

MEDIA RELEASE

Local Employers Recognized at the 2010 ECC Summit

Wednesday, March 24, 2010, Ottawa – Hire Immigrants Ottawa (HIO) hosted employers, senior executives from public-and-private sector organizations, representatives from immigrant serving agencies and stakeholders at the 2010 Employer Council of Champions Summit (ECC)-*Leadership, Collaboration and Innovation: The Key to Addressing Ottawa's Talent Needs*. The annual ECC Summit provides a unique opportunity for employers to engage with each other and to learn about the most effective ways of integrating skilled immigrants into their workplaces.

The Summit is a two-day event that featured a Learning Exchange, and a networking event that brought together employers and skilled immigrants. A keynote address by Carleton University's labour market and workplace health expert Linda Duxbury provided insight to employers on the transformational changes coming to the workforce. As well, a key element of the Summit was the presentation of the 2010 Employer Excellence Awards to local employers who have implemented innovative practices in the recruitment and retention of skilled immigrants. The event was facilitated by members of the ECC and sponsored by Scotiabank.

"Scotiabank is proud to sponsor the ECC Summit," said Dennis Jackson, Scotiabank District Vice President, Ottawa and West Quebec and a member of the Employer Council of Champions. "This event provides an important opportunity for employers to share best practices for inclusive workplaces that welcome Canada's new skilled immigrants. As Canada's most international bank, Scotiabank believes strongly in engaging a diverse workforce that reflects the communities in which we operate. We also believe diversity contributes directly to business success. Harnessing the skills and the cultural perspectives of newcomers to Canada generates innovative thinking and provides us with a competitive edge."

In light of rapidly changing demographics, the Employer Council of Champions used the Summit as an opportunity to call other Ottawa employers to action. With declining birthrates, decreasing numbers of post-secondary graduates, and a coming wave of retirements, Ottawa's employers face impending skills shortages, and they need to prepare their workplaces for the effective recruitment and integration of skilled immigrant talent. Employers will have also have to work collaboratively with each other and with other stakeholders to fully take advantage of the skills that immigrants bring to the city.

"...we need to do more to fully integrate our highly skilled and educated immigrants into our workplace if we want to maintain our position as their destination of choice. Communities that are best able to do this will be economic leaders," said Rosemarie Leclair, President and Chief Executive Officer of Hydro Ottawa Group of Companies and ECC Co-Chair.

Canada's population is becoming increasingly diversified. According to Statistics Canada's latest projections, by 2031, more than 25% of Canadian residents would be foreign-born—the highest proportion since confederation. Along with significant international work experience, more than 60% of these immigrants will have some type of post-secondary education—the proportion is even higher for working-age immigrants.

While demographic changes may be associated with challenges, they can also provide real opportunity. Skilled immigrants play a critical role as a catalyst for innovation and creativity in Ottawa's workplaces and economy. And as Ottawa's businesses expand into the global market, skilled workers with international experience will become important assets to growing organizations. Cultural expertise will be important for the domestic market also, as Canada's population becomes more culturally diverse. Indeed, according to the Conference Board, the Canadian economy already suffers an annual loss of \$5.9 billion as a result of underemployment among internationally trained workers.

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“Business is becoming increasingly international. Employing staff who have international experience and who come from different cultures helps organizations access a diverse customer base,” said Hicham Adra, Senior Vice-President and General Manager, National Capital Region of CGI and ECC Co-Chair. “HIO works hard to ensure that employer have the tools and resources and networks necessary to respond to these shifts.”

Employers can access tools and resources – including a schedule for cross-cultural competency training- on the HIO website at www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca.

Some employers have already opened their doors to hiring and integrating skilled immigrants. The following organizations were recognized with a 2010 Employer Excellence Award for their innovative practices in talent management:

- The large-employer category for outstanding practices in the recruitment of skilled immigrants – The City of Ottawa was recognized for the development and application of its “Equity and Inclusion Lens” as an HR tool within its hiring process. The tool will be used to develop policies and programs that address systemic barriers in the recruitment and promotion of workers with diverse backgrounds, including internationally trained individuals. By increasing diversity in the workplace, the City seeks to better reflect the community it serves. The City for All Women Initiative and the community collaborated to develop the Equity and Inclusion Lens.
- The small-employer category for outstanding practices in the recruitment of skilled immigrants – OCRI Talent Bridge received an award for its internship program, which offers unique opportunities for young talent, including new Canadians, to foster professional skills and entrepreneurial spirit. By investing in the next generation, the program helps to ensure that Ottawa remains a hub for creative talent. The program matches candidates with small- and-medium-sized enterprises, where they gain valuable paid work experience. To support candidates, OCRI Talent Bridge provides full access to training programs and mentorship to support candidates in their job search or with their own business opportunities.
- The small-employer category for outstanding practices in the retention of skilled immigrants – Revera Health Services Inc. was recognized for excellence in its HR practices. Almost 50 per cent of Revera’s employees are skilled immigrants, and its HR policies ensure that all employees work in an environment free of barriers and bias. Revera provides financial and operational support to its internationally trained workers in obtaining Canadian certifications. It also offers flexible work hours to allow staff an opportunity for professional development.

Previous award recipients include the University of Ottawa, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), Algonquin College, and GEM Health Care Services Inc.

About Hire Immigrants Ottawa

Hire Immigrants Ottawa (HIO) is a community-based initiative that brings together employers, immigrant agencies, and other stakeholders to enhance employers’ ability to access the talents of skilled immigrants in the Ottawa area. The initiative was launched in 2006 in response to a growing need to identify and address barriers faced by employers in the hiring and integration of skilled immigrants into the labour force. The project is funded by the Government of Ontario and Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

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