

MEDIA RELEASE

### Local Employers Recognized at the 2011 ECC Summit

Wednesday, March 9, 2011, Ottawa – At National Arts Centre, Hire Immigrants Ottawa (HIO) hosted employers, senior executives from public-and-private sector organizations, representatives from immigrant serving agencies and stakeholders at the annual Employer Council of Champions Summit (ECC) - *Diverse Talent is the New Competitive Edge: Attract, Develop and Retain*. The Summit is a two-day event that featured a Learning Exchange, a networking event and the Employer Excellence Awards ceremony. Speakers provided employers with insights into the importance of hiring and integrating skilled immigrants into their workplace, in order to remain competitive in today's marketplace.

Glen Hodgson, Senior Vice-President and Chief Economist for the Conference Board of Canada delivered the Keynote address on the *Relevance of Immigration to Canada's Economy*. It underscored the increasing role that immigration will play in Canada's economic growth, the need to recognize the importance of skills-based immigration to address labour market needs and immigrants' potential for long-term economic contribution.

The integration of skilled immigrants into employers' workplace is increasingly becoming more important as the shrinking labour force is reaching a critical stage with the first of the baby boomers, some 344,000 people, reaching the age of 65 this year. With their pending retirement, many employers will feel the effects of a tightening labour market. The aging population will drive changes in the labour force, along with declining birthrates and decreasing number of post-secondary graduates.

"We must keep in mind that we are competing in this war for talent, not only with other communities in Canada, but increasingly with growing cities in other industrialized countries and emerging economies," said Hicham Adra, Senior Vice President and General Manager, National Capital Region, CGI.

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.

"Employers are already experiencing a shortage of skilled talent in several sectors in the Ottawa area. But this latest demographic shift will place even more pressure on employers as they try to fill senior positions with the best candidates," said Rosemarie T. Leclair, President and CEO, Hydro Ottawa Group of Companies.

Employers were encouraged to take a number of measures to position their workplaces to stay competitive in a changing labour market. The following are resources and programs that employers can make use of: [www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca](http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca); Cross Cultural Competency Workshops, Coaching, and Networking events delivered by Hire Immigrants Ottawa; use the services of the Ottawa Job Match Network to access the skilled immigrant labour pool; and participate in mentoring and internship programs.

Three employers were recognized with an Employer Excellence Award: Citizenship and Immigration Canada; MBNA Canada; and Vanier Community Services Centre.

### Large-Size Employer, Recruitment Category

In recognition of the Federal Internship for Newcomers (FIN) program, Citizenship and Immigration Canada received an award for the large-size employer, recruitment category. The FIN program provides qualified skilled immigrants with valuable paid work experience to help them integrate effectively into the Canadian workforce. Job-ready candidates are recruited for the FIN program with the help of partnering immigrant serving agencies, LASI World Skills, Service Intégration Travail Outaouais and World University Service of Canada. To smooth the onboarding process, cross-cultural competency training is provided to all interns, managers and mentors. Each intern is paired with a mentor to help them pursue career development and build networks. Since its announcement to expand last spring, the Program has more than tripled in size, offering 71 work placements to newcomers. Participating departments and agencies have increased from two to eleven, and several other departments, agencies and crown corporations have confirmed their participation moving forward

### Large-Size Employer, Retention Category

MBNA Canada Bank (MBNA) has made diversity one of its key business drivers, including hiring strategies to attract and retain skilled and professional immigrants. MBNA offers candidates unique employment opportunities in an environment that encourages them to gain experience and develop a career in the financial services industry. MBNA has established five Associate Affinity Groups to eliminate barriers to inclusion. These groups facilitate networking, mentoring and development opportunities for its employees, as well as provide a consultative voice to help the bank develop its diversity and inclusion best practices. Recognizing that development of its employees is critical for its business; MBNA's Tuition Reimbursement Program provides opportunities for eligible employees, including skilled immigrants, to complete post-secondary training to help enhance their opportunities for growth within the organization that will support MBNA's business strategy.

### Small-Size Employer, Retention Category

Vanier Community Service Centre (VCSC) believes that its skilled immigrant staff is an asset to the organization as the centre serves an increasingly diverse client base. All of its job postings are made available to its entire network of immigrant serving agencies. The centre's flexible recruitment process recognizes and values the qualifications and international experience of new Canadian candidates, giving equal opportunity for all candidates to be evaluated equitably. VCSC organizes quarterly lunches with its senior management and its employees which allows for open exchange consultations to help create an inclusive workplace. Its Diversity Committee celebrates the richness of the centre's international cultures through activities that includes diversity potlucks and lunch-and-learns. To encourage and support its employees to reach their full potential, access to training is available to all staff at every level of the organization. Skilled immigrants make up 43% of VCSC staff.

### **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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