

# An Employer Survey of the Under-Employment of Skilled Immigrants

## **FINAL REPORT**

- Funded by Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services
- Submitted by the YMCA of Greater Vancouver - prepared by Cheryl McNicol and Marita Dachsel
- Submitted May 31, 2004

## **Acknowledgements**

### **Funding**

The survey was funded by the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services and the YMCA of Greater Vancouver.

### **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks to those employers who participated in the survey and provided us with key information about the employment of skilled immigrants. A special thank you to the company representatives who took the time to respond to our survey questions.

Thanks to the individuals who participated as members of the Advisory Council. Your dedication and assistance was greatly appreciated.

Much gratitude to those employers who were willing and able to send a representative to the Focus Group. A special thanks to those representatives that attended the Focus Group and provided the YMCA with such valuable input.

This report is intended to provide the results of the Employer Survey of the Underemployment of Skilled Immigrants. Specifically, this report provides a list of skills, attributes, and attitudes required by a variety of employers to facilitate labour market entry for skilled immigrants. This report also provides recommendations for services, programs and resources required to support employers who hire skilled immigrants.

## Table of Contents

<b>1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	4
1.1 Background Information/Rationale.....	4
1.2 Objectives of the Survey.....	4
1.3 Methodology.....	5
1.4 Survey Results.....	5
1.5 Project Deliverables.....	6
a) List of Skills and Attributes.....	6
b) Recommendations from Employers.....	7
1.6 Conclusions and Final Recommendations.....	9
<b>2.0 AN EMPLOYER SURVEY OF THE UNDER-EMPLOYMENT OF SKILLED IMMIGRANTS – FINAL REPORT</b> .....	12
<b>2.1 Background Information</b> .....	12
<b>2.2 Project Description</b> .....	12
<b>2.3 Methodology</b> .....	13
a) Development of Tools.....	13
b) Identification of Potential Employers.....	13
c) Distribution.....	13
d) Findings.....	14
e) Follow-up.....	14
<b>2.4 One-on-One Interview Results</b> .....	15
<b>2.5 Focus Group Results</b> .....	20
a) Skills, Attributes and Attitudes.....	20
b) Challenges and Solutions.....	21
c) Programs and Services.....	21
d) Questionnaire Results.....	22
e) Final Thoughts and Recommendations.....	22
<b>2.6 Summary of Deliverables</b> .....	24
a) List of Skills and Attributes.....	24
b) Recommendations from Employers.....	25
<b>2.7 Conclusions and Final Recommendations</b> .....	27
a) Language Program Recommendations.....	27
b) Information Program Recommendations.....	27
i) For the Foreign-trained Worker.....	27
ii) For the Employer.....	28
c) Employment Programs.....	28
d) Immigration Policy Recommendations.....	29
e) Networking Recommendations.....	29
<b>3.1 Appendix A – Bibliography</b> .....	30
<b>3.2 Appendix B – Interview Questionnaire for One-on-One Interviews</b> .....	34
<b>3.3 Appendix C – Information Notice</b> .....	35
<b>3.4 Appendix D – Focus Group Questionnaire</b> .....	36
<b>3.5 Appendix E – Advertisement for the Architectural Institute of B.C. eNewsletter</b> ..	37
<b>3.6 Appendix F – Advertisement for Vancouver Board of Trade Sounding Board</b> ....	37
<b>3.7 Appendix G – Notice for Downtown Vancouver Rotary Chapter Newsletter</b> .....	37
<b>3.8 Appendix H – Listing of Participating Employers</b> .....	38

## **1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **1.1 Background Information/Rationale**

The YMCA is a multi-service community-based charitable organization dedicated to the development of people in spirit, mind and body. Best known for our work in promoting health and working with youth, the YMCA also responds to the community's need for child care, employment-related counseling and training, English language instruction, outdoor education, and short term accommodation.

The YMCA has been active in the field of employment since the 1890's when it organized the first job club registry and employment centre in Vancouver, and the YMCA also established Vancouver's first English as a second-language program in 1947. Our commitment to helping people in need through innovative, community-based programs has continued for over 100 years.

In the past several years, there has been significant research undertaken by a variety of groups Canada-wide to examine the challenges skilled immigrants face when trying to find a job in Canada. From an in-depth examination of credentials to educational programs available, these studies offer one perspective of the challenges to securing employment. We identified a gap in this research and determined that there was a need to examine the challenges to labour market enhancement for new immigrants – from the employers' point of view.

The YMCA submitted a proposal in response to a Request for Proposal from the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services and was awarded funding to conduct a research study of the underemployment of skilled immigrants. For the purposes of this survey, the term *skilled immigrant* is defined as those immigrants that had some post-secondary education outside of Canada including trades, technical diplomas, certificates or degrees. The term *skilled immigrant* and *foreign-trained worker* are interchangeable and both are used in this report.

### **1.2 Objectives of the Survey**

The objective of this survey was to create a profile of the top employability skills of recent skilled immigrants required by employers, to develop recommendations for services, programs and resources needed in the current environment, and to establish guidelines for future employment and language programs.

To achieve this, we conducted a survey of employers to determine what skills, attributes, and attitudes are required of skilled immigrants as well as any programs and services they need to help them employ skilled immigrants

Our goal was to secure the participation of at least 50 employers who are working with, or have worked with, recent skilled immigrants. Targeted business sectors included: large employers (over 500), mid-size employers (51 – 499), small employers (1-49), public sector employers, and voluntary sector.

### 1.3 Methodology

We compiled large lists of potential businesses relevant to the study and contacted them via telephone to garner interest and secure participation in our survey. Businesses selected were taken from a variety of publications: Business in Vancouver Magazine – The 2003 Book of Lists, The Board of Trade membership listing, and the British Columbia Technology Industries Association (BCTIA) membership listing.

We also contacted various business associations and advertised for participants through some of their publications (The Architectural Institute of British Columbia’s biweekly eNewsletter (see Appendix E); The Vancouver Board of Trade’s monthly newspaper *Sounding Board* (see Appendix F); the Downtown Vancouver Rotary chapter’s weekly newsletter (See Appendix G). As well, we connected with personal and business associates to locate additional participants.

A total of 220 businesses were contacted by telephone to secure participation in a focus group or one-on-one interviews. Selected employers represented a mix of local, provincial and national businesses from a variety of industries and sectors.

### 1.4 Survey Results

A total of 55 employers participated in the survey of which 5 took part in a focus group format and the remaining 50 were interviewed one-on-one via telephone. This represents an overall participation rate of 25%, which can be considered high for a telephone survey.

Participating industries included: accounting, architecture, engineering, health care, technology, legal, security, energy, food production, government (regional, provincial, and federal), education, banking and finance, communications, manufacturing/production, and not-for-profit agencies.

A breakdown of participants by sector follows:

Large employers	11 participants
Mid-size employers	14 participants
Small employers	18 participants
Public sector employers	7 participants
Voluntary sector	<u>5 participants</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>

See Appendix H for listing of Participating Employers

## 1.5 Project Deliverables

### a) List of Skills and Attributes

The following list of skills and attributes is the culmination of results from a brainstorming session conducted at the focus group interview as well as responses from one-on-one interviews. These skills and attributes can be grouped into four main categories. Some of them fit into more than one category.

<b>LANGUAGE/COMMUNICATION</b>	<b>CULTURAL</b>
Customer service	Knowing corporate culture
Verbal and written English skills	Cultural fit
Reasonable language skills	Self-motivation
Speaking skills – slow enough to be understood	Interpersonal skills
Teamwork	Teamwork
Communicate effectively in English	Customer service
Communication skills	Understand Canadian culture
Interpersonal skills	Interaction with staff
	Fit into casual office culture
	Comfortable with people from various backgrounds
<b>TECHNICAL</b>	<b>WORK ETHIC/ATTITUDE</b>
Technical skills	Right attitude
Certification	Flexibility
Experience in the field	Energetic
Familiarity with the business	Conscientious
Familiarity with computers	Willing to work hard
Presentation skills	Thorough
Marketing skills	Good work ethic
Ability to adapt to change	Willing to learn
Right qualifications	Self-motivation
Transferable skills	Determination to succeed
Negotiation skills	Work independently/self-sufficiency
Product knowledge	Positive attitude
Business development	Take initiative
Specialized skills	Ability to adapt to change
Creative	Good natured
Innovative	Patience
Problem-solving skills	

## **b) Recommendations from Employers**

The following list of recommended programs and services is the culmination of results from a brainstorming session conducted at a focus group interview as well as responses from one-on-one interviews. They could be grouped in the following categories:

### **Accreditation**

- Accreditation—work with governing bodies (for example, Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia)
- Give foreign trained workers educational credit for experience and foreign credentials while going through accreditation process
- Create a centralized agency to get credentials recognized in Canada quicker
- Post-secondary institutions – make assessment of credentials more standard, easier and faster
- Database to check credentials, compare and confirm degrees, etc.

### **Immigration**

- Streamlined process for bringing immigrants into Canada
- Change immigration policy – should match immigrants entering Canada to the jobs required

### **Incentives for employers**

- Wage subsidies—for first 6 months to a year until upgrading is complete or until accreditation is complete
- Offer incentive to employers to hire skilled immigrants—it take more time to train them
- Remove the liability in volunteer positions—so skilled immigrants can get some Canadian experience

### **Information**

- Directory of ESL programs for each community
- Landed services support/coordination agency—resources available to skilled immigrants
- Develop a website – Canadian Experience Website
  - Courses
  - Clips (sound or video) by subject matter, careers, etc. using terminology and language
  - Nationwide – click on communities to get information on what is available
  - Earn “Canadian Experience Diploma”
  - Online mentors
  - Exchange of ideas
  - Pure information – rent, basic necessities, top questions
  - Link to community agencies
  - Conduct online job interviews – interactive experiences
  - Stock with recorded interviews
  - Provides an introduction to Canadian and corporate culture

**Instruction**

- Technical English course
- Canadian culture program
- English language skills program
- ESL training
- Writing skills course—technical reports
- Basic IT training—computer skills
- Job search skills—interview skills
- Conversational English
- Problem solving skills course
- Working in a team environment course

**Programs**

- Bridging programs—so foreign workers don't have to start from scratch
- Face to Face model (a national program that matches disabled individuals with an employer in a particular career and that provides an opportunity to exchange information, ask questions and learn from each other, it is not a job interview but a one week opportunity for disabled individuals to be at a work site, to job shadow, and to share useful information about community resources) on a larger scale—match skilled immigrants to employers
- Co-op program

## **1.6 Conclusions and Final Recommendations**

It is apparent that employers feel changes need to be made in the current system. Foreign-trained workers are arriving in Canada not fully aware of the current job market and the accreditation/ requalification process. Language skills and the knowledge of Canadian/corporate culture are the primary challenges they face.

British Columbian employers, especially those in the Lower Mainland, seem to be aware of the benefits of employing foreign-trained workers. They want to hire the new Canadians but often feel discouraged by the process either because of bureaucracy or the immigrants' lack of readiness to work (inadequate language, technical, or cultural skills).

Based on the recommendations from employers, research, and our own perceptions we have developed the following recommendations for programs or services to aid employers in hiring foreign-trained workers.

### **a) Language Program Recommendations**

As language is the largest challenge facing employers and foreign-trained workers, further language training for immigrants is needed. Before emigrating, people should be aware of what level of English is needed to live in Canada. Once in Canada, specialized language-training courses need to be available.

While there are some English for Business courses offered in the Lower Mainland, there is a need for profession/occupation specific classes. These classes could include visits from professionals in the field, instruction on where and how to upgrade skills, exploration of Canadian corporate culture of that particular profession, and communication skills (oral and written). This type of program could be marketed as both a language and culture class and a networking opportunity.

For employers who have recently hired foreign trained workers, a government subsidy to fund on-site language training would be beneficial. The employees would learn language specific to their profession and participate in their corporate culture. It could be company policy for every new employee whose first language was not English to attend one hour per week for six months.

### **b) Information Program Recommendations**

#### **For the foreign-trained worker:**

It is clear that a concise and in-depth directory of existing programs and services needs to be available. Ideally this would be on a national level, but just provincially would work as well, and would need to be accessible online so that people could reach it outside of Canada. The directory would include lists and links to programs available in every community or region in the province, whether they were federally, provincially, municipally or privately funded. It would cover all services deemed necessary, such as immigration, language, employment, spiritual and cultural organizations, and basic informational "how-tos" of Canadian living (banking, housing, groceries, etc. and frequently asked questions). Also on this website there would be courses,

online mentors, sound or video clips organized by subject matter, careers et cetera using the relevant terminology and language. It would also stock recorded interviews and have the ability to conduct online interviews as an interactive experience to help people gain this cultural experience. Ideally, it would be a place where people could exchange ideas and learn basic, unbiased information about Canada.

### **For the employer:**

Many employers expressed a need for an easily accessible and always current directory that deals primarily with accreditation and qualification issues. Employers could compare education levels and post-secondary degrees between Canadian institutions and those throughout the world. The directory will also include guidelines for necessary upgrading categorized by profession and country of origin, as well as programs (government or private) that aid this process.

### **c) Employment Program Recommendations**

The conundrum many employers face is that they prefer to hire people with local (Canadian) experience, but many foreign-trained workers struggle to be given their first opportunity to gain such experience. Employers often suggest volunteering as a valid way to acquire relevant experience, but many businesses are unable to offer volunteer positions because of the associated liabilities.

Employers and foreign-trained workers could both benefit from a government sponsored volunteer ladder program. Recent skilled immigrants would be matched with businesses that forecast a need for new employees. After completing a language/culture course (see above), a foreign-trained worker could be placed in a company to volunteer for a short period of time (four weeks to three months) while being given a weekly honorarium paid by the government. Then the employer and foreign-trained worker would decide whether or not the individual is a right match for the company. If so, the employee continues with the company for three to six months. During this probationary period, the government subsidizes wages. After this period, if both the employer and employee are content, the employer hires the foreign-trained worker permanently and with no subsidy. This benefits both parties, as the skilled immigrant receives language and cultural training and a minimum of four weeks local experience while the employer receives a highly qualified employee.

For foreign-trained workers who have Canadian experience but are not satisfied with their current employment status, a mentorship program would be worthwhile. Members of various business sectors would act as the mentors. They could be matched through a careful screening process where the participants would be compatible in profession, personality, and goals. Mentors and foreign-trained workers could meet once a month over a six-month period. Foreign-trained workers would be given relevant advice and emotional support, while gaining opportunities in networking, practicing interpersonal skills, and participating in Canadian and corporate culture. The mentors would exercise and hone their coaching and motivational skills, participate in networking, and achieve a personal sense of accomplishment.

#### **d) Immigration Policy Recommendations**

According to many employers in British Columbia, current immigration practices are not effective. Immigration officials should be contacting employers to determine what positions or skills are in shortage today and what skills will be in demand in the future. The skilled immigrants that are being targeted for the immigration process should match the specific skills and qualifications that employers need. Many skilled immigrants are led to believe that there are jobs for them in their field or occupation in Canada when this is clearly not the case for all people. The government should provide potential skilled immigrants with accurate and honest employment prospects.

#### **e) Networking Recommendations**

The ability to network and create opportunities is one of the largest challenges recent skilled immigrants face in finding employment. It would be difficult to create an effective networking-specific program because those attracted to such a program would be others in similar situations (unemployed or under-employed) rather than those who could be in the position to open doors to employment (business owners, managers, HR people). It is imperative that all programs targeting immigrants have networking components, whether it is bringing in people from the business world to meet and speak with foreign trained workers or by stressing the importance of reaching beyond ethnic-specific communities to the larger Canadian culture and creating opportunities through organizations and activities such as sports, religious institutions, schools or professional organizations.

A series of monthly information sessions could be a productive networking opportunity. Each month would highlight a different profession. The guest speakers at the sessions would be a Canadian in the field and one or two foreign trained workers who successfully attached to this particular field of employment. Participants would hear about how to break in to the field, what the challenges were and how they were resolved. This series of information sessions would not only be limited to recent immigrants, but also be open to students or anyone else who would be interested in pursuing the particular field to enhance diversity within the group.

## **2.0 AN EMPLOYER SURVEY OF THE UNDER-EMPLOYMENT OF SKILLED IMMIGRANTS—FINAL REPORT**

### **2.1 Background Information/Rationale**

The YMCA is a multi-service community-based charitable organization dedicated to the development of people in spirit, mind and body. Best known for our work in promoting health and working with youth, the YMCA also responds to the community's need for child care, employment-related counseling and training, English language instruction, outdoor education, and short term accommodation.

The YMCA has been active in the field of employment since the 1890's when it organized the first job club registry and employment centre in Vancouver, and the YMCA also established Vancouver's first English as a second-language program in 1947. Our commitment to helping people in need through innovative, community-based programs has continued for over 100 years.

In the past several years, there has been significant research undertaken by a variety of groups Canada-wide to examine the challenges skilled immigrants face when trying to find a job in Canada. From an in-depth examination of credentials to educational programs available, these studies offer one perspective of the challenges to securing employment. We identified a gap in this research and determined that there was a need to examine the challenges to labour market enhancement for new immigrants – from the employers' point of view.

The YMCA submitted a proposal in response to a Request for Proposal from the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services and was awarded funding to conduct a research study of the underemployment of skilled immigrants. For the purposes of this survey, the term *skilled immigrant* is defined as those immigrants that had some post-secondary education outside of Canada including trades, technical diplomas, certificates or degrees. The term *skilled immigrant* and *foreign-trained worker* are interchangeable and both are used in this report. The research involved a combination of one-on-one interviews and focus groups with 55 businesses, voluntary sector and public sector organizations.

### **2.2 Project Description**

The objective of this survey was to create a profile of top employability skills of recent skilled immigrants required by employers; recommendations for services, programs and resources needed in the current environment; and guidelines for future employment and language programs. To achieve this, we conducted a survey of employers to determine what programs and services they need to help them in employing immigrants.

The survey was conducted amongst employers of small, medium and large sized businesses as well as employers in the public sector and non-profit organizations. Information was gathered via focus groups and one-on-one interviews with employers who are working with, or have worked with, recent skilled immigrants.

The anticipated outcome of our survey was to discover how skilled immigrants could secure employment by creating a list of skills and attributes necessary to overcome challenges to entering and attaching to the Canadian labour market. The research also provides a vital tool for service providers to bridge gaps between programs and services offered and the skills employers require, leading to improved program design and ultimately to enhanced, long-term labour market attachment for skilled immigrants.

## **2.3 Methodology**

### **a) Development of Tools**

Our research team conducted a review of the literature concerning immigrant employment, both national and provincial, to gain a further understanding of the issues and to ensure that our study would offer new insights into the field. We discovered that while there have been numerous studies from the point of view of the immigrant, there have been few from the employer's (see Appendix A for Bibliography).

Using this information, we developed a survey questionnaire to be used for the one-on-one interviews with employers (see Appendix B). We also created an information notice (see Appendix C) that provided businesses with an overview of the survey and included details for the focus group sessions that were being held.

We also developed a questionnaire for the Focus Group participants to collect information about the participants and their experiences with employing skilled immigrants (see Appendix D).

### **b) Identification of Potential Employers**

We compiled large lists of potential businesses relevant to the study and contacted them via telephone to garner interest and secure participation in our survey. Businesses selected were taken from a variety of publications: Business in Vancouver Magazine – The 2003 Book of Lists, The Board of Trade membership listing, and the BCTIA membership listing. Many businesses requested a follow-up email summarizing the project. See appendix C for Information Notice.

We also contacted various business associations and advertised for participants through some of their publications (The Architectural Institute of British Columbia's biweekly eNewsletter (see Appendix E); The Vancouver Board of Trade's monthly newspaper *Sounding Board* (see Appendix F); the Downtown Vancouver Rotary chapter's weekly newsletter (See Appendix G). As well, we connected with personal and business associates to locate additional participants.

### **c) Distribution**

A total of 220 businesses were contacted by telephone to secure participation in a focus group or one-on-one interviews. Selected employers represented a mix of local, provincial and national businesses from a variety of industries and sectors. Targeted industries included: accounting, architecture, engineering, health care, technology, legal, security, energy, food production,

government (regional, provincial, and federal), education, banking and finance, communications, manufacturing/production, and not-for-profit agencies.

Targeted business sectors included: large employers (over 500), mid-size employers (51 – 499), small employers (1-49), public sector employers, and voluntary sector.

#### **d) Findings**

A total of 55 employers participated in the survey of which 5 took part in a focus group format and the remaining 50 were interviewed one-on-one via telephone. This represents a participation rate of 25%, which can be considered high for a telephone survey.

Once it was determined that the employer contacted had experience with hiring and managing skilled immigrants and they agreed to participate, they were asked to attend a breakfast focus group interview for a duration of two hours. Only 5 businesses agreed to attend a focus group of the 55 participating in the survey. The remaining 50 businesses preferred to answer questions in a telephone interview.

The reasons given for not wanting to attend a focus group were:

- Not enough time
- Too busy
- Wanted to know who the other participants were – didn't want to attend if a competitor was going to be there
- No interest in focus group participation
- Preferred to talk one-on-one about their experiences
- Company policy

A breakdown of participants by sector follows:

Large employers	11 participants
Mid-size employers	14 participants
Small employers	18 participants
Public sector employers	7 participants
Voluntary/civil employers	<u>5 participants</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>

See Appendix H for Listing of Participating Employers

#### **e) Follow-up**

A summary of findings was emailed to all interested participants.

## **2.4 One-on-One Interview Results**

### **1. What are your thoughts and feelings about hiring skilled immigrants?**

The respondents were primarily positive in their thoughts and feelings about hiring skilled immigrants. Many mentioned that they hire the best candidate for the position, whether the individual is Canadian-born or an immigrant—“as long as a person is qualified, it doesn’t matter where they come from,” one participant said.

Many are proud of their company’s support in hiring skilled immigrants, pointing out how ethnically diverse their workforce is, the number of languages spoken at their companies, or what percentage of their workforce is immigrants.

The only negative comments were in regard to the challenge language can sometimes be, but usually still with a positive outlook. As one respondent said, “sometimes language is a problem, but usually the experience is a good one.”

### **2. Will you hire skilled immigrants without Canadian experience?**

The majority of those who responded to this question have hired skilled immigrants without Canadian experience (34). Many volunteered that they were willing to continue to do so, while a few (6) stated that they still prefer to hire employees with Canadian experience.

### **3. What particular challenges /successes have you experienced in recruiting, hiring, training and managing skilled immigrants?**

By far, the largest challenge employers face in recruiting, hiring, training and managing skilled immigrants is language (29). Often this was stated with customer service in mind. For instance a representative of a small engineering firm said, “customers don’t want us to send them an engineer they can’t understand or who can’t really understand their needs.” But the concerns over language weren’t only about communicating with clients. One respondent lamented that if language is a problem, it can affect the workplace as some foreign trained workers “don’t tell you that they didn’t understand you, so you assume since they don’t tell you, that they understood your directions” and this, another mentioned, “can cost the company \$10,000 for one simple mistake.”

The second largest challenge is how poorly some foreign trained workers adapt to Canadian corporate culture (12). It appears to be common for some employees to want to change the workings of a company to reflect how it was done back in their country of origin. Although this may be a natural inclination, it causes problems within the organization. Consequently, to avoid internal rifts, employers seek candidates who will fit their corporate culture and understand Canadian culture.

The third largest challenge is problems with immigration and accreditation (7). Employers who mentioned this accuse the government of making the process unnecessarily slow and burdensome. One person said, “the administration paperwork for immigration process is a

nightmare.” Her employee has been in Canada for two years, and not yet a landed citizen. She said that her company “will never go through this process again—they will hire a consultant to do the immigration paperwork.”

Other relevant challenges that were mentioned include the lack of local experience, the difficulty in getting trustworthy references, and the concern that the employer will take the time to train the immigrant worker only for them to leave for another company.

The respondents offered few examples of successes. The majority who described successes were more vague, simply stating that most of their experiences with skilled immigrants had been successful (12). The only specific success that was mentioned was in regards to language (3). They appreciated when their employees were able to offer service in a customer’s primary language. One respondent stated, “customers want technicians that can speak their language, so there is a benefit to hiring immigrants that speak different languages.”

#### **4. How did you resolve/address these challenges? How did you support these successes?**

The majority of the people did not offer a response to this question (25). The most popular way employers found to resolve challenges was simply to be flexible and supportive (7). Some employers offered language classes (3) while others vowed to only hire people that are “employment ready” (3). Two respondents felt the only way to deal with the problems was to lay-off the employees.

#### **5. What are the most important skills, attributes, or attitudes that skilled immigrants should have to work for your company?**

Every respondent stressed the importance of communication skills; the ability to communicate effectively in English, both oral and written, is vital to being successfully employed. Having the right qualifications (37), whether it is technical skills, past experience, or just the right skills for the position was also deemed important.

Respondents needed prospective employees to have strong “soft skills” (41). Some of the most popular soft skills mentioned were good attitude, strong work ethic, interpersonal skills, teamwork, and creativity.

The other major attribute employers believe skilled immigrants should have is knowledge of, or the willingness to adapt to, Canadian and/or corporate culture (10). As one respondent said, foreign trained workers need to have “flexibility and adaptability—we do things differently in Canada.”

#### **6. Does your company have any services/programs in place for skilled immigrants? What are they?**

Most respondents worked for companies that did not have any services or programs in place for skilled immigrants (29). One of them explained that they “can’t afford any language training programs as a small business owner.” Another considered starting a program, but said, “the

immigrants weren't interested, were insulted when the company suggested they could offer ESL courses."

The most common program available to immigrant employees was ESL classes (8) whether it was the offer to pay for classes outside of the business or that the classes within the company itself. Four businesses have relocation policies or plans that often include career counseling and cultural orientation for spouses. It should be noted, that the relocation plans are not necessarily designed specifically for skilled immigrants, but they do greatly benefit from the program. One company does not have a program in place yet, but is working on a website of Internet links to help their new employees find more about Canada and the city they live in. Another company is involved in a Co-op program funded by the federal government and they have hired four technicians through this program.

### **7. What types of programs/services would assist you in recruiting, hiring, training, and maintaining skilled immigrants as employees?**

While 10 employers stated that they could not think of anything or that nothing was needed ("I don't hire skilled immigrant: I hire individuals, not special groups"), the majority of respondents had many suggestions.

The most popular suggestion was related to language training (15). Some employers wanted to see language training designed for specific professions, others wanted writing skills courses, while many would be satisfied with a more general approach.

Nine respondents see a need for programs that aid foreign trained workers adapting to Canadian culture, "how life works here." Thirteen employers want to see the immigration process itself improved whether by decreasing the time it takes and reducing the perceived need to "have to jump through many hoops" or by matching immigrants to what employers need and "establishing a qualified pool of candidates that meet certain standards." Accreditation (4) was also an issue; respondents felt there was a need to "decrease the amount of time required to get credential/work permits approved, put money into hiring more people or reduce the red-tape" and "assessing credentials must be simpler, less time consuming."

Other suggestions include:

- A services support co-ordination agency that includes resources available to skilled immigrants (2)
- A database to check credentials, compare and confirm degrees that our universities give credit for
- A program that teaches job search, interview, and networking skills
- Remove the liability in volunteer positions (no insurance or WCB)
- Offer incentives to employers to hire people, a wage subsidy to pay a percentage of the pay for six months
- Co-op programs
- Basic IT training, computer skills because "even assembly workers need it"
- Similar program to Face to Face (a national program that matches disabled individuals with an employer in a particular career and that provides an opportunity to exchange

information, ask questions and learn from each other; it is not a job interview but a one week opportunity for disabled individuals to be at a work site, to job shadow, and to share useful information about community resources) but on a larger, more permanent scale

- Educating staff on immigrants, cultural diversity awareness, and “how to support them”

One respondent is working with a new program called Fast Track to Employment and finds this very successful. Fast Track to Employment is a partnership between industry, government, trainers/educators and the “long-term unemployed” and it facilitates existing community-based training providers and educational institutions into an array of services that assists the unemployed to re-enter and sustain their participation in the labour market. She would like to see something like this on a larger scale and with a larger immigrant contingent.

Another respondent has been disappointed with government involvement in the past. Her company has wanted to set up a program for industrial training, but received no government support because of the red tape involved. She feels that employers “need programs without strings attached.”

### **8. Would you say that your experience with employing skilled immigrants has been mostly positive or mostly negative?**

Every person, except for two (2), said that their experience in hiring and managing skilled immigrants has been mostly positive.

### **9. Any words of wisdom that you can offer to skilled immigrants looking for work?**

The respondents had many suggestions for skilled immigrants looking for work. Upgrading English and communication skills (17) was mentioned the most. The importance of researching positions and companies before applying for a job (9) was stressed as well as understanding Canadian culture (8). Some respondents urged skilled immigrants to keep a positive attitude and not to give up (7), while others suggested volunteering (6) as a way to help them gain Canadian experience.

Other words of wisdom were:

- Upgrade your technical skills at a local institution (4)
- Be persistent, but not pushy (3)
- Be prepared for interviews (2)
- Network
- Be courteous
- Be willing to start at a lower position than you are used to
- Stress your hobbies
- Don't always go through HR
- Don't claim racism if you don't get the position
- Be yourself
- Try job clubs and organizations like SUCCESS
- Think of your family before deciding to emigrate

- Don't discount or discredit field of work because they are not valued in your home country (for example, jobs in the social or recreational fields)
- Be honest on your resume, up front about skills and abilities
- Be able to demonstrate what you can do for a company
- Be trustworthy and reliable

#### **10. Is there one particular message that you want to be sure to get across?**

Many respondents echoed their sentiments of the previous question; they focused on language skills, fitting into Canadian culture, keeping a positive attitude, research, and upgrading technical skills. A few new ideas did surface, however. One employer suggested prospective skilled immigrants should try to work for a multinational company in their country of origin and then be transferred to Canada. Another warned that “just because you have papers and experience in your home country, doesn't mean that you can get work at that level in Canada.”

Most of the new comments were directed to the government. One respondent wanted some methodology to bridge the gap between what skills are really needed in Canada and the people that are coming to the country, to match the skills required by employers to those who are allowed to emigrate to Canada. Another suggested a directory that compares Canadian education and credentials to those of other countries.

One employer wants the government to not look at people differently “just because they come from some other country,” and that they “shouldn't treat skilled immigrants any differently than other workers.” This respondent also stated “there are no programs or services the government should be providing employers.”

Conversely, a different respondent suggested “people need a chance” and has found that foreign-trained workers are “willing to work a little harder.” Another employer supported this sentiment by stating it is “to an employer's advantage to make use of skilled immigrants whenever possible.”

#### **11. Any other comments or experiences that you want to be sure are included in our final report to the provincial government? Are there any recommendations that you want to make to the Provincial government?**

This question elicited the fewest responses. Most participants felt that they had already said everything they needed to say. What was said was often stated by other respondents in earlier sections in the interviews, but we are including these responses here, as the employers felt it was important to stress these ideas. The comments and experiences that were expressed are listed below:

- One employee (an immigrant) can't understand why she has to work when the government will give her money to live on—this attitude is frustrating
- Can be very difficult to recruit/bring someone qualified to Canada
- Get input from engineer companies and they type of skills they need—match people with skills needed

- Government needs to be aware of what skills are lacking, which skilled workers that are really needed, get this feedback from employers
- Assessing credentials must be made simpler, less time-consuming and less cost to skilled immigrants
- There are too many piecemeal government projects out there. Stop the duplication in project mandate
- Communication skills and language skills are very important.

## **2.5 Focus Group Results**

Five employers participated in the focus group, but due to time constraints, one had to leave early. She was able to fill out the questionnaire but was unable to offer ideas for the latter discussions.

They were a varied and opinionated group with two people from different levels of government, a person from the social services/voluntary field, a small business owner, and a person working HR in a large high tech company. They came from various backgrounds and a spectrum of ages.

### **a) Skills, attributes and attitudes**

After introductions, the group brainstormed a list of skills, attributes and attitudes an ideal employee would have:

- Willingness to learn
- Customer service
- Right attitude
- Right qualifications
- Transferable skills
- Teamwork
- Technical skills
- Communication skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Communicate effectively in English
- Self-motivation
- Flexibility
- Knowing corporate culture
- Energetic
- Self-starter
- Conscientious
- Thorough
- Certification (in some professions)

The group collectively grouped some of the above into what they believe to be the top three skills:

- Self-starter (flexible, self-motivated, energetic)

- Communication skills (written and oral, as well as the ability to communicate effectively in Canadian and corporate culture—one participant said “communication equals culture”)
- Right qualifications (transferable skills, technical skills)

The above list, the group agreed, would be the same whether for a Canadian-born employee or a foreign trained worker. They stated that there is “no difference if an immigrant or not—the best candidate for the job is hired.”

## **b) Challenges and Solutions**

The group came up with a list of the largest challenges that face them, as employers, in hiring and managing foreign-trained workers. They are:

- Language
- Lack of knowledge of Canadian culture
- Fitting in (There was much discussion about this point about where the employee needs to be on the line between keeping their own culture and full assimilation. Most of the participants agreed foreign-trained workers should adapt, not assimilate.)
- Feelings of entitlement
- Being too aggressive or arrogant
- Not being self-aware enough
- No real Canadian work experience. (They defined “real” as in a proper job, not a short-term “pick-up” job or something not in the field. There was a little debate as to whether volunteering would be considered real or not. They did not come to a consensus.)
- Not knowing anyone, networking

Out of these, they flagged the top challenges as:

- Language
- Lack of knowledge of Canadian culture
- Not knowing anyone, networking
- No real Canadian experience

When asked to offer solutions for these challenges, they came up with:

- Create networking opportunities without advocacy
- Mentoring
- Teaching corporate culture and Canadian culture through networking—a system run by business people
- Have Canadians (Canadian-born or immigrants, but must be able to speak English well) tell their stories, talk about their experiences

## **c) Programs and Services**

When asked to come up with programs and services that would help them in hiring and managing foreign-trained workers, the group touched on ideas that were mentioned in many of the phone interviews. However, because of the time allowance and the ability to brainstorm as a group, they were able to give more depth to some of the suggestions.

The group would like to see:

- Bridging programs so foreign-trained workers would not have to start from scratch.
- Subsidize wages for the first year of employment.
- Change the accreditation system so that it works with governing bodies of the specific professions and to give the foreign-trained workers credit while going through the accreditation program.
- Create a program based on the Face-to-Face model, but on a larger scale.
- Create a website, a “Canadian Experience website” where people could earn a “Canadian Experience Diploma.” This website would be nationwide and people could click on communities to get information on what is available there (everything from community agencies, ESL programs, to where to buy your groceries or where to live). Also on this website there would be courses, online mentors, sound or video clips organized by subject matter, careers etc. using the relevant terminology and language. It would also stock recorded interviews and have the ability to conduct online interviews as an interactive experience to help people gain cultural experience. Ideally, it would be a place where people could exchange ideas and learn basic, unbiased information about Canada (such as rent, basic necessities, the top questions answered).

#### **d) Questionnaire Results**

There was little additional information or recommendations that came from the completed questionnaires.

Because the participants’ business sectors were so diverse, when they were asked to outline the steps a foreign trained worker needed to take to find employment in their companies, their responses were varied. However, it can be concluded that prospective employees must research companies to find out what their specific protocols are, and that it is advantageous to have strong English skills and the ability to network.

When asked what steps foreign-trained workers should take before leaving their home country, the participants advised that they learn English well, determine what the labour market needs are for their occupation or profession and liaise with Canadian employers to determine what skills and accreditation is required. Once foreign-trained workers are in Canada, this group suggested that they should liaise with employers, associations, employment agencies and network with community groups. As well, they should take cultural, language, and job search training to understand the market and standards.

#### **e) Final Thoughts or Recommendations**

When the group was asked if they had any final thoughts they wanted to share or were not given the opportunity to express, they had advice for both foreign-trained workers and the government.

They wanted foreign-trained workers to use job finding clubs, but with other Canadians, not just other immigrants. One participant simply said “Language! Networking!” They wanted to see less isolation (culturally, linguistically, geographically) for recent immigrants to avoid ghettoizing

them to help their integration into Canadian culture. Similarly, they urge the governing bodies to stop treating immigrants as “other,” to treat them as Canadians immediately and to stop using the term “immigrants.” They believe that Canada needs to provide more help to immigrants to integrate into the Canadian culture and workplace. One stated “we need to attract immigrants that would be a good fit for the needs of Canadian business (in terms of skills) but also help employers overcome the hurdles they see in hiring foreign-trained workers, such as attraction and recruitment and ease of bringing people to Canada.”

## 2.6 Summary of Deliverables

### a) List of Skills and Attributes

The following list of skills and attributes is the culmination of results from a brainstorming session conducted at the focus group interview as well as responses from one-on-one interviews. These skills and attributes can be grouped into four main categories. Some of them fit into more than one category.

<b>LANGUAGE/COMMUNICATION</b>	<b>CULTURAL</b>
Customer service	Knowing corporate culture
Verbal and written English skills	Cultural fit
Reasonable language skills	Self-motivation
Speaking skills – slow enough to be understood	Interpersonal skills
Teamwork	Teamwork
Communicate effectively in English	Customer service
Communication skills	Understand Canadian culture
Interpersonal skills	Interaction with staff
	Fit into casual office culture
	Comfortable with people from various backgrounds
<b>TECHNICAL</b>	<b>WORK ETHIC/ATTITUDE</b>
Technical skills	Right attitude
Certification	Flexibility
Experience in the field	Energetic
Familiarity with the business	Conscientious
Familiarity with computers	Willing to work hard
Presentation skills	Thorough
Marketing skills	Good work ethic
Ability to adapt to change	Willing to learn
Right qualifications	Self-motivation
Transferable skills	Determination to succeed
Negotiation skills	Work independently/self-sufficiency
Product knowledge	Positive attitude
Business development	Take initiative
Specialized skills	Ability to adapt to change
Creative	Good natured
Innovative	Patience
Problem-solving skills	

## **b) Recommendations from Employers**

The following list of recommended programs and services is the culmination of results from a brainstorming session conducted at a focus group interview as well as responses from one-on-one interviews. They could be grouped in the following categories:

### **Accreditation**

- Accreditation—work with governing bodies (for example, Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia)
- Give foreign trained workers educational credit for experience and foreign credentials while going through accreditation process
- Create a centralized agency to get credentials recognized in Canada more quickly
- Post-secondary institutions – make assessment of credentials more standard, easier and faster
- Database to check credentials, compare and confirm degrees, etc.

### **Immigration**

- Streamlined process for bringing immigrants into Canada
- Change immigration policy – should match immigrants entering Canada to the jobs required

### **Incentives for employers**

- Wage subsidies—for first 6 months to a year until upgrading is complete or until accreditation is complete
- Offer incentive to employers to hire skilled immigrants—it take more time to train them
- Remove the liability in volunteer positions—so skilled immigrants can get some Canadian experience

### **Information**

- Directory of ESL programs for each community
- Landed services support/coordination agency—resources available to skilled immigrants
- Develop a website – Canadian Experience Website
  - Courses
  - Clips (sound or video) by subject matter, careers, etc. using terminology and language
  - Nationwide – click on communities to get information on what is available
  - Earn “Canadian Experience Diploma”
  - Online mentors
  - Exchange of ideas
  - Basic, unbiased information—rent, basic necessities, top questions
  - Link to community agencies
  - Conduct online job interviews—interactive experiences
  - Stock with recorded interviews
  - Provides an introduction to Canadian and corporate culture

**Instruction**

- Technical English course
- Canadian culture program
- English language skills program
- ESL training
- Writing skills course—technical reports
- Basic IT training—computer skills
- Job search skills—interview skills
- Conversational English
- Problem solving skills course
- Working in a team environment course

**Programs**

- Bridging programs—so foreign workers don't have to start from scratch
- Face to Face model (a national program that matches disabled individuals with an employer in a particular career and that provides an opportunity to exchange information, ask questions and learn from each other; it is not a job interview but a one week opportunity for disabled individuals to be at a work site, to job shadow, and to share useful information about community resources) on a larger scale—match skilled immigrants to employers
- Co-op program

## **2.7 Conclusions and Final Recommendations**

It is apparent that employers feel changes need to be made in the current system. Foreign-trained workers are arriving in Canada not fully aware of the current job market and the accreditation/ requalification process. Language skills and the knowledge of Canadian/corporate culture are the primary challenges they face.

British Columbian employers, especially those in the Lower Mainland, seem to be aware of the benefits of employing foreign-trained workers. They want to hire the new Canadians but often feel discouraged by the process either because of bureaucracy or the immigrants' lack of readiness to work (inadequate language, technical, or cultural skills).

Based on the recommendations from employers, research, and our own perceptions we have developed the following recommendations for programs or services to aid employers in hiring foreign-trained workers.

### **a) Language Program Recommendations**

As language is the largest challenge facing employers and foreign-trained workers, further language training for immigrants is needed. Before emigrating, people should be aware of what level of English is needed to live in Canada. Once in Canada, specialized language-training courses need to be available. While there are some English for Business courses offered in the Lower Mainland, there is a need for profession/occupation specific classes. These classes could include visits from professionals in the field, instruction on where and how to upgrade skills, the Canadian corporate culture of that particular profession, and communication skills (oral and written). This type of program could be marketed as both a language and culture class and a networking opportunity.

For employers who have recently hired foreign trained workers, a government subsidy to fund on-site language training would be beneficial. The employees would learn language specific to their profession and participate in their corporate culture. It could be company policy for every new employee whose first language was not English to attend one hour per week for six months.

### **b) Information Program Recommendations**

#### **For the foreign-trained worker:**

It is clear that a concise and in-depth directory of existing programs and services needs to be available. Ideally this would be on a national level, but just provincially would work as well, and would need to be accessible online so that people could reach it outside of Canada. The directory would include lists and links to programs available in every community or region in the province, whether they were federally, provincially, municipally or privately funded. It would cover all services deemed necessary, such as immigration, language, employment, spiritual and cultural organizations, and basic informational "how-tos" of Canadian living (banking, housing, groceries, etc. and frequently asked questions). Also on this website there would be courses, online mentors, sound or video clips organized by subject matter, careers et cetera using the relevant terminology and language. It would also stock recorded interviews and have the ability

to conduct online interviews as an interactive experience to help people gain this cultural experience. Ideally, it would be a place where people could exchange ideas and learn basic, unbiased information about Canada.

### **For the employer:**

Many employers expressed a need for an easily accessible and always current directory that deals primarily with accreditation and qualification issues. Employers could compare education levels and post-secondary degrees between Canadian institutions and those throughout the world. The directory will also include guidelines for necessary upgrading categorized by profession and country of origin, as well as programs (government or private) that aid this process.

### **c) Employment Program Recommendations**

The conundrum many employers face is that they prefer to hire people with local (Canadian) experience, but many foreign-trained workers struggle to be given their first opportunity to gain such experience. Employers often suggest volunteering as a valid way to acquire relevant experience, but many businesses are unable to offer volunteer positions because of the associated liabilities.

Employers and foreign-trained workers could both benefit from a government sponsored volunteer ladder program. Recent skilled immigrants would be matched with businesses that forecast a need for new employees. After completing a language/culture course (see above), a foreign-trained worker could be placed in a company to volunteer for a short period of time (four weeks to three months) while being given a weekly honorarium paid by the government. Then the employer and foreign-trained worker would decide whether the individual is a right match for the company or not. If so, the employee continues with the company for three to six months. During this probationary period, the government subsidizes wages. After this period, if both the employer and employee are content, the employer hires the foreign-trained worker permanently and with no subsidy. This benefits both parties, as the skilled immigrant receives language and cultural training and a minimum of four weeks local experience while the employer receives a highly qualified employee.

For foreign-trained workers who have Canadian experience but are not satisfied with their current employment status, a mentorship program would be worthwhile. Members of various business sectors would act as the mentors. They could be matched through a careful screening process where the participants would be compatible in profession, personality, and goals. Mentors and foreign-trained workers could meet once a month over a six-month period. Foreign-trained workers would be given relevant advice and emotional support, while gaining opportunities in networking, practicing interpersonal skills, and participating in Canadian and corporate culture. The mentors would exercise and hone their coaching and motivational skills, participate in networking, and achieve a personal sense of accomplishment.

#### **d) Immigration Policy Recommendations**

According to many employers in British Columbia, current immigration practices are not effective. Immigration officials should be contacting employers to determine what positions or skills are in shortage today and what skills will be in demand in the future. The skilled immigrants that are being targeted for the immigration process should match the specific skills and qualifications that employers need. Many skilled immigrants are led to believe that there are jobs for them in their field or occupation in Canada when this is clearly not the case for all people. The government should provide potential skilled immigrants with accurate and honest employment prospects.

#### **e) Networking Recommendations**

The ability to network and create opportunities is one of the largest challenges recent skilled immigrants face in finding employment. It would be difficult to create an effective networking-specific program because those attracted to such a program would be others in similar situations (unemployed or under-employed) rather than those who could be in the position to open doors to employment (business owners, managers, HR people). It is imperative that all programs targeting immigrants have networking components, whether it is bringing in people from the business world to meet and speak with foreign trained workers or by stressing the importance of reaching beyond ethnic-specific communities to the larger Canadian culture and creating opportunities through organizations and activities such as sports, religious institutions, schools or professional organizations.

A series of monthly information sessions could be a productive networking opportunity. Each month would highlight a different profession. The guest speakers at the sessions would be a Canadian in the field and one or two foreign trained workers who successfully attached to this particular field of employment. Participants would hear about how to break in to the field, what the challenges were and how they were resolved. This series of information sessions would not only be limited to recent immigrants, but also be open to students or anyone else who would be interested in pursuing the particular field to enhance diversity within the group.

### 3.1 Appendix A - Bibliography

#### Surveys, Studies, Reports

Canadian Labour and Business Centre. *Interim Report for the Integration of Internationally Trained Workers Project*. Ottawa: Developed in collaboration with United Way/Centraide of Ottawa and LASI/World Skills. September, 2003.

- Ottawa-based report focusing on specific skilled immigrant labourers—teachers, engineers, masons, nurses—and their distinct challenges and recommendations for solutions.

Canadian Labour and Business Centre. *Moving Forward: for the Integration of Internationally Trained Workers Project*. Ottawa: Developed in collaboration with United Way/Centraide of Ottawa and LASI/World Skills. February, 2004.

Surrey Delta Immigrant Services Society, Immigrant Services Society of BC, MOSAIC. *Internationally Trained Professionals in BC: An Environmental Scan*. Vancouver: Prepared for the BC Internationally Trained Professionals Network Project Management Team. November, 2002.

- Overview of BC's internationally trained professional population including information on demographics (occupations, origin countries, etc.), findings from immigrant serving agencies, and an extensive bibliography.

Frenette, Marc and René Morissette. *Will They Ever Converge? Earnings of Immigrant and Canadian-born Workers over the Last Two Decades*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada: Business and Labour Market Analysis Division. October, 2003.

- Statistical comparison covering the years 1980-2000 between the earnings of immigrant workers and their Canadian-born counterparts.

Statistics Canada. *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada: Labour Market Entry*. Ottawa: <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-611-XIE/labour.htm> 2004.

- Statistical overview of the immigrant labour experience in Canada. Highlights include effects of language skills and education, fields of work, occupational shifts, and hurdles including lack of Canadian experience and transferability of foreign credentials.

Looking Ahead. *Employing New Immigrants Forum: Case Study Discussion Group Notes*. Vancouver: <http://www.lookingahead.bc.ca/links.cfm?linkType=research> October 16, 2001

- Questions, comments offered, and case studies for Looking Ahead's Employing New Immigrants Forum.

BC Coalition for Immigrant Integration. *Immigrants: An Investment in BC's Future*. <http://www.amssa.org/bccii/> Vancouver: July, 2002.

- BC and Canadian trends and recommendations

BC Internationally Trained Professional Network. *All Professions Information Session: Surrey Delta Immigrant Services Society—Surrey*. Vancouver:

<http://www.bcitp.net/newsreleases.cfm?wp=en&page=29> March 5, 2003.

- Results from session in Surrey that included primarily skilled immigrant professionals. Highlights include lists of: challenges to accessing profession, dealing with regulatory organizations, needs regarding employment opportunities, ideas for network/association.

Spigelman, Martin. *Looking Ahead: Immigration Overview—Planning for the Labour Market Integration of Immigrants in the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley Regions of British Columbia*. Vancouver: Immigrants Labour Force Integration Steering Committee. 1999.

- Primarily a statistical overview of BC's immigration trends, settlement patterns, countries of origins, income, labour force participation, etc.

Lochhead, Clarence. *The Transition Penalty: Unemployment Among Recent Immigrants to Canada—CLBC Commentary*. Ottawa: Canadian Labour and Business Centre. July, 2003.

Lochhead, Clarence. *Perspectives on Immigration: Findings from the Central Labour and Business Centre's Survey of Canadian Business, Labour and Public Sector Leaders—Final Report*. Ottawa: Canadian Labour and Business Centre—Submitted to Strategic Policy Division, Citizenship and Immigration Canada. March 31, 2003.

Lamontagne, Francois. *Food for Thought: Workers Educated Abroad: Seduction and Abandonment*. Ottawa: Canadian Career Development Foundation for Working Connection, The Pan-Canadian Symposium on Career Development and Lifelong-Learning and Workforce Development. November 26, 2003

Alboim, Naomi and The Maytree Foundation. *Fulfilling the Promise: Integrating Immigrant Skills into the Canadian Economy*. Toronto: Caledon Institute of Social Policy. April 2002.

*EASI Strategy: Employment Access for Skilled Immigrants: A systems approach to facilitate the entry of skilled immigrants into the British Columbia labour market*. Vancouver: June 24, 2002.

*EASI Strategy: Employment Access for Skilled Immigrants: A systems approach to facilitate the entry of skilled immigrants into the British Columbia labour market: Leadership Council Discussion Paper*. Vancouver: January 16, 2003.

*Employment Access for Skilled Immigrants: An Implementation Strategy*. Vancouver: March 31, 2003.

Business Council of British Columbia. *2002 Biennial Skills and Attributes Survey Report: What are BC Employers looking for?* Vancouver: [www.bcbc.com/publications](http://www.bcbc.com/publications) April 3, 2002.

Business Council of British Columbia. *Press Release: Business Council says employers are looking for workers who are "accountable and responsible"*. Vancouver: [www.bcbc.com/publications/pr040302.asp](http://www.bcbc.com/publications/pr040302.asp) April 3, 2002.

*Labour Market year-end review*. January 23, 2004.

[www.canadaimmigrationnews.com/Canadianimmigration/new/viewnews.aspx](http://www.canadaimmigrationnews.com/Canadianimmigration/new/viewnews.aspx)

- General labour stats for 2003

Sangster, Derwyn. *Assessing and Recognizing Foreign Credentials in Canada—Employers' Views*. Ottawa: Canadian Labour and Business Centre, prepared for Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Human Resources Development Canada in consultation with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. January, 2001.

Spigelman, Martin and Associates. *Building Community: A Framework for Services for the Korean Community in the Lower Mainland Region of British Columbia*. Vancouver: prepared for The City of Vancouver, Canadian Heritage, and MOSAIC. July, 2000.

- An overview of the Korean community in the Lower Mainland, mentions some challenges faced in reaching the community and divisions within the community.

### **Newspaper/ Magazine Articles**

“Pounding the pavement.” *Canada and the World Background*, Dec 2002 v68 i3 pS13(3)

Malarek, Victor. “Immigrant rules called too tough.” *Globe & Mail* (Toronto, Canada), April 8, 2003

Peritz, Ingrid and Mahoney, Jill. “Census: immigrants to Canada are increasingly taking high-skill positions.” *Globe & Mail* (Toronto, Canada), Feb 12, 2003 pNA

Cunningham, Dave. “Giant sucking sound: taxation and immigration policies are hemorrhaging entrepreneurs from Canada.” *BC Report*, July 27, 1998 v9 i45 p33.

Jimenez, Marina. “200,000 illegal immigrants toiling in Canada's underground economy.(National News)(SATURDAY SPECIAL: UNDER THE RADAR).” *Globe & Mail* (Toronto, Canada), Nov 15, 2003 pA1

Collacott, Martin. “Better a flow than a flood.” *Globe & Mail* (Toronto, Canada), Sept 17, 2003 pA25

Harding, Katherine. “A Leap of Faith.” *Globe & Mail* (Toronto, Canada), January 8, 2003.

Wong, Jan. “Thorncliffe Park Series: Tales from the towers.” *Globe & Mail*, February 20, 2004.

Wong, Jan. “Thorncliffe Park Series: Cold calls without a coat.” *Globe & Mail*, February 20, 2004.

Wong, Jan. “Thorncliffe Park Series: Seven people, one bedroom.” *Globe & Mail*, February 20, 2004.

Wong, Jan. "Thorncliffe Park Series: The landlord and the insults." *Globe & Mail*, February 20, 2004.

Wong, Jan. "Thorncliffe Park Series: Life in Thorncliffe Park." *Globe & Mail*, February 28, 2004.

Wong, Jan. "Thorncliffe Park Series: The doctor's sister's story." *Globe & Mail*, March 13, 2004.

Wong, Jan. "Thorncliffe Park Series: There's almost nowhere for Deewa to play." *Globe & Mail*, March 20, 2004.

Wong, Jan. "Thorncliffe Park Series: William's and Julie's big news." *Globe & Mail*, March 26, 2004.

Wong, Jan. "Thorncliffe Park Series: All that space, the neighbours marvel." *Globe & Mail*, April 3, 2004.

Wong, Jan. "Thorncliffe Park Series: The final chapter." *Globe & Mail*, April 10, 2004.

### 3.2 Appendix B – Interview Questionnaire for One-on-One Interviews

#### INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Business Interviewed: \_\_\_\_\_

Person Interviewed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/time of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_ Business Sector: \_\_\_\_\_

---

- 1) What are your thoughts and feelings about hiring skilled immigrants?
- 2) Will you hire skilled immigrants without Canadian experience?
- 3) What particular challenges /successes have you experienced in recruiting, hiring, training and managing skilled immigrants?
- 4) How did you resolve/address these challenges? How did you support these successes?
- 5) What are the most important skills, attributes, or attitudes that skilled immigrants should have to work for your company?
- 6) Does your company have any services/programs in place for skilled immigrants? What are they?
- 7) What types of programs/services would assist you in recruiting, hiring, training, and maintaining skilled immigrants as employees?
- 8) Would you say that your experience with employing skilled immigrants has been mostly positive or mostly negative?
- 9) Any words of wisdom that you can offer to skilled immigrants looking for work?
- 10) Is there one particular message that you want to be sure to get across?
- 11) Any other comments or experiences that you want to be sure are included in our final report to the provincial government? Are there any recommendations that you want to make to the Provincial government?

### 3.3 Appendix C – Information Notice



YMCA

We build strong kids,  
strong families, strong communities.

#### An Employer Survey: Employment of Skilled Immigrants

##### Background:

The YMCA of Greater Vancouver has been dedicated to helping immigrants find employment for almost 120 years. In recent years there has been a shift in immigration trends and we want our programming to reflect and aid these changes. To achieve this, we are conducting a survey amongst employers to determine what programs and services they need to help them in employing immigrants.

The study is one of several recent BC initiatives funded by the BC Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women’s Services. It will include focus groups and one-on-one interviews with employers who are working with, or have worked with, recent immigrants.

##### Goals:

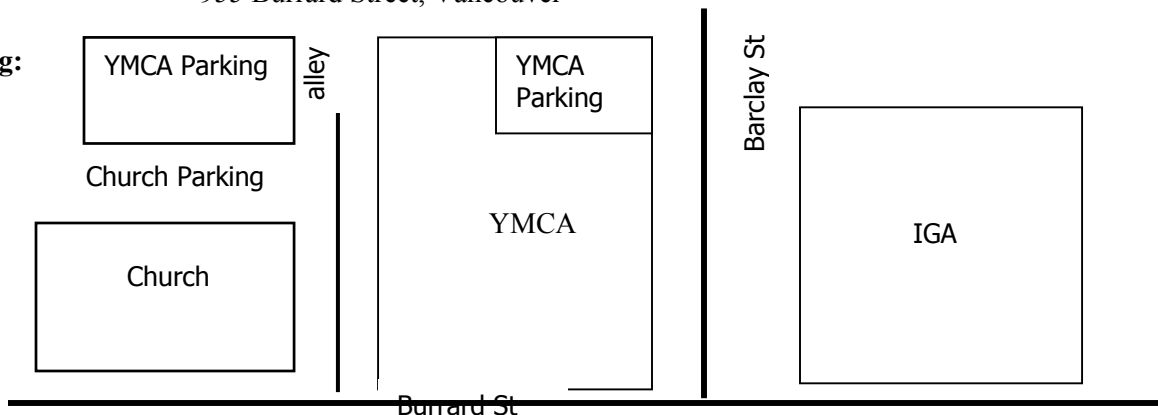
From these information sessions, we will create a profile of top employability skills required by employers, recommendations for services, programs and resources needed in the current environment, and guidelines for future employment and language programs.

**Participants:** Employers of all sizes in a variety of business sectors

**When:** Tuesday, April 27, 2004 from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.  
Breakfast will be provided

**Where:** YMCA of Greater Vancouver  
Caribou Room on 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
955 Burrard Street, Vancouver

##### Parking:



**How can you help?** If you are a business owner or manager and would like to assist us with this study, or know of someone who would, please contact Cheryl McNicol at [cheryl.mcnicol@vanymca.org](mailto:cheryl.mcnicol@vanymca.org) or call 604 685 8066.

### 3.4 Appendix D – Focus Group Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to have a picture of the people who participated in the focus group meeting. We are not asking for your name.

The more you write, the better—feel free to use the back, or ask for extra paper.

1. Position in company: \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. What is your gender? a) female      b) male
  
3. What is your age?  
a) 24 or younger      b) 25-34      c) 35-44      d) 45-54      e) 55+
  
4. What is the size of your company?  
a) small (under 50 employees)    b) mid-sized (50-499)    c) large (500 +)
  
5. What is your business sector? \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. How would you describe your experiences with hiring foreign trained workers?
  
7. If you were a foreign trained worker, what steps would you take to find work in your company?
  
8. What steps should a foreign trained worker take to find employment in Canada? Before leaving home country? Once in Canada?
  
9. Any other comments or experiences that you want to be sure are included in our final report to the provincial government? Are there any recommendations that you want to make to the Provincial government?

*We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services.*

### 3.5 Appendix E – Ad for the Architectural Institute of B.C.’s eNewsletter

Want to make a difference? Your opinions and experiences matter to us. The YMCA of Greater Vancouver is conducting a study of employers of skilled immigrants to determine what programs and services they need to help them in employing recent immigrants. We are looking for volunteers to attend a two-hour breakfast meeting/focus group to create a profile of top employability skills required by employers, recommendations for services, programs and resources needed in the current environment, and guidelines for future employment and language programs. If you are interested, or know someone who might be, please contact Cheryl @ 604 685 8066.

### 3.6 Appendix F – Ad for Vancouver Board of Trade newspaper Sounding Board



YMCA

We build strong kids,  
strong families, strong communities.

YMCA of Greater Vancouver is conducting a survey amongst employers to determine what programs and services they need to help them in employing immigrants. If you are a business owner or manager and would like to share your opinions and experiences, or know of someone who would, please contact Cheryl McNicol at [cheryl.mcnicol@vanymca.org](mailto:cheryl.mcnicol@vanymca.org) or 604 685 8066.

### 3.7 Appendix G – Notice for Downtown Vancouver Rotary Chapter Newsletter



YMCA

We build strong kids,  
strong families, strong communities.

YMCA of Greater Vancouver has been dedicated to helping immigrants find employment for almost 120 years. In recent years there has been a shift in immigration trends and we want our programming to reflect and aid these changes. To achieve this, we are conducting a survey amongst employers to determine what programs and services they need to help them in employing immigrants.

The survey, partially funded by the BC Ministry of Community, Women and Aboriginal Service, will include focus groups and one-on-one interviews with employers who are working with, or have worked with, recent immigrants. From these information sessions, we will create a profile of top employability skills required by employers, recommendations for services, programs and resources needed in the current environment, and guidelines for future employment and language programs.

**How can you help?** If you are a business owner or manager and would like to assist us with this survey, or know of someone who would, please contact Cheryl McNicol at [cheryl.mcnicol@vanymca.org](mailto:cheryl.mcnicol@vanymca.org) or 604 685 8066.

## **3.8 Appendix H – Listing of Participating Employers**

### **Business Names**

- 1) 3M Touch Systems
- 2) ADT Security Services Canada Inc.
- 3) Alcan
- 4) Atlas Alarms Ltd.
- 5) Apparent Networks
- 6) Association of Neighbourhood Houses of Greater Vancouver
- 7) BC Association of Community Living
- 8) BC Public Service Agency
- 9) Bing Thom Architects
- 10) Blake Cassels and Graydon LLP
- 11) Blast Radius
- 12) Boys and Girls Club
- 13) Braintech Inc.
- 14) Chubb Security Systems
- 15) City of Vancouver (two participants)
- 16) Coast Capital Savings Credit Union
- 17) Commercial Electronics Ltd.
- 18) Covenant House
- 19) Creation Technologies
- 20) Creo Inc.
- 21) Crystal Decisions
- 22) Dossiercreative Inc.
- 23) Electronic Arts
- 24) Fleming Design
- 25) Freybe Gourmet Foods Ltd.
- 26) Harper Gray Easton
- 27) HRDC
- 28) ICBC
- 29) KP Wood
- 30) Logotex
- 31) MacDonald Dettwiler & Associates Ltd. (two participants)
- 32) McCarthy Tetrault LLP
- 33) Methanex Corporation, Kitimat
- 34) Methanex Corporation, Vancouver
- 35) MTT Technologies
- 36) Norske Skog Canada
- 37) Pacific Coast Information Systems Ltd.
- 38) Patch Computers
- 39) Peer I Network
- 40) Pottinger Gaherty Environmental Consultants
- 41) RKW Communications Inc.
- 42) Robert Freundlich and Associates

- 43) Sandwell International Inc.
- 44) Shaw Communications
- 45) TIR Systems Ltd.
- 46) Transport Canada
- 47) Vancouver Coastal Health Authority
- 48) Vancouver Community College
- 49) Vancouver Fire and Safety
- 50) Velare Technologies
- 51) Xynyth Manufacturing
- 52) YMCA Administrative Offices
- 53) Zybotix Systems Inc.