

Four Ottawa Employers Receive Excellence Awards in Immigrant Employment

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Keynote speaker Don Drummond at the 2015 Employer Council of Champions Summit

Hire Immigrants Ottawa (HIO) and the Employer Council of Champions (ECC) presented four Employer Excellence Awards today at the 2015 Employer Council of Champions Summit.

Each year, the Summit attracts over 100 senior executives and HR professionals from business, government, not-for-profit sectors and civic leaders to exchange ideas about the importance of integrating immigrants into Ottawa's labour force. It is also used as an occasion to recognize local employers for their outstanding work in immigrants' employment.

"The Employer Excellence Awards recognize Ottawa employers that have implemented innovative policies and practices around the recruiting, retaining and integrating skilled immigrants into their organizations," said Gaye Moffet, Founder, GEM Healthcare Services, and Co-Chair, Employer Council of Champions. "The four award winners today provide concrete examples of the actions and policies employers can undertake to create diverse and inclusive workplaces, and we thank them for sharing their success stories."

The theme of this year's Summit was Skills to Jobs: Ottawa's Human Capital Requirements in the Knowledge Economy. Keynote speaker, Don Drummond, former senior vice president and chief economist of TD Financial Group, spoke about the importance of effectively integrating newcomers into the province's labour force and social fabric, both from an employer/business perspective, and well as from a wider social and public policy perspective.

"Skilled newcomers are crucial to Ontario's future prosperity. Our government is working with employers and newcomers to build a highly skilled workforce that will deliver economic growth and drive local economies," said Michael Chan, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade.

“The challenges of integrating immigrants into the workplace are complex and multifaceted,” said Frank Bilodeau, Vice President, Scotiabank, Ottawa and West Quebec and ECC Co-Chair. “This requires us as employers to be innovative in our talent management strategies, to make investments in training, collaborate with initiatives like Hire Immigrant Ottawa, as well as share best practices.”

The award winners are:

The Business Development Bank of Canada

The Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) works with local agencies and bridging programs to access pools of experienced international talent. It helps these new Canadians prepare for rewarding careers in the Canadian banking industry, and also actively recruits from this talent pool to build the diversity of its own team. Since 2010, BDC has hired 28 new Canadians via partnerships with bridging programs across Ontario, including here in Ottawa.

Epocal

Epocal brings world-class healthcare technology to market, and it relies on a world-class team that hails from around the globe to do it. Epocal recognizes international academic, professional and work experience qualifications at face value, and on par with Canadian credentials. In this multicultural workplace, a standardized recruitment and onboarding process is complemented by an informal buddy system – current staff will take new hires with the same cultural experiences under wing to help them become confident and productive members of Epocal’s open-door culture.

Ottawa Catholic School Board

At the Ottawa Catholic School Board, 62 per cent of its English as a Second Language (ESL) instructors are immigrants to Canada who represent a diversity of faiths and cultures. Every attempt is made to provide applicants with fair interview practices, recognize their credentials, and create a welcoming workplace environment that is respectful and supportive of individual cultural and religious beliefs.

Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre

At the Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre, almost 50 per cent of its client base represents immigrant populations, a notably higher percentage than elsewhere in Ottawa. PQCHC proactively recruits staff and volunteers that are representative of its client base by working with local immigrant agencies. As a result, about 39 per cent of its staff, and 67 per cent of its volunteers, are representative of the diverse population it serves.

About Hire Immigrants Ottawa

Hire Immigrants Ottawa (HIO) is an initiative that brings together employers, immigrant agencies and 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. HIO is funded by the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada.