



Ghanaian tells summit of employment trials

TRACEY TONG

25 March 2010 05:28

With a master's degree in hand and three children in tow, Alberta Lawson arrived in Canada in 2003 to start a new life.

Lawson, who is from Ghana, fell in love with Canada while attending Carleton University years earlier. She returned to her home country, but when her application to become a permanent resident came through, she returned.

"I told myself I have the necessary experience, and I also have the Canadian degree, which should help me land a job," she said.

It wasn't as easy as that.

"The job search for me was really a nightmare," Lawson said. "I brought savings with me, but it was draining through my fingers.

A job search, combined with trying to help her three children adjust, was difficult, she said.

Things changed when she attended a networking event by Hire Immigrants Ottawa — a provincially funded community-based initiative that works with local employers to hire and integrate skilled immigrants into the workplace — where she met a representative from Scotiabank. Three interviews later, she got a job for a higher position than the one for which she had applied.

Yesterday, Lawson shared her story with employers and representatives from immigrant serving agencies at the 2010 Employer Council of Champions Summit at the National Arts Centre, which focused on skilled immigrants' critical role as a catalyst for innovation and creativity in their workplace and the local economy.

The City of Ottawa received the 2010 Employer Excellence Award from Hire Immigrants Ottawa at the event.