

Open Letter to Ottawa Employers and Businesses

March 6, 2017

Newcomers are a vital part of Ottawa's cultural and economic fabric: Almost a quarter of Ottawa's population is foreign-born and that percentage is expected to increase in the coming years.

This isn't unique to the nation's capital. Statistics Canada forecasts that without immigration Canada's population growth would be close to zero in 20 years.

Couple that with the mass retirement of the baby boomer generation and it is clear that tapping into our diverse pool of immigrant talent is crucial to our economic future. For three years running the Ottawa Business Growth Survey has shown that access to skills is the main challenge facing local businesses. As employers, it's important to ensure our businesses and organizations have the human capital they need to grow and prosper.

Immigrants settling in Ottawa are highly educated, and as a group they represent about 27 per cent of our labour force with a post-secondary education. Many immigrants also have backgrounds in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. These "STEM" skills are vital to Canada's success in the global knowledge economy, particularly in economic sectors where technological innovation is important. In Ottawa, immigrants make up a large share (37%) of the STEM workforce. And yet, immigrants remain more likely to work in jobs not commensurate with their skill levels and training. There is a gap between talent and opportunity.

Today's workplaces must be inclusive and committed to fair and equitable hiring practices. Such organizations will be well positioned to integrate immigrant hires and ensure they are primed for success. We know that employers who diversify their workforce are better able to attract and retain top talent, better understand a diverse customer base, expand markets, enhance productivity, and so much more.

This is an extremely important message for employers.

The global marketplace for talent is heating up. Given this reality, there is urgency for Canada to take action. The necessity for employers to tap into as broad and diverse a labour pool as possible has never been greater and the challenges to do so as present.

On March 7 and 8, Ottawa employers committed to diversity and inclusion are gathering at Hire Immigrants Ottawa's Employer Council of Champions annual employer Summit to celebrate and examine the ways we can work together and with community agencies and stakeholders to make far more effective use of the local immigrant talent pool. It's an important part of the solution to our skills challenges. We invite all local employers to join us in this work.

Learn more at www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca.



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