Associates. *Internationally Trained Professionals in BC: An Environmental Scan*. Vancouver, BC: Surrey Delta Immigrant Services Society; Immigrant Services Society of BC; Mosaic. November 2002.
- Simosko, Susan & Associates, Inc. *Multi-Sectoral Working Group Forum: Employment Access for Skilled Immigrants: Developing an Outcomes-Based Achievable Implementation Plan*. Vancouver, BC. March 2003.
- Working Group. *EASI Strategy: Employment Access for Skilled Immigrants: A Systems Approach to Facilitate the Entry of Skilled Immigrants into the British Columbia Labour Market*. Vancouver, BC. June 2002.

An extensive annotated bibliography of research related to issues of skilled immigrants accessing the labour market is available on the web site of the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services, International Qualifications Program at: [http://www.mcaws.gov.bc.ca/amip/iqp/research\\_reports.htm](http://www.mcaws.gov.bc.ca/amip/iqp/research_reports.htm).

## Recommendations for Successful Assessment Strategies

Based on the perspectives provided by key trades personnel during interviews, the following is recommended to successfully assess international qualifications:

### Fact Sheets

In order to assist internationally trained tradespersons in understanding the trade designations and certification process in BC and to facilitate the assessment process, translated information / fact sheets outlining guidelines and steps to becoming certified should be made available. Using the language-specific fact sheets, individuals would be able to conduct a preliminary self-evaluation to determine what occupation their trade equates to in Canada. Similar to the Ontario occupational fact sheets, these fact sheets would provide a detailed overview of the entry-to-practice requirements in BC. The fact sheets should be widely distributed through community colleges, immigrant serving agencies, organizations that provide employment programs, trade associations, and the Industry Training Centre.

### Interviews

Informal interviews should be conducted in order to obtain information from the applicant regarding his/her work experience and skills. In order to ensure the consistency and thoroughness of the interview process, a list of predetermined questions should be

developed and utilized to guide the interview. Through the interview process, equivalency can be established between the international qualifications and Canadian standards.

### **Documents**

Documents should be reviewed in order to determine eligibility for trade certification or training programs. If documents are not in English, the individual should be referred to organizations that provide professional translation services. In circumstances where individuals, such as refugees, are unable to provide documentation supporting their training and work experiences, statutory declarations should be accepted.

### **Written Exams**

When English language skills are a barrier to the successful completion of the examination, the applicant should be able to utilize interpreters to write the examination. A pool of professional interpreters who have knowledge of common trade terminology should be made available. Also, oral exams should be made more readily available to those individuals who are unsuccessful in passing the written exam.

### **Practical Exams**

Since written exams test for technical knowledge only, practical exams should be used to assess the trade skill level of the applicant. Practical tests enable the internationally trained tradesperson to demonstrate their competence in their trade.

## **Recommendations for Appropriate Responses**

In order to successfully implement the recommended assessment strategies, a number of supports should be put in place. For this reason, the following is recommended as appropriate responses to meet the needs of internationally trained tradespersons:

### **Trade-Specific English Language Upgrading**

As identified in the project, insufficient language skills can have an impeding impact on conducting accurate assessments of international qualifications, successful completion of qualification exams, progress in training programs, and job performance. It has also been noted that beyond the need for internationally trained tradespersons to upgrade their basic English language skills, an understanding of trade terminology and codes is also a requisite for entry into most trades. Despite this, the provision of trade-specific English language classes is limited. Consequently, there is a need to develop and provide self-study materials, distance education courses, or specialized classes, which focus on trade-specific language upgrading. The availability of such specialized classes will assist individuals to develop and improve their trade-specific terminology. Once the individual has improved their language skills, they can write or, if necessary, rewrite the qualification examination, take a training program, or improve workplace performance.

### **Implications**

- Educational institutions and regulatory bodies will need to partner in the development of specialized courses which meet the English language needs of both industry and internationally trained tradespersons.
- The development of self-study materials and distance education courses addresses the issue of low enrollment numbers for educational institutions.
- Individuals who wish to improve their knowledge of trade-specific language can work independently at their own pace. They will not have to worry about waiting for courses to be offered.

### **Trades Benchmarking Data Bank**

It has been discussed that reviewing and assessing international trades qualification documentation can be an onerous and challenging task. Although the use of interviews mitigates the challenge to a certain degree, there is often an issue of the accuracy of the assessment. This can result in the non-recognition or under-evaluation of international qualifications. The creation of a data bank, consisting of information regarding certification and apprenticeship systems from other countries and the Canadian equivalence to that trade, would expedite the assessment process and result in an increase in the accurate recognition of international trades training.

The data bank would include information about apprenticeship programs from other countries, which would be benchmarked against Canadian trades standards. Assessors or employers could utilize the data bank to review and assess international qualifications and determine the trade and training equivalency in Canada.

### **Implications**

- Immigrants arrive in Canada from numerous countries with various trade backgrounds. Developing a data bank for all occupations and countries would be a substantial endeavour, which is highly time-consuming and perhaps a costly process. Also, the fact that not every country has a formal training and certification process would need to be considered. There would also be a need to establish international cooperation with other countries to share information regarding the types of training and credentials that are issued from country to country. The development of a data bank would be of benefit in assessing internationally trained tradespersons across Canada. The development of the bank could be structured in various stages, starting with perhaps larger or more common trade clusters.
- With the development of national data bank, the current level of subjectivity would be removed and assessment of international qualifications could be carried out in a consistent manner. Furthermore, a non-trades assessor or educator could use the data bank to determine if the required curriculum has been covered.
- As a result of continuous economic and industry changes, national apprenticeship systems change frequently. Consequently, a mechanism for updating the data bank on a regular basis would have to be established.

## Practical Assessment Tests

The development and implementation of practical tests will enable internationally trained tradespersons to demonstrate their practical skill level. Practical testing will ensure that the internationally trained tradesperson has been designated in the appropriate trade equivalence.

### Implications

- Practical tests will require a workplace environment, with the appropriate tools and materials and a trained tradesperson to conduct the assessment. This could result in a lengthy and costly examination process. Many new immigrants facing the challenges of finding employment and family responsibilities in their new country may not be in a position to incur the costs of an expensive examination process.
- In order to address the potential of a costly assessment process, the Industry Training Authority, regulatory bodies, and employers will need to partner to develop a practical assessment model which is cost-effective, efficient, and supportive of the needs of internationally trained tradespersons. For example, assessment costs could be subsidized or perhaps a model could be established where employers could conduct the practical assessment test at the work site. In doing so, tradespersons would be able to demonstrate their hands-on skills in an actual industry environment. However, employers would have to be trained to carry out the assessments.
- In order to develop a practical assessment process, regulatory bodies, employers, and educational institutions will need to come together to establish and define competency-based standards. This will result in a standardized assessment process, whereby internationally trained tradespersons would be assessed in a consistent manner.

## Bridging Pilot Program

With trades being a performance-based industry, internationally trained tradespersons require more than paper credentials to obtain employment in the Canadian labour market. The lack of Canadian work experience and knowledge about workplace culture can have an impeding influence on successful integration into the Canadian workplace. At the same time, many internationally trained tradespersons come with high levels of skill and expertise within their trade. By developing a bridging program, which both recognizes the international training and experience of immigrants and also addresses the identified barriers in accessing employment in their trade, internationally trained tradespersons could experience increased success in integrating into the workplace while the industry could benefit from the experience and expertise tradespersons would bring to the workplace.

A pilot project, targeting one or two of the four identified trades, would include the following components:

- Assessment of both technical and practical skills and the identification of gaps.
- Specific skills training to address the identified training needs.
- Specialized English language training, including trade terminology and codes.
- Partnering with industry employers to provide a formal mentorship program through a workplace practicum.

This bridging pilot program could be used as a model to develop training programs in other trade areas.

### **Implications**

- As experienced by the two Ontario initiatives, the skill levels of individuals will vary. As a result, a one size fits all training model will not be effective or appropriate. In order to respect the individuality of internationally trained tradespersons, a modular training program should be developed. This would enable participants to be trained in their specific areas of need, rather than taking a generic program, which may result in the duplication of their previous training.
- In order to meet the diverse needs of the participants, educational institutions will need to adopt a flexible approach in curriculum development and delivery. Based on the initial assessment of skills, individualized learning plans will need to be developed.

### **Conclusion**

Although there are no standardized assessment procedures for assessing the qualifications of internationally trained tradespersons, there are similarities in how assessments are currently being conducted. Based on the successes and challenges experienced in conducting assessments, a number of effective strategies are recommended. These strategies include the development of fact sheets, use of interviews, review of documents, written exams, and practical examinations. The use of these strategies can provide a holistic and accurate assessment of the experiences and training of internationally trained tradespersons.

In addition to adopting these assessment strategies, there is a need to develop flexible and innovative programs that support the integration of internationally trained tradespersons into the trades industry. There are a number of possible approaches that can be used to address the needs of internationally trained tradespersons. Such approaches are: trade-specific English language upgrading classes, trades benchmarking data bank, practical assessment tests, and a bridging pilot program. The findings of this report can inform the goals and objectives of subsequent phases of this project, which will enable internationally trained tradespersons to overcome barriers in attaining recognition of their international qualifications, access employment within their related trade, and contribute to BC's industry.

## **Access to Trades for Internationally Trained Tradespersons Project**

### **Role of Advisory Committee**

As members of the Advisory Committee, you would advise and support the endeavours of this project in the following ways:

1. Act as resource persons, providing information that will inform the process.
2. Provide feedback on:
  - a) the project objectives and deliverables
  - b) interview questions
  - c) draft of final report (including best practices related to assessment strategies and recommendations)
3. Provide names and contact information of individuals who should be interviewed or could provide information related to the project.

## **Access to Trades for Internationally Trained Tradespersons Project**

### **Interview Questions**

1. Tell me about yourself. What is your background?  
What is your experience with internationally trained tradespersons?
2. In your experience, what are the most common countries of origin for internationally trained trades individuals?
3. What is your experience with using assessments / reviewing the qualifications of internationally trained tradespersons?
4. How are these assessments carried out?
5. What aspects / components of the assessment strategies used to assess internationally trained tradespersons are appropriate / successful?
6. In your opinion, what aspects / components of the assessment strategies are ineffective?
7. If you were given the opportunity to redesign the system to integrate internationally trained tradespersons into the labour market, what would you do?
8. If you were given the opportunity to develop an assessment, what would you include in its development that would support foreign-trained tradesperson?  
Examples?
9. Are you aware of any resources for benchmarking international trades credentials against Canadian standards?
10. In your opinion, what are the language challenges of internationally trained trades individuals?
11. In your opinion, what are the functional English language requirements for this type of work?
12. Are you aware of any recent or current projects or initiatives related to this project?
13. Is there anyone else that we should interview or contact regarding this project?  
Can you give us the contact information?
14. Do you have anything to add or any further questions about the project?

**Introduction Letter**

Dear Participant,

Re: Access to Trades for Internationally Trained Tradespersons Project

Thank you for taking the time to read this information letter. By the year 2011, it is estimated that 100% of Canada's net labour force growth will be dependent on immigration. The Access to Trades for Internationally Trained Tradespersons Project attempts to address the impending industry specific skills shortage by removing barriers and providing strategies for a smooth transition of international tradespersons into the Canadian labour market.

The purpose of this project is to research and recommend a process that will provide an appropriate response to address the barriers faced by internationally trained tradespersons in their attempt to access trades certification and employment in Canada. Thereby, key trades personnel will be interviewed in order to obtain their perspectives and experiences with assessing internationally trained tradespersons. The intent is to identify best practices related to successful assessment strategies.

As a key stakeholder, we would appreciate your input. If you agree to participate, a meeting will be arranged with you at a time and location suitable to you for an interview. The interview will consist of a series of open-ended questions pertaining to this project. The questions will be provided in advance of our interview to give you time to think about these issues. The interview will take no longer than an hour and a half, and will be audiotaped. Any information resulting from this project will be kept in strict confidence and the names of individuals participating in the interviews will not be identified in any report, unless written permission has been granted.

I will follow up with you by telephone or email in the next week or two to answer any questions, and determine your interest, availability, and willingness to participate in this project. I believe you have a valuable perspective to bring to this project, and hope that you will be willing to share this. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (604) 599-3049 or Harpreet Bachra with Customized Training & Contract Services at Kwantlen University College at (604) 599-3052.

Sincerely,

Jas Parmar  
Project Consultant

## **Access to Trades for Internationally Trained Tradesperson Project**

### **Interview Consent Form**

#### **Purpose:**

The overall goal of the Access to Trades project is to enhance the access and success rate of internationally trained tradespersons when applying for apprentices and writing trades qualification examinations. The purpose of this project is to research and recommend a process for appropriate responses to enhance the transition of international tradespersons into Canadian industry.

#### **Procedures:**

- One interview will be conducted and will take approximately an hour and half.
- Participants will be asked to give their perspectives on the best practices related to successful assessment strategies for assessing internationally trained tradespersons.
- The interview will be audiotaped and a transcript of the interview will be prepared for the purposes of analysis.
- If necessary, participants may be contacted by telephone or e-mail after the analysis for clarification of information.

#### **Confidentiality:**

Any information resulting from this interview will be kept strictly confidential and the names of individuals participating in the interviews will not be identified, unless permission is granted by signing below.

#### **Contact:**

For clarification or any further information with respect to this project, the following individuals can be contacted:

- Jas Parmar, Project Consultant, (604) 599-3049
- Harpreet Bachra with Customized Training & Contract Services at Kwantlen University College at (604) 599-3052.

#### **Consent:**

I understand that my participation in this project is entirely voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time, and that I do not need to give any reasons or explanations for doing so.

I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records.

I have read and understood this information, agree to participate in this project and do not consent to have my name identified in any report.

Subject Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Witness: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I have read and understood this information, agree to participate in this project and consent to have my name identified in the report.

Subject Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Witness: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Bibliography

- Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, *Benchmarking the English Demands of the Nursing Profession Across Canada*. Governments of Alberta and Ontario. July 2002.
- Epp, L. & McInnis, C. *Aircraft Maintenance Engineers: Benchmark Levels for the Occupation*. Red River College. April 2001.
- Epp, L. & McInnis, C. *Occupational Therapists: Benchmark Levels for the Occupation*. Red River College. July 2002.
- Fanshawe College, *Preparation for Apprenticeship, Trades and Technology PATT Program Prototype: How-to Process Guide*. Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, Government of Ontario. April 2003.
- Georgian College of Applied Arts and Technology, *Bridges to Employment: How-to Process Guide*. Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, Government of Ontario. March 2003.
- Government of Manitoba, *Manitoba Qualifications Recognition Initiative: Interim Report*. June 2003.
- Hayes, J., Johnson, J., & Petit, L. *Early Childhood Education: CBA / PLA Project Report*. Government of Manitoba, Department of Labour, Adult Language Training Branch. January 2000.
- McInnis, C., & Epp, L. *Motor Vehicle Mechanics: Benchmark Levels for the Occupation*. Red River College. May 2002.
- Website: [http://www.mcaaws.gov.bc.ca/amip/iqp/research\\_reports.htm](http://www.mcaaws.gov.bc.ca/amip/iqp/research_reports.htm).