

Hire new Canadians for a test drive, advises study

Contributed by Laurie Blake
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While small firms still see hiring internationally educated professionals (IEPs) as more of a risk than an advantage, large firms are more likely to recognize that a diverse workforce is a huge asset in developing business with a global reach. These are some of the findings of a recent study by the Progress Career Planning Institute (PCPI), a business-focused, not-for-profit organization that offers career development services for people to realize their full potential.

"Canada's cultural diversity is a tremendous asset, and we're doing everything we can to help all employers see that," says Silma Hudson Roddau, president of PCPI. "Internationally educated professionals bring the kind of skill and experience that Canadian companies of all sizes need to compete."

The study, *The Power of Different: The Race to Bridge the Skills Gap in the Toronto Region*, suggests that more employers should take IEPs on a "test drive" by hiring them on contract.

"The reality is that immigration could account for virtually all labour force growth in Canada within the next decade," says the Honourable Jason Kenney, minister of citizenship and immigration Canada. "Our government is committed to helping newcomers integrate and succeed."

In Toronto, roughly half of the City's residents were born outside Canada.

"Toronto has the economic advantage of being one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the world," says Michael Williams, general manager, economic development, culture and tourism, for the City of Toronto. "Our residents are able to speak in just about every language, helping Toronto businesses connect with every corner of the globe. That's a huge plus."

The research study by PCPI based in part on interviews with IEPs found the following:

- 71 per cent of internationally educated immigrants feel they cannot achieve their professional goals in Canada.
- Over 50 per cent those surveyed found work in their field, but not at their level of education.
- 30 per cent felt they were overqualified and not able to realize their full potential.
- 75 per cent say they were advised to get further education to achieve their employment goals.
- Larger firms are more likely to have a culturally diverse workforce.

The study also recommends that employers speak with passion on the competitive advantages of IEPs to their customers, suppliers and friends at the chamber of commerce.

For more information, visit www.iep.ca.

