

LABOUR NEEDS

Hiring for the global marketplace

by Carla J. Foote

By the year 2020, the labour shortage in Canada is expected to reach 950,000 workers. According to Statistics Canada "If current immigration rates continue, it is possible that immigration could account for virtually all labour force growth by 2011." AXIS Career Services is well positioned to help employers benefit from the talents and skills of immigrants. The economy of Newfoundland and Labrador has experienced tremendous growth in the last decade, due especially to the success of the oil and gas industry. Given the recent Hebron announcement the province's financial prosperity is expected to increase. However, the all too familiar refrain of higher wages in Western Canada is drawing skilled workers away from Newfoundland and Labrador. Added to the migrating workforce is an increase in the number of retirements, and increasing employment opportunities which require specialized skills. Clearly, one way to address the emerging labour market issues is advancing the acknowledgement of credentials by highly skilled international workers acquired outside of Canada.

Through the Association for New Canadians, AXIS Career Services has been providing career placements to immigrants for over a decade. AXIS offers an array of customized, client-driven programs which bridge the gap between immigrants and local employers. Partnering organizations have included businesses in industry sectors ranging from engineering, food and service industries, health care, manufacturing, utilities, government agencies, resource industries and private enterprises. Newfoundland and Labrador currently welcomes on average 450 immigrants annually, and government's goal is to triple that number by 2012. Immigrants can potentially provide employers with access to untapped markets at the local, national and international level. Any business with a reasonable expectation of success in this difficult labour environment ought to consider employing skilled immigrants. "Interestingly, 97 per cent of employers in the province who hire immigrants report a positive experience. Nearly three-quarters of employers agreed that a multicultural workforce enhances creativity in the



Members of the Foreign Credential Recognition team are (l-r) Zheng Chen, Database Administrator; Carla Foote; and Jerry Hennebury, Internship Coordinator.

workplace and that hiring international workers serves to improve export opportunities." (Wade Locke/Scott Lynch Economic Consulting, April 14, 2005.)

The Internship Pilot Program (IPP) will provide an opportunity for highly skilled immigrants to gain Canadian work experience. This ground breaking initiative is part of the national Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) initiative, funded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC). It offers employers a collaborative opportunity to host a skilled worker in a 12-week career placement. Prior to an internship, AXIS will work with each client to ensure their marketability. The IPP Coordinator will be available for both the employer and the intern to answer any questions prior to, during and upon completion of the internship. Employers will also be able to avail of an employer/employee matching database which is a segment of the FCR project. This pilot project will serve to support government's Immigration Strategy and recent multiculturalism policy. The Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) helps government facilitate the nomination of immigrants, who can contribute to the economic and social goals of the province. The challenge for employers will be overcoming preconceived barriers to hiring newcomers. The perception of a multi-

cultural workforce is a new concept for many employers in this province. "Barriers to employment integration, including the non-recognition of foreign credentials, must be eliminated so that immigrants and employers can come together in a way that helps immigrants use their skills and abilities and also helps employers meet their employment needs". (Association for New Canadians, The Integration of Immigrants into the Newfoundland and Labrador Workforce, April 2007)

As AXIS Career Services further advances the Internship Pilot Program (IPP) it is vital that we develop close ties with employers struggling to meet the needs of the current labour market. In a global economy, in-house knowledge of doing business in other countries is invaluable. Employers are encouraged to think outside the box and be innovative when dealing with the shortage of skilled workers. Simply relying on help-wanted ads and the traditional job-bank are no longer adequate ways to recruit qualified staff. Employers can readily avail of resources such as AXIS Career Services which provide employable, highly skilled workers, with an edge in the competitive global marketplace. For more information on how your business can become involved in the Internship Pilot Program, please call (709) 722-0720 or e-mail axis@nfld.net.

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