



Foreign Credentials Referral Office

Helping foreign-trained workers succeed in Canada

PROGRESS REPORT

2007-2008



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of Canada

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I am pleased to present the first Progress Report of the Foreign Credentials Referral Office.

Every year, thousands of hard-working men and women from all over the world immigrate to Canada, bringing their education, skills and experience. They are eager and willing to contribute to their new home, and Canada needs their knowledge and talents to compete in the global marketplace.



When newcomers are able to work in jobs for which they were educated and trained, they succeed and Canada benefits. Too often, however, immigrants encounter roadblocks to employment in their field when they cannot put their credentials to work in Canada.

The Government of Canada listened to the frustrations of these newcomers, and to employers who want assurance that workers have the necessary education and training. We heard from provinces and territories that face shortages of skilled employees, and from regulatory organizations and post-secondary institutions that must make sure international education and experience meets Canadian standards.

There are over 400 regulatory bodies in Canada and while much of the responsibility for professional accreditation lies with the provinces, we made a commitment to help and we have kept that commitment.

In May 2007, the Foreign Credentials Referral Office (FCRO) was launched as part of Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Today, newcomers in Canada can access information, path-finding and referral services through the FCRO Web site, over the telephone and in person at 320 Service Canada centres across the country.

The FCRO Web site lets prospective immigrants around the world get the information they need early in their immigration journey.

Overseas services for prospective immigrants are also a priority for the federal government because this helps individuals prepare to integrate into the Canadian labour market while they wait to enter Canada. The Canadian Immigration Integration Project, delivered by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges, offers sessions in China, India and the Philippines. These sessions help skilled immigrants get oriented to the realities of the Canadian labour market and Canada's foreign credential recognition processes prior to their arrival in Canada. During a recent visit to India, I had the opportunity to meet some of the people who have benefited from this pilot project as they prepared to start their new professional lives in Canada.

All those who come to Canada bring hopes and dreams for themselves and their families. Many partners have a role to play in helping newcomers to succeed. When immigrants use their skills and credentials in the Canadian labour force, we all benefit.

Because when newcomers succeed, we all succeed.

The Honourable Diane Finley, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Citizenship and Immigration



Foreign Credentials Referral Office
Helping foreign-trained workers succeed in Canada

This has been a busy and rewarding start-up year for the Foreign Credentials Referral Office (FCRO).

The Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, launched the FCRO in May 2007. Our first priority was to provide comprehensive and authoritative information and referral services to newcomers and Canadians educated abroad.

At launch, the FCRO offered information, path finding and referral services in person at six Service Canada centres across Canada, over a dedicated phone line (1-888-854-1805), and on a new Web site (www.credentials.gc.ca). By fall, the FCRO's in-person services were offered at 320 Service Canada centres.

The FCRO Web site features the *Working in Canada* Tool, a personalized interactive tool that provides individuals with detailed information on occupations, links to the appropriate regulatory bodies, and labour market information for specific communities.

Overseas, prospective immigrants benefit from getting information early in their immigration process. More than two-thirds of the thousands of visits to the FCRO Web site now come from outside Canada. The FCRO continues to collaborate with regulatory bodies, as well as provincial and territorial governments and other key partners to improve and expand overseas services so prospective immigrants can come to Canada prepared to work.

To strengthen foreign credentials recognition (FCR) processes and services across the country, the FCRO is collaborating with employers, regulatory bodies, immigrant-serving organizations, provincial and territorial governments and federal partners including Human Resources and Social Development Canada, Service Canada and Health Canada.

The FCRO is working with employers and in partnership with the Alliance of Sector Councils to develop effective tools for foreign credentials recognition. Looking ahead, the FCRO is working with, employers, regulatory bodies, immigrant-serving organizations, and federal, provincial and territorial governments and others to share best practices and find solutions to FCR challenges.

This start-up year was exciting and challenging. The FCRO's activities and accomplishments would not have been possible without the dedicated and fully staffed team of employees and our partners who together made it possible for us to be up and running quickly and effectively.

Throughout our first year, we heard that the FCRO is filling an important gap through our Web site, telephone and in-person services. We continue to be inspired and motivated by the newcomers who come to Canada to build a better future for all of us.

Cheryl Grant

Executive Director, Foreign Credentials Referral Office



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INTRODUCTION

Canada has a proud tradition of welcoming immigrants. One in five Canadian residents was born outside the country.¹ Immigration has helped to make Canada a prosperous and culturally rich nation.

Today, skilled immigrants are increasingly important to ensure Canada's competitive strength in a global marketplace. A significant part of the growth in Canada's workforce now comes from immigration.

To meet the ongoing challenges of globalization, Canada needs well-trained and well-educated newcomers, and we need to help create the conditions for their success. There are already shortages in certain skills and in certain regions of the country. And, as we continue to transition to a knowledge-based economy that demands a high level of academic learning, skills and training, there are not enough younger Canadians to replace those who will soon retire.

In 2006, more than half of new workers coming to Canada had post-secondary education, including trades training and university education up to the doctorate level.² However, many of the immigrants capable of helping meet the demands of the new economy become frustrated when they cannot work in their field in Canada. Although most immigrants find work quickly, many are not able to find work in their field or at the level appropriate for their training and experience.

This is a loss to newcomers and to Canada's workforce. Canada's economy also suffers when we don't use the skills immigrants bring: the cost has been estimated from \$2.4 to \$5.9 billion in lost income annually.³

¹ Statistics Canada, *Immigration in Canada: A portrait of the foreign-born population, 2006 Census* (Ottawa: Minister of Industry, 2007).

² Citizenship and Immigration Canada, *Citizenship and Immigration Canada Immigration Overview, Facts and Figures 2006: New Workers by Gender and Level of Education* (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2006).

³ Conference Board of Canada, *Brain Gain: The Economic Benefits of Recognizing Learning and Learning Credentials in Canada*, by Michael Bloom and Michael Grant (Ottawa: Conference Board of Canada, 2001); and J. G. Reitz, "Immigrant Skill Utilization in the Canadian Labour Market: Implications of Human Capital Research," *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 2, no. 3 (2001): 347-378.

FINDING THE PATH TO FOREIGN CREDENTIALS RECOGNITION

Foreign credentials assessment is the process of verifying that the education, training and job experience obtained in another country are equal to the standards established for Canadian professionals. Newcomers to Canada face a challenge to find out where and how to have their credentials assessed and recognized.

In Canada, the provinces and territories are responsible for credential assessment and recognition. About one in five jobs is regulated, including teachers, nurses, physicians, engineers and electricians. Some provinces and territories have delegated the regulation of certain occupations to the more than 400 regulatory bodies across Canada. These bodies administer the provincial or territorial laws that apply to their occupation. People who want to work in regulated jobs must get a license from the responsible body in the province or territory where they wish to work.

Recognition processes vary from province to province and from occupation to occupation. Each regulated occupation sets its own requirements. Job seekers may have to undergo professional and language exams, have qualifications reviewed or go through a period of supervised work experience.

"Newcomers want to contribute to Canada by using their talents and working in the fields for which they've been trained, and we want to help them do that."

*The Honourable Diane Finley, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Citizenship and Immigration*

Most occupations in Canada are non-regulated. For these jobs, employers are responsible for assessing and recognizing the credentials, work experience and skills of prospective workers. Employers decide if overseas credentials are equivalent to Canadian credentials required for that job, and employers often have different standards.

Canadian employers understand the importance of welcoming well-trained and educated immigrants. At the same time, employers and consumers need to be assured that foreign credentials meet the same standards as those of employees trained and educated in Canada.

In addition to employers and the over 400 regulatory bodies, there are several other organizations that may play a role in foreign credentials recognition: 16 federal departments and agencies, 55 provincial and territorial departments and ministries, five provincial assessment agencies, post-secondary institutions, non-governmental agencies and labour organizations.

To build the 21st century workforce Canada needs to compete in the global marketplace, we must help integrate highly skilled and knowledgeable immigrants into the Canadian workforce. One important way to help is to guide them with the appropriate knowledge, path-finding and referral services. Getting these services to prospective immigrants early in their immigration process will help them be well prepared to enter the workforce when they arrive here.

Canada needs well-educated and trained immigrants, and nothing will attract newcomers more than the knowledge that their legitimate credentials will allow them to explore economic opportunities across the country. They need to know that newcomers can build better futures for themselves and their families and a better Canada for all of us.



ABOUT THE FOREIGN CREDENTIALS REFERRAL OFFICE

WHO WE ARE

The Foreign Credentials Referral Office (FCRO) was established to provide internationally trained and educated individuals with the information, path-finding and referral services they need, both overseas and in Canada, to help them better utilize their skills and credentials in the Canadian labour force.

The FCRO is a federal office located within Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The FCRO works with Human Resources and Social Development Canada, Health Canada, other federal partners, the provinces and territories, regulatory bodies, employers and other stakeholders to strengthen processes of foreign credentials recognition across the country and overseas. The FCRO's in-Canada services are delivered in collaboration with Service Canada.

HOW WE BEGAN

The Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, launched the FCRO in May 2007 after two extensive rounds of consultations in 2006-2007.

The consultations included ministerial roundtables with key stakeholders; bilateral meetings with provinces and territories; meetings with immigrant-serving organizations, post-secondary institutions, assessment agencies and newcomers; and participation in events and conferences hosted by employer organizations, regulatory bodies, post-secondary institutions and

immigrant-serving organizations. The result of the consultations was agreement on the need for an organization that would: respect jurisdictions; complement but not duplicate existing programs and services; fill gaps in the foreign credentials recognition process; collaborate with provinces, territories and stakeholders; engage employers; and reach prospective immigrants overseas early in their immigration process.

A task force established at Human Resources and Social Development Canada organized the consultations and later worked with partners to develop the mandate, organization and activities of the FCRO.

The Government of Canada allotted \$37.2 million over 5 years to the FCRO initiative, with \$6.4 million in on-going funding. Of this funding, \$5 million was provided to Human Resources and Social Development Canada's Foreign Credential Recognition Program (over 2007-2009), bringing total funding for that program to \$73 million over six years. Service Canada received \$18.5 million over 5 years and \$3.6 million in on-going funding, for in-Canada service delivery.

Two new permanent residents, a woman and her 16-year-old son, went to a Service Canada centre to get their Social Insurance Numbers. The mother was looking for employment, and her son was anxious to get a part-time job. With in-person help, they used the FCRO Web site and the Working in Canada Tool, to learn about FCR in Canada, and to get information on the labour market in their community.

WHAT WE DO

The FCRO provides integrated and authoritative foreign credentials information, path-finding and referral services to newcomers, prospective immigrants and employers through:

- ♦ toll-free telephone and in-person services delivered through 320 Service Canada centres across the country; and
- ♦ Internet services inside and outside Canada through the FCRO Web site (www.credentials.gc.ca), including the *Working in Canada* Tool, an online search tool that provides individualized information on specific occupations, communities and labour market conditions, and information targeted both to internationally trained individuals and to employers.

Overseas services are in development and will include in-person orientation sessions in key countries. The FCRO is studying the Canadian Immigration Integration Project (CIIP), which offers orientation sessions in India, China and the Philippines. CIIP is a project of

As a client of the CIIP in China, a young woman with financial services experience was able to find a job in her field after only two months in Canada.

CIIP provides prospective immigrants with a continuum of programs and services, starting in their country of origin and continuing after they arrive in Canada, to help them integrate into the Canadian labour market.

the Association of Canadian Community Colleges and is supported by a contribution from the Foreign Credential Recognition Program of Human Resources and Social Development Canada.

The CIIP sessions have already helped more than 2,200 prospective skilled immigrants understand the realities of the Canadian labour market and Canada's foreign credentials recognition process before they arrive in Canada. In November 2007, the Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, visited the CIIP pilot project in New Delhi to announce a modest expansion in India and China.

The Foreign Credentials Referral Office partners with employers and employer organizations to share information and best practices and to develop tools that meet the needs of employers and related stakeholders.

The FCRO also works with federal, provincial and territorial partners, and foreign credentials assessment and recognition bodies to strengthen foreign credentials recognition (FCR) processes across the country through improved coordination of FCR issues, policies, programs and services, information sharing and exchange of best practices.

COLLABORATING WITH FEDERAL PARTNERS

The responsibility for assessing and recognizing foreign credentials rests with provincial and territorial governments and regulatory and assessment bodies. The federal government's role comes from its responsibility for immigration and its leadership role in strengthening the labour market and the economy across Canada.

The Foreign Credentials Referral Office, provides services that complement other programs and services offered by the Government of Canada to help integrate immigrants into the economy and Canadian society.

Working in partnership with other federal programs, the FCRO can expand its reach to immigrants in Canada and prospective immigrants overseas, and improve coordination on FCR issues across government.

HUMAN RESOURCES AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT CANADA

FOREIGN CREDENTIAL RECOGNITION PROGRAM

The Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) Program helps to improve the integration of foreign-trained skilled workers into Canada's labour market by developing and improving FCR processes in Canada. The FCR Program fosters the development of fair, consistent, transparent, and yet rigorous assessment and recognition processes among Canadian institutions which complements the FCRO's information sharing, path-finding and referral services.

The FCR Program is a systemic labour market intervention with two objectives:

- ♦ to develop and strengthen Canada's FCR capacity; and
- ♦ to improve the labour market integration of immigrants.

The FCR Program provides financial support to develop FCR processes in specific regulated and non-regulated occupations and sectors. The FCR Program budget is \$73 million over six years (2003-2009). Through contribution agreements, the FCR Program makes strategic investments in three streams:

- ♦ horizontal leadership; working with a wide variety of stakeholders to better understand and tackle FCR and related issues;
- ♦ regulated occupations; working with regulators to improve the fairness, transparency and consistency of assessment processes; and
- ♦ non-regulated occupations; working with employers, educators and industry associations to minimize barriers to integration into the labour market.

Some recent projects supported with contributions from the FCR Program:

■ **Engineers Canada** has developed a database of foreign engineering degree programs to help provincial regulatory bodies in assessing international engineering graduates. The database will help to ensure consistent assessments and to accelerate assessment of internationally trained engineers.

■ In partnership with the **Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training**, the Atlantic Provinces are completing initial steps toward establishing an International Credential and Competency Assessment and Recognition Agency for Atlantic Canada.

■ The **Royal Architectural Institute of Canada** is developing a national system to assess the educational qualifications and professional experience of Internationally Trained Architectural Graduates.

■ In partnership with the **Alliance of Credential Evaluation Service Providers of Canada** and the **Council of Ministers of Education in Canada**, the Pan-Canadian Quality Standards in International Credential Evaluation project is harmonizing tools and processes of provincial assessment agencies to improve assessment consistency.

THE WORKING IN CANADA TOOL

With the *Working in Canada* Tool (www.workingincanada.gc.ca/tool), developed by Human Resources and Social Development Canada, prospective immigrants and newcomers are able to access information from six national labour market databases and receive a report that is tailored to a specific occupation in a city or region.

From FCRO's launch in May 2007 to December 31, 2007, the Working in Canada Tool produced over 120,000 unique reports.

For example, an internationally trained nurse from the Philippines can verify skills and competencies required in one province, compare wages in one city versus those in another, compare licensing requirements between provinces and make a well informed

decision on where to settle in Canada. The *Working in Canada* Tool is available through the *Going to Canada* Immigration Portal and on the FCRO's Web site (www.credentials.gc.ca).

SERVICE CANADA

Service Canada improves the delivery of federal government services by helping Canadians access a growing range of government services and benefits they want and need. Service Canada also works in collaboration with other federal departments and other levels of government to explore innovative and efficient ways to serve Canadians better.

As part of its services for newcomers, Service Canada provides the Foreign Credentials Referral Office's personalized telephone and in-person services to immigrants and Canadian citizens who earned their professional credentials abroad. In developing its Newcomers to Canada client segment strategy, Service Canada held consultations across Canada with over 70 organizations serving immigrants. They identified foreign credentials recognition as a priority concern.

TELEPHONE SERVICE

Skilled immigrants who want information or who have limited computer access or Internet skills can get help through a dedicated toll-free telephone service (1-888-854-1805) in Canada. Call-centre agents draw on the comprehensive information available on the FCRO Web site,

From the May 24, 2007 launch to December 31, 2007, telephone agents assisted 1,486 clients with FCR information, path-finding and referrals.

the *Working in Canada* Tool and *Going to Canada* Immigration Portal. The call-centre agents refer clients to the appropriate regulatory body for their occupation as well as advise them of Internet and in-person resources.

IN-PERSON SERVICE

When the FCRO launched in May 2007, in-person services through Service Canada were available at six offices in major urban centres across Canada. Today, Service Canada supports the FCRO in 320 offices nationwide. The in-person agents of Service Canada help clients looking for information on assessment and recognition of their foreign credentials. Service Canada agents answer basic client questions, including identification of appropriate regulatory or assessment bodies. Agents help clients find information on specific occupations and jurisdictions and provide an orientation to the *Going to Canada* Portal and the FCRO Web site. Service Canada agents also take time to promote FCRO resources when they are assisting newcomers with other concerns.

*As of December 31, 2007, Service Canada had provided in-person FCR services to **7,807** clients.*

When a young woman from Germany came into the Service Canada centre for information on extending her work permit, she also used the Working in Canada Tool to get information about her previous occupation as an x-ray technician. She found out about job requirements, prospects for employment in Southern Manitoba, wages and job opportunities. She was pleased to get the information, including contact information, and printed it up to take away with her.

HEALTH CANADA

INTERNATIONALLY EDUCATED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS INITIATIVE

The Internationally Educated Health Professionals Initiative aims to increase the assessment and integration of internationally educated health professionals into the health workforce.

The initiative, launched in 2005, will give internationally educated health professionals:

- ♦ access to clear, timely information about paths to licensure;
- ♦ fair and transparent mechanisms for assessing credentials, knowledge and clinical skills;
- ♦ ability to work with faculty and clinical educators;
- ♦ access to an increased range of bridge training and remediation programs; and
- ♦ regional collaboration to avoid duplication and maximize the effectiveness of existing resources.

*Close to **4,000** internationally educated health professionals have benefited from newly created counselling and assessment centres and services offering specialized advice and programs on licensure and employment.*

Key accomplishments include:

- ♦ Central Web site of information for international medical graduates (www.img-canada.ca).
- ♦ “One-stop shop” information centres to provide internationally educated health professionals with information, resources, assessment and referral services.
- ♦ More streamlined, consistent approach across the country to assessment of internationally educated physicians and nurses.
- ♦ Health care orientation program developed by six health professions and representatives from across the country.
- ♦ Bridge training and remediation programs aimed at quickly filling skills gaps for physiotherapists, nurses, medical laboratory technologists and medical radiation technologists.
- ♦ Multimedia programs for faculty and clinical educators of internationally educated physicians and nurses.

*With support from Health Canada's International Educated Health Professionals Initiative, **Alberta's Mount Royal College** developed a competency assessment and bridging program for internationally educated nurses. This pilot program is being expanded to other parts of the country. Also funded by Health Canada was an off-shore assessment pilot project. In the winter of 2007, 33 nurses were assessed overseas, prior to immigration to Canada, in order to speed up the assessment and licensing process.*

OTHER PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

Foreign credentials recognition is only one challenge immigrants face in integrating into the Canadian labour market. Among the other challenges are official language proficiency, obtaining Canadian work experience, and understanding workplace culture in Canada. Because these issues are interrelated and critical to the success of newcomers both in the labour market and in Canadian society, the federal government and its partners collaborate to develop policy and program solutions to address the range of barriers newcomers face. Some of these are highlighted here.

Since 2006 the federal government has begun investing an additional \$1.4 billion over five years in settlement funding across the country. Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) funds a range of settlement programs and services which aim to provide newcomers with the information required to make informed decisions, language skills adequate to their settlement and integration goals, and the support they need to build networks within their adopted communities. These programs and services, delivered in partnership with provinces, territories and service providers, include:

- ♦ the *Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program*, which provides social and economic



bridging services, such as translation/interpretation, orientation and information, referral to community-related services, and employment-related services, to assist newcomers settle and integrate into Canadian society, so that they may become participating members as soon as possible;

- ♦ the *Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada Program*, which provides basic language training for adult newcomers in either official language, language testing services, and literacy training for eligible immigrants and refugees to help them function in, and contribute to, Canadian society; and
- ♦ the *Host Program*, which is a volunteer-based mentoring program which matches immigrants and refugees with Canadians to support settlement and integration. Canadian hosts/mentors help immigrants learn about available services and how to use them, practice English and French, and access social and work contacts; at the same time, host Canadians learn about new cultures.

While most newcomers destined for the Canadian labour force have adequate conversational language skills when they arrive, many employers report gaps in recent immigrants' language skills and vocabulary in the workplace. To help address this, in 2004 CIC also introduced the *Enhanced Language Training (ELT) initiative*, which combines employment-specific language training in addition to mentoring, internships, placements and other work-related experiences. This combination of learning helps prepare newcomers for jobs in the Canadian labour market that match their skills and qualifications.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and Human Resources and Social Development Canada developed the Going to Canada Immigration Portal (www.goingtocanada.gc.ca) to provide online access to information and services from a variety of government and non-government sources. The Portal helps immigrants to make informed decisions and prepare to integrate into communities and the labour market.

COLLABORATING WITH PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL PARTNERS

Many players are involved in foreign credentials assessment and recognition in Canada. The provincial and territorial governments are responsible for the regulation of skilled trades and some professions. This responsibility is often delegated by legislation to more than 400 provincial/territorial regulatory bodies across Canada that assess, recognize and license individuals. Five provincially mandated assessment agencies and many post-secondary institutions in the provinces and territories also have assessment responsibilities related to academic credentials.

In the extensive consultations with provinces, territories and stakeholders that led up to the creation of the Foreign Credentials Referral Office, newcomers reported that they often have difficulty finding their way through the various assessment and regulatory bodies and different standards and processes. The FCRO was established to offer information, path-finding and referral services for internationally trained individuals so that they can get to the assessment and regulatory bodies more quickly.

In fulfilling its mandate, the FCRO respects jurisdictions, complements existing programs and services, fills gaps along the FCR continuum, and collaborates with provinces, territories and stakeholders on FCR issues.

The provinces and territories take different approaches to the issue of foreign credentials recognition in their jurisdictions, and they are at different places in implementing their approaches. Some have introduced legislation, while others are focusing on policy and program initiatives, such as action plans, information tools for newcomers, capacity-building initiatives with regulators or establishing credential assessment agencies.

The FCRO plays a collaborative role with the provinces and territories, strengthening capacity in the FCR process through information sharing on best practices, and identification of issues of common concern, while respecting the provincial/territorial jurisdiction. In meetings, conferences and roundtables, and through the Federal-Provincial/Territorial Immigration Table, the FCRO facilitates discussions between federal, provincial and territorial governments to improve FCR processes in Canada and overseas.

COLLABORATING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

While the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials (FCR) is a provincial/territorial responsibility, many organizations have interests related to FCR processes.

Working closely with Human Resources and Social Development's Foreign Credential Recognition Program, which supports the development of fair, consistent, transparent, and rigorous assessment and recognition processes, the Foreign Credentials Referral Office has an important role as a facilitator among the many stakeholders to strengthen FCR capacity across the country so Canada's economy can benefit from the many skills and talents that immigrants bring to this country.

There are currently five provincially mandated assessment agencies that evaluate international academic credentials against Canadian standards. These agencies are members of an umbrella organization, the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada. Several colleges and universities also offer academic assessment, and regulatory and professional organizations may assess credentials for the purposes of certification or licensing.



The FCRO is collaborating with the Canadian Network of National Associations of Regulators (CNNAR) as well as other regulatory bodies to discuss initiating foreign credentials assessment and recognition processes overseas so prospective immigrants can arrive in Canada better prepared to work. The FCRO encourages stakeholders to share promising practices through national conferences, roundtables and other means.

The global marketplace demands a highly educated and skilled workforce, and many employers are facing the pressures of a current or anticipated shortage of skills. Employers are looking to well-educated and well-trained immigrants to meet the shortages. Because over 80% of jobs are unregulated, the task of assessing and recognizing overseas credentials falls on employers. The process and standards for assessment and recognition are uneven, and overseas credentials can be under-valued. Small and medium size businesses have extra challenges because they may not have the capacity to recruit from overseas or assess international credentials.



The FCRO is partnering with employers through The Alliance of Sector Councils (TASC) to design tools and resources for foreign credentials recognition so employers, particularly small and medium size businesses, can successfully hire and integrate internationally trained employees.

Working with major organizations such as the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses, the Canadian Chambers of Commerce and others, TASC has begun work on a FCR Roadmap Tool for Employers.

Immigrant-serving organizations are often the first places that newcomers turn for help with foreign credentials recognition. The FCRO facilitates an exchange of information among these groups and other stakeholders. The FCRO makes immigrant-serving groups aware of specific services and information available for newcomers and collaborates with these organizations to ensure that information and services are appropriate for the people they serve.

MILESTONES AND ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE LAUNCH

Since its launch less than a year ago, the Foreign Credentials Referral Office has been providing authoritative information, path-finding and referral services to newcomers and prospective immigrants. The FCRO also has been working with its partners to strengthen FCR capacity by establishing partnerships and working relationships with federal departments, provincial and territorial governments, regulatory bodies, employers and other stakeholders.

MAY 24, 2007

- ♦ Launch of the FCRO by the Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.
- ♦ In-person information, path-finding and referral services offered to newcomers through six Service Canada centres (Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Calgary and Halifax).
- ♦ The FCRO Web site (www.credentials.gc.ca) launched, with the *Working in Canada* Tool and information for internationally trained individuals and employers.
- ♦ Minister announces that the FCRO will be developing its overseas services which will complement information currently provided to prospective immigrants overseas.

NOVEMBER 2007

- ♦ Minister Finley visits the Association of Canadian Community Colleges' Canadian Immigration Integration Project (CIIP) in New Delhi, India and announces expansion of these overseas services to include itinerant service in India and China. The CIIP, with funding through a contribution by HRSDC's Foreign Credential Recognition Program, is offering orientation sessions in India, China and the Philippines as a pilot project.
- ♦ Minister Finley announces that in-person information, path-finding and referral services to newcomers is now provided in 320 Service Canada centres.

DECEMBER 2007

- ♦ As of December 31, Service Canada had provided in-person FCR services to 7,807 clients and telephone agents had assisted 1,486 clients with FCR information, path-finding and referrals.

JANUARY 2008

- ♦ Engagement session held by the FCRO with the Alliance of Sector Councils and employer associations to develop employer-oriented FCR tools and resources.

FEBRUARY 2008

- ♦ Engagement session with the Canadian Network of National Associations of Regulators (CNNAR) to explore potential for initiating FCR assessment and recognition processes overseas.
- ♦ FCRO Web site receives over a quarter of a million visits since launch, the majority from overseas.

LOOKING AHEAD

During its second year, the FCRO will consolidate and enhance its services to newcomers and, in particular, its overseas services for prospective immigrants. The FCRO will also continue to work collaboratively with partners and stakeholders to strengthen FCR processes across the country.

The FCRO will:

- ♦ study the impact of overseas pilots and focus on expanding overseas services to allow prospective immigrants to receive detailed information, path-finding and referral services and labour market information early so that they can better prepare for integration into the labour market and initiate FCR processes before coming to Canada;
- ♦ enhance the FCRO Web site with additional tools and information for internationally trained individuals and employers;
- ♦ expand engagement activities with provinces, territories, and stakeholders through a series of workshops; and
- ♦ continue to work with employers to develop tools related to FCR.

FIND OUT MORE

To access information, path-finding and referral services for foreign credentials recognition, you can get information:

On the Internet:

www.credentials.gc.ca

By telephone through Service Canada:

1-888-854-1805 or **TTY 1-800-926-9105** (in Canada only).

In person through Service Canada:

Visit **www.servicecanada.gc.ca** to find the nearest Service Canada centre offering in-person information, path-finding and referral services

To get more information about the Foreign Credentials Referral Office, you can email us at **credentials@cic.gc.ca** or write to us at:

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