

Ottawa employer group surpasses skilled immigrant hiring targets

By Peter Kovessy, Ottawa Business Journal Staff

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Leading by example, a group of 44 Ottawa employers working to remove barriers to employing skilled immigrants themselves hired 561 newcomers into skills-appropriate positions over the past year, more than 10 times the initial target, officials said Wednesday.

The working groups of human resources professionals from Ottawa's health-care, IT, finance and public sectors had originally set a target of 55 hires before revising it up to 550.

The sector-specific groups are part of Hire Immigrants Ottawa, a local initiative made up of employers, immigrant agencies and other stakeholders working to removing barriers to the recruitment and retention of skilled immigrants into Ottawa's labour force.

The importance of this goal was underlined at a two-day summit this week where Hire Immigrants Ottawa officials noted that immigrants will account for 100 per cent of Ottawa's net labour market growth by 2011.

On Wednesday, the group hosted an awards breakfast at the Novotel Hotel, where roughly 120 guests heard keynote speaker and employment diversity consultant Trevor Wilson encouraged Ottawa businesses to do more to capitalize on the skills of highly trained newcomers to Canada.

"Ottawa gets some of the best immigrants this country has," he said.

"For you not to take advantage of that is not only a missed opportunity, it's bad for business."