



Skills Without Borders



Connecting employers and skilled immigrants

(Phase 2)

Final Report

*Sponsored by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce
(With support from the Region of Peel, and
ACCES Employment)*

Backgrounder and Objectives

In January 2008, the **Brampton Board of Trade**, with funding provided by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, launched Phase 2 of its award-winning program “**Skills Without Borders**”-connecting employers and skilled immigrants.

Research results and information gathered through focus groups, as part of the phase 1 of the programme, clearly indicate that in addition to the three barriers preventing skilled immigrants from gaining meaningful employment in their field of training and expertise, already identified and extensively addressed by settlement organizations and governmental programmes (language related barriers, credentials assessment, evaluation and licensing barriers, lack of Canadian experience), there are significant cultural barriers that have not yet been sufficiently researched, precisely identified and properly addressed.

These acculturation barriers relate to both, the insufficient awareness from Canadian employers of specific cultural characteristics and differences that skilled immigrants bring to the workplace and their advantages and challenges, as well as a lack of familiarity with Canadian corporate culture from the side of the skilled immigrants.

Based on these findings, phase 2 of Skills Without Borders was designed and launched to raise employers awareness about the benefits and challenges of developing and managing a culturally diverse workforce, focusing on the premise that diversity is good for business.

Planned Activities and Deliverables

In order to address the issues of cultural diversity in the workplace and Canadian acculturation on newcomers, and their challenges and opportunities for employers in their imperative quest of diversifying their workforces while advancing the integration of skilled immigrants into the Canadian workforce in their fields of training and expertise, phase 2 of the programme planned the following activities and deliverables:

- **Updating, expanding and enhancing the programme website**
www.skillswithoutborders.com
- **Writing a monthly column in the BBOT newspaper Trade Talks** and posting it in the website to educate employers regarding the development and management of a culturally diverse workforce.
- **Developing partnerships and networking with settlement organizations** providing employment services to skilled immigrants, to conduct joint activities

and events aimed to increase awareness among employers and advance the employment integration of skilled immigrants.

- **Organize and host the 2nd annual Job Fair for local employers** to facilitate meeting their labour needs and diversifying their workforces by hiring skilled immigrants.
- **Actively participating in several panels, conferences and other events** to promote and disseminate the position, involvement and accomplishments of the BBOT with respect to the issue of cultural diversity in the Canadian workplace.
- **Development of an online Resource Guide** with comprehensive information and links for international entrepreneurs.
- **Development of an Employers' Manual** summarizing basic facts about workplace diversity, as a resource for employers dealing with the development and management of a culturally diverse workforce.
- **Organizing and delivering of an Employers' presentation** to launch the Employers' Manual and to further raise awareness, among employers, about the business benefits and challenges of diversifying their workforce.

Project Results

Skills Without Borders website

The website www.skillswithoutborders.com has been updated, expanded and enhanced with new features including testimonials of success stories, updated information and photo galleries of events and activities, newspaper articles about cultural diversity, development and management of a diverse workforce focusing on benefits and challenges, and employment integration of skilled immigrants.

New useful information for employers has been posted providing additional links to sites featuring advice and guidance pertinent to:

- **Accessing the large and growing pool of skilled immigrants**
- **Benefits of hiring skills immigrants and diversifying the workforce**
- **Improving hiring practices**
- **Managing a culturally diverse workforce**
- **Dealing with language issues**

Newspaper column

A monthly column was written and published in the **BBOT newspaper Trade Talks** which is delivered to all businesses in Brampton, including non members, with a circulation of more than 8 000 employers.

The articles, available also online at the programme website, were titled:

- **Cross Cultural Differences in the Workplace**
- **Diversity is good for business-Advantages and Challenges of Cultural Diversity in the Workplace**
- **The Canadian Way-Canadian Workplace Culture and Cultural Diversity**
- **Working with Diverse Culture**
- **Integrating Skilled Immigrants: Barriers or Advantages?**
- **Employer focused strategy needed for employment integration of immigrants**
- **Need to better match immigration with regional labour shortages**
- **Discrimination or Employers' Expectations?**
- **Employers or Immigrants: It's not about taking sides!**
- **Immigration needs to adapt to current economic circumstances**
- **Brampton "Ethnic Businesses"- Welcome aboard the BBOT**

Several other articles, including one from the President of the Board, were written and published in Trade Talks and other local papers as well as posted on the website as part of the cultural diversity awareness campaign.

Photo exhibit

On February 12th, 2008, the Brampton Board of Trade, in partnership with the **Toronto Region Immigrant and Employment Council (TRIEC)**, launched the photo exhibit **20 Journeys-A visual essay of the immigrant experience** at the Bramalea City Centre.

The exhibit, as part of the ongoing employers' awareness campaign about the importance, benefits and challenges of effectively including skilled immigrants in the Canadian labour market, is a traveling showcase of powerful photographs and stories of immigrants entering the Canadian labour force. It details the experiences of skilled immigrants, their journeys to achieving integration, success and happiness, and the programmes and employers that have shared in their milestones. The exhibit featured immigrants from India, Sri Lanka, China, Colombia, Ghana, Greece, Kenya, Lebanon, Mexico, the UK and the Ukraine. The launching event was attended by several personalities including the President and the CEO of the BBOT, the Executive Director of TRIEC, the Executive Director of the Peel Newcomer Strategy Group and the MPP for the Region of Peel.

The exhibit was on display for two weeks until February 24.

Job Fair

On May 21st, 2008, the BBOT, in partnership with the **Region of Peel**, hosted its **2nd Annual Job Fair for local employers** at the Holiday Inn Select Brampton. The event featured exhibits and staff from close to 40 leading employers in the region with multiples job openings and/or interested in diversifying their workforce. Employers/exhibitors included large companies like Coca-Cola Bottling, the Canadian

Forces, several health care and IT companies, Sheridan College and leading career and employment agencies like ACCESS Careers Solutions and MMMI Employment Solutions, as well as leading settlement organizations providing employment services to skilled immigrants and employers like ACCES Employment Services and COSTI Immigrant Services.

Numerous ads were placed in different ethnic newspapers, Trade Talks and the major local newspaper, the Brampton Guardian, and media coverage of this extremely successful job fair was provided by Trade Talks, Brampton Business Times and the Brampton Guardian.

The fair was attended by more than 500 job seekers, with multiple job applications filled on site and numerous job interviews conducted at the spot.

The results of an evaluation form, filled by job seekers and employers, show that satisfaction among employers/exhibitors regarding planning, organization, hosting and effectiveness of the fair was overwhelmingly positive. At the same time, more than 56% of job seekers stated that their skills were in demand by employers/exhibitors and more than 85% rated the fair, regarding promotion and advertisement, organization and usefulness as excellent or very good.

Opportunities 2008 Conference

In April, 2008, the Skills Without Borders Project Coordinators represented the BBOT at the **9th Annual Opportunities Conference “Workforce 2010: Preparing for tomorrow’s challenges”** in Niagara Falls.

The Skills Without Borders Coordinator co-presented a proposal for a **“Mentoring Model for Employers to Ensure Successful Workforce Integration of New Immigrants”**.

According to the organizers of the conference, **ONESTEP** and the **Ontario Alliance of Career Development Practitioners, Opportunities 2008** was a very successful gathering and workshop, and the presentation on behalf of the BBOT was rated as *“one of the best presentations because of the content and discussions involving a Chamber of Commerce”, as well as for the “knowledge and passion of the presenter and his innovative approaches”*.

The content of the presentation and follow up debate included:

1. The Social Case for Employment Integration of Skilled Immigrants

- The “compassionate approach”
- Consequences for the communities
- Consequences for the newcomers

2. The Canadian Point Based Immigration Criteria

- Main parameters to be selected/accepted
 - Reality after landing: the “ four main barriers”
3. **Government Programs and Settlement Organizations**
 - Language courses, credentials assessment, “Canadian experience”
 - Diversity awareness and Canadian acculturation
 4. **Basing the Business Case on “Skills Shortages”**
 - Federal Stats and “the Business Case”
 - The Australian Immigration System
 - Local labour demand and its consequences
 5. **Making the Right Business Case: Diversity is Good for Business!**
 - Demand and Supply(skills needed and talent available)
 - Marketing the assets of skilled immigrants
 6. **Language, Credentials, Experience: Barriers or Assets?**
 - Assets of skilled immigrants
 - Cultural diversity in the Canadian workplace
 7. **Accessing the Talent Pool of Skilled Immigrants: Building, Retaining, and Managing a Culturally Diverse Workforce**
 - Ways and means
 - Job posting and interviewing
 8. **Conclusions: The Right Approach, The Right Model**
 - Employment and Integration of skilled immigrants (opportunities, fairness and transparency)
 - Diversity awareness campaign (integration-accommodation)
 - Partnerships between settlement-employment agencies and chambers of commerce
 - The right message and the right “messenger”
 - The right approach; recommended model

(A full version of the presentation is available at the program website www.skillswithoutborders.com)

OECD Conference

In May, 2008, the Skills Without Borders Programme Coordinator participated, on behalf of The Brampton Board of Trade, in the Metropolitan Review of the Greater Toronto Area of the **Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)**. Established in 1961 and based in Paris, the OECD brings together the governments of 30 countries committed to democracy and market economy from around the world, including Canada to support sustainable economic growth, boost employment, raise standards of living, maintain financial stability and contribute to growth in world trade.

As part of the in-depth analysis of the economic, social, cultural and environmental factors affecting the Greater Toronto Area (GTA)’s long term prosperity, a session was

dedicated to the issues of Diversity Advantage, Social Inclusion and Immigration and Integration.

During this session the position of the BBOT, based on the findings and accomplishments of its Skills Without Borders project, was presented and debated.

The content of the presentation, titled **“BBOT prospective: Opportunities and challenges regarding the employment integration of skilled immigrants into the Canadian workplace in their fields of training and expertise”** included explanations about the following topics and view points:

- **Immigrants coming to Canada are told that their skills are needed, but *they are not told where in Canada they are needed***
- **Economic class immigrants are selected according to a point system based on *Language, qualifications (credentials,) and experience***
- **After landing they settle where previous immigrant from same countries and backgrounds have already settled, not necessarily where their skills are in short supply.**
- **In addition, they encounter language barriers, difficulties with credential assessment, recognition and licensing, rejection based on a lack of “Canadian experience”, and acculturation barriers.**
- **Settlement organizations and Government programs at all levels have address these barriers, but with limited success**
- **BBOT initiative “Skills Without Borders” is tackling the issue of employment integration of skilled immigrants, in their fields of training and expertise, from the employers’ prospective**
- **To make the so called “business case” based on “labour shortages” is not appropriate: there are not labour shortages in Canada in all regions and in all sectors of the Economy (current unemployment rate stands at 6%)**
- **At the present time an awareness campaign “Diversity is Good for Business” is being conducted. Diversifying the workforce helps address the needs of a multicultural consumers’ base, and do business in a global economy. Internationally trained professionals bring assets to the market place that Canadian born and trained professionals don’t necessarily have: a second language, international credentials and experience.**
- **Partnerships are to be developed between settlement organizations, chambers of commerce and government departments to conduct more accurate regional labour needs research, structure the immigration plans accordingly and address the issue of employment integration of skilled immigrants**

Networking and Partnership with Settlement Organizations

In order to address the employers labour needs, while facilitating the employment integration of internationally trained professionals and trades people in their fields of training and expertise, Skills Without Borders has partnered, among others, with the following community organizations providing employment services to employers and

skilled immigrants: **The Toronto Region Immigration and Employment Council (TRIEC), ACCES Employment, COSTI Immigrant Services and The Brampton Neighbourhood Resource Centre (BNRC).**

Networking with our community partners we have been able to address numerous requests from employers for specific skills needs, by referring suitable qualified, pre-screened skilled immigrants able to meet the employers' requisites.

In the project website a sample of testimonials of success stories has been posted.

Online Guide for International Entrepreneurs

In collaboration with the BBOT Multicultural Committee, Skills Without Borders developed an online guide for international entrepreneurs titled **“Starting a Business in Brampton”** to provide prospective and already landed immigrants contemplating the opening of a business in Brampton with comprehensive information and links regarding all aspects of start-up and running a business in our city. (See online Guide at www.skillswithoutborders.com)

Table of content

I. Before coming to Canada: Research and Preparation for Immigration

- **Canadian Immigration**
- **Documents you should carry**
- **Things that can be brought into Canada**
- **Getting ready if you are a Business Immigrant**
- **Canadian Climate: What to expect**
- **Cost of living in Canada**
- **Choosing Brampton as your destination**

II. After landing in Canada: Settlement issues

- **Finding a place to live**
- **Banking**
- **Telephone services**
- **Health Services**
- **Education**
- **Transportation**
- **Language Training**
- **Services in Brampton**

III. Doing Business in Brampton

- **Checking the business idea: Is it needed in Brampton?**
- **How to start a business: A checklist**
- **Canadian business practices**
- **Type of business: Local or Import-Export? Revenue Canada Tariffs.**
- **Registration, licensing and incorporation**
- **Legal and Financial issues**
- **Business Structure and Organization: Sole Proprietorship; Partnership**
- **Business taxes**
- **Employment Standards**
- **Marketing , Advertisement and Sales**
- **Operating a business in Brampton: Customer Service tips**
- **Programs for business immigrants entrepreneurs**
- **Local contacts**

Cultural Diversity Awareness: Developing of an Employers’ Manual to help employers dealing with the recruiting and managing of a culturally diverse workforce, its business benefits and challenges.

With the assistance of our partner **ACCES Employment** , and with help from the BBOT Multicultural Committee, Skills Without Borders developed an **Employers’ Manual** titled **“WORKPLACE DIVERSITY: AN EMPLOYER’S GUIDE FOR BUSINESS ADVANTAGE”** to help employers understand the business benefits and challenges of hiring and managing a cultural diverse workforce.

Table of content

- **Introduction**
- **Advantages of a Culturally Diverse Workforce**
- **Making Connections: How and Where to Find Candidates**
- **Assessing Qualifications & Experience**
- **Determining Language Proficiency**
- **Credential Assessment**
- **Finding the Right Fit: Interviewing Tips & Techniques**
- **Employers’ Obligations & Rights Re: Accommodation**
- **Managing Cultural Differences**
- **Sponsored Workplace Supports & Subsidies**
- **FAQ’s**

The Employer’s Guide will be available, after February 26th, online at the project website, www.skillswithoutborders.com. An electronic file is attached to this report, and

hard copies will be available at and after the official launching to be held at the February 25th Employers' Presentation.

Employers' presentation on Cultural Diversity and launching of the Employers' Manual

On February 25th and 26th, 2009, the BBOT and SWB with the assistance of ACCES Employment, hosted two Employers' Breakfast Presentations titled **Workplace Diversity: A Business Success Story**.

These presentations featured, as keynote speaker, **John Cutruzzola, President and CEO of Inzola Construction Inc.**, an immigrant himself, a businessman, an artist, a community leader and visionary.

In his presentations, Mr. Cutruzzola delivered a very optimistic and powerful message of hope to both employers and immigrants, highlighting his personal experience about Canada as a land of fairness and opportunities where talent, values and perseverance always prevail and lead to success and happiness, and a country where we all feel welcome, accepted, respected and valued, as Canadian Citizens, with a deep sense of pride and belonging.

The events was attended by numerous personalities and dignitaries, including the President of The Brampton Board of Trade, the Executive Director of ACCES Employment, the CEO of the Brampton Neighbourhood Resource Centre, MPPs, officials from the City of Brampton and the Region of Peel, as well as numerous prominent business people.

Media coverage of these events included the Brampton Guardian, Trade Talks, and OMNI Television.

Resolutions presented to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce

Two project resolutions were developed and have been presented for consideration to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, one about the need of involvement and proactive participation of Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade in addressing the issue of employment integration of skilled immigrants into the Canadian economy, and another about the need of better matching immigration with regional labour needs and the role that Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade should play.

Both resolutions, supported by The Economic Policy Committee of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, were approved during the CCC AGM.

Recommendations

In order to maintain, expand and successfully complete the initiated Cultural Diversity Awareness Campaign, the following tasks are recommended:

- **Maintaining, updating and further expanding the SWB website**
- **Developing and managing a blog about Cultural Diversity and/or Employment Integration of Immigrants to disseminate news, view points, positions, suggestions of lines of action and, at the same time, gather information from stakeholders and the community at large, and promote and facilitate the debate of related issues and find possible solutions.**
- **Continuing publishing newspaper articles to increase awareness and educate employers about the benefits and challenges of developing and managing a culturally diverse workforce.**
- **Revise and expand the online resource guide for international entrepreneurs**
- **Complete and publish a cultural diversity awareness pamphlet**
- **Organize and host presentations to promote awareness and provide resources and tools to help employers in the quest of developing and managing a cultural diverse workforce**
- **Continuing the development of close partnerships with settlement and community organizations providing employment services to employers and skilled immigrants to advance the agenda of employment integration of newcomer professionals and trades people, while addressing the skills and labour needs of local employers.**
- **Networking with other boards of trade and chambers of commerce to provide assistance and support for the implementation of similar programmes within their jurisdictions**
- **Organize and host The Brampton Board of Trade Third Annual Job Fair**