

MEDIA RELEASE

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**Hire Immigrants Ottawa secures renewal funding
from Government of Ontario**

Wednesday, May 20, 2009, Ottawa – The Honourable Michael Chan, Ontario Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, announced a renewal of funding for the Hire Immigrants Ottawa (HIO) project, a community-wide initiative hosted by United Way/Centraide Ottawa. Over the next three years, \$1.9 million will help the employer-focused initiative develop solutions to help Ottawa employers hire and retain internationally trained individuals into skills-appropriate positions in their workplaces.

“Bridging programs works,” said Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Michael Chan. “Programs like United Way Ottawa’s Hire Immigrants Ottawa have proven effective in getting newcomers jobs that match their skills, expertise and qualifications.”

With new funding in place, HIO is looking to expand its activities. A new working group concentrating on the biotechnology sector would be convened, rounding out the present four working groups that consist of human resources professionals and other stakeholders from the health care, information technology, finance and public sectors. Plans to widen its reach to other surrounding regions, with a concentration on Eastern Ontario, and to build local awareness of the project’s objectives are also on the horizon. Building on the successful initial engagement with the public sector, increased focus on the Federal Government as the region’s largest employer on the challenges of hiring skilled immigrants has been added to the agenda for this community project.

“Today’s announcement is a welcome recognition of the valuable work being done at Hire Immigrants Ottawa, and the achievements of the program to date. It also shows the commitment of the Government of Ontario to further engaging local businesses on this important issue,” said Rosemarie Leclair, President and CEO of the Hydro Ottawa Group of Companies and co-chair of the Employer Council of Champions.

Hicham Adra, Co-Chair of HIO’s Employer Council of Champions and Senior Vice-President and General Manager, National Capital Region at CGI, also a regional employer, speaks out about how a lack of skilled employees can affect an organization’s productivity and bottom line. He explains “Internationally trained immigrants are valuable assets to an organization; they bring an inherent diversity of skills, approach and market knowledge to the team.”

Studies by the Conference Board of Canada have shown that by 2014 labour demand will exceed labour supply. With a projected shortage of skilled labour due to impending retirements and fewer people entering the workforce, the HIO project highlights the opportunity for employers to benefit from frequently overlooked skilled newcomers.

Hire Immigrants Ottawa is a local initiative that brings together employers, immigrant agencies and other stakeholders to develop solutions to systemic barriers to the recruitment and retention of skilled immigrants into the Ottawa labour force. Lead partners of the initiative include the Ottawa Chamber of Commerce, le Regroupement des Gens d’Affaires de la Capitale Nationale (RGA) and United Way/Centraide Ottawa. Hire Immigrants Ottawa is funded by the Government of Ontario with support from United Way/Centraide Ottawa.

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