

Epocal and BDC among Employer Excellence Award winners in Ottawa

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comments



Hire Immigrants Ottawa and the Employer Council of Champions presented four Employer Excellence Awards this week at the 2015 Employer Council of Champions Summit.

“The Employer Excellence Awards recognize Ottawa employers that have implemented innovative policies and practices around the recruiting, retaining and integrating skilled immigrants into their organizations,” said Gaye Moffet, founder, GEM Healthcare Services, and co-chair, Employer Council of Champions.

“The four award winners provide concrete examples of the actions and policies employers can undertake to create diverse and inclusive workplaces, and we thank them for sharing their success stories.”

The theme of this year’s Summit was Skills to Jobs: Ottawa’s Human Capital Requirements in the Knowledge Economy. Keynote speaker, Don Drummond, former senior vice-president and chief economist of TD Financial Group, spoke about the importance of effectively integrating newcomers into the province’s labour force and social fabric, both from an employer/business perspective, and well as from a wider social and public policy perspective.

“Skilled newcomers are crucial to Ontario’s future prosperity. Our government is working with employers and newcomers to build a highly skilled workforce that will deliver economic growth and drive local economies,” said Michael Chan, minister of citizenship, immigration and international trade.

“The challenges of integrating immigrants into the workplace are complex and multifaceted,” said Frank Bilodeau, vice-president, Scotiabank, Ottawa and West Quebec and ECC Co-Chair. “This requires us as employers to be innovative in our talent management strategies, to make investments in training, collaborate with initiatives like Hire Immigrant Ottawa, as well as share best practices.”

The four award winners are Business Development Bank of Canada, Ottawa Catholic School Board, Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre and Epocal.

The Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC), which works with local agencies and bridging programs to access pools of experienced international talent, has hired 28 new Canadians via partnerships with bridging programs across Ontario, including here in Ottawa, since 2010.

At Ottawa Catholic School Board, 62 per cent of its ESL instructors are immigrants to Canada who represent a diversity of faiths and cultures. Every attempt is made to provide applicants with fair interview practices, recognize their credentials, and create a welcoming workplace environment that is respectful and supportive of individual cultural and religious beliefs.

At the Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre, almost 50 per cent of its client base represents immigrant populations, a notably higher percentage than elsewhere in Ottawa. PQCHC proactively recruits staff and volunteers that are representative of its client base by working with local immigrant agencies. As a

result, about 39 per cent of its staff, and 67 per cent of its volunteers, are representative of the diverse population it serves.

Epocal brings world-class healthcare technology to market, and it relies on a world-class team that hails from around the globe to do it. Epocal recognizes international academic, professional and work experience qualifications at face value, and on par with Canadian credentials. In this multicultural workplace, a standardized recruitment and onboarding process is complemented by an informal buddy system — current staff will take new hires with the same cultural experiences under wing to help them become confident and productive members of Epocal's open-door culture.

Gideon Mensah, a recent immigrant from Ghana recently started working as a finished goods quality Control Technician at Epocal. During his interview, Mensah was given the opportunity to meet with a fellow Ghanaian employee, who shared his perspective on the work environment and culture at Epocal. Mensah said that having a mentor and friend there on his very first day took a lot of the stress out of starting a new job. Experiences like Mensah's are not uncommon at Epocal; the company strives to recruit and retain skilled immigrant employees, and has recently been recognized for this strong commitment to diversity.