

MEDIA RELEASE

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Local Employers Honoured at HIO's 2009 Employer Council of Champions Summit

Wednesday, April 1, 2009, Ottawa – Hire Immigrants Ottawa (HIO) hosted top executives and civic leaders from Ottawa at a breakfast this morning, to explore how barriers facing skilled immigrants can be overcome and how this burgeoning population can successfully integrate into the region's workforce. The breakfast was part of a two-day summit facilitated by HIO's Employer Council of Champions (ECC). This morning's event also featured the presentation of the 2009 HIO awards to employers who have demonstrated innovation in the recruitment and retention of skilled immigrants.

"We've seen remarkable strides in the diversification of Ottawa workplaces," said Rosemarie Leclair, President and Chief Executive Officer of Hydro Ottawa Group of Companies and ECC Co-Chair. "HIO has been working hard to level the playing field for new Canadians — helping them find meaningful employment and helping employers respond to the needs of the changing workforce."

The following organizations were recognized with a 2009 HIO Award:

- The University of Ottawa was recognized for its Access uOttawa program. Through this program, the university recruits a pool of qualified, job-ready, bilingual candidates from which university managers can fill short-term positions. Successful candidates obtain valuable and marketable work experience, enhancing their ability to secure permanent employment and promoting diversity within the university.
- Human Resources and Skills Development Canada's (HRSDC) Immigrant Internship Pilot Program (IIPP), launched in June 2008, was recognized for creating opportunities for the recruitment, mentoring and integration of skilled newcomers into the federal public service. The first of its kind within the federal public service, this program provides immigrants with valuable work experience and promotes diversity, positioning HRSDC as a leader in helping immigrants in their efforts to integrate into the Canadian labour market.
- Honourable mentions went to Citizen Advocacy Ottawa and Association pour l'intégration sociale d'Ottawa.

"The landscape of the job market in Ottawa is rapidly changing," said Hicham Adra, Senior Vice-President and General Manager, National Capital Region of CGI and ECC Champions Co-Chair. "HIO works hard to ensure that employers are equipped to respond successfully to these shifts and to provide the support their immigrant employees require. This year's award recipients provide excellent models for other employers to learn from and build upon."

By 2011, immigrants will comprise 100 per cent of Ottawa's labour market growth. With a projected shortage of skilled labour due to the impending retirement of the baby boomer generation, along with fewer post-secondary graduates and fewer people entering the workforce, HIO presents a strong business case for employers to diversify their workforce.

(more...)

Since last year's summit, significant progress has been made by a number of employers. Current ECC employers report:

- increased participation in networking events that connect employers with skilled immigrants from a wide variety of sectors;
- in-depth assessment and adjustment of human resources processes and practices to enhance the capacity to access a diverse talent pool; and
- increased participation in mentoring and internship programs to provide immigrants with an opportunity to obtain work experience and new skills.

Future plans for the HIO initiative include:

- establishing a new working group with the biotechnology sector;
- delivering cross-cultural competency workshops to employers;
- increasing engagement with the federal public service, the region's largest employer; and
- Expanding the HIO model to communities in Eastern Ontario.

About Hire Immigrants Ottawa

Hire Immigrants Ottawa is a community-based initiative that connects employers, immigrant agencies and stakeholders to create employment opportunities for skilled immigrants in the Ottawa area. Lead partners of the HIO initiative include United Way/Centraide Ottawa, City of Ottawa, Local Agencies Serving Immigrants (LASI) World Skills Inc., le Regroupement des Gens d'Affaires de la Capitale Nationale (RGA), Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation (OCRI), and Ottawa Chamber of Commerce. Hire Immigrants Ottawa is funded by the Government of Ontario.

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For further information, please contact:

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

T: 613-683-3882

F: 613-228-6730

mwong@hireimmigrantsottawa.ca

www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca