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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**April 8, 2010**

**Hire Immigrants Ottawa Receives Arthur Kroeger Award**

**Thursday, April 8, 2010, Ottawa** – Hire Immigrants Ottawa (HIO) received an Arthur Kroeger College Award in the Citizenship and Community Affairs category for its work in enhancing employers' capacity to access the talents of skilled immigrants in the National Capital Region.

Presented by Carleton University, the award recognizes an individual or organization that has shown creativity, persistence and overall leadership in demonstrating the value of a locally-based initiative in dealing with a problem or challenge. These include creating economic opportunity, protecting the environment, helping neighbours or contributing to the vitality of the voluntary sector.

Funded by the Government of Ontario and Citizenship and Immigration Canada, HIO was launched in 2006 in response to a growing need to identify and address barriers faced by employers in hiring and integrating skilled immigrants into the labour force.

Every year, 200,000 people immigrate to Canada in search of better opportunities. By 2011, immigrants will account for all net labour force growth in the country. It is also estimated that by 2025, Canada will face a skilled labour force deficit of 1.2 million people, and by 2031 immigrants will account for all of Canada's net population growth.

"We know that the average skilled immigrant isn't working in a job that reflects their education and experience. If you look at the underutilization of their talents, that's huge — both from the point of view of a loss to the economy in terms of what they're capable of contributing and what they are able to earn for themselves as disposable incomes," says Henry Akanko, Director, Hire Immigrants Ottawa.

With lowering birthrates, declining numbers of post-secondary graduates and unprecedented numbers of retirements, labour shortages will soon be felt across several sectors of the Canadian economy. The underutilization of skilled immigrants costs Canada's economy between \$3.4 and \$5 billion a year, according to the Conference Board of Canada. Considering that Ottawa is the second largest recipient of immigrants in Ontario, it makes economic sense to recruit skilled immigrants into the local labour force.

"HIO gives employers the tools, resources and networks necessary to respond to and capitalize on these demographic shifts," says Michael Allen, President and CEO, United Way Ottawa. "HIO is making tremendous progress in knocking those walls down, allowing skilled immigrants to secure meaningful employment and enabling employers to tap into a powerful workforce."

Employers engaged with HIO have hired more than 750 skilled immigrants for skills-appropriate positions over the past three years.

United Way Ottawa is a lead partner in the Hire Immigrants Ottawa initiative.

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**For further information, please contact:**

Melinda Wong, Manager of Communications and Marketing, Hire Immigrants Ottawa

T: 613-683-3882

E-mail: [mwong@hireimmigrantsottawa.ca](mailto:mwong@hireimmigrantsottawa.ca)

**[www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca](http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca)**