

Exploratory and Developmental Projects Related to the Labour Market Attachment of Skilled Immigrants in B.C.

For

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A Research project to assist Skilled Immigrant Workers Toward Credentialing and Employment in the FVRD

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A Research Project to assist Skilled Immigrant Workers toward Credentialing and Employment in the FVRD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community Futures Development Corporation of North Fraser has completed its findings that focus on the Immigrant population within the Fraser Valley Regional District. There is a positive response from all sectors when discussion of the issue of credential of foreign-trained individuals is mentioned. With the Immigrants it was two fold, first the stories of their experiences and the frustrations that they have faced and secondly the excitement that the issue being addressed. With the educators and trainers we found an enthusiasm of reworking materials that may make a bigger impact on persons caught in a cycle that restricts their potential. Employers also have stories to tell of persons overqualified for potential work yet pursues the employment to make ends meet. One employer who is a farmer mentioned that he appreciated the highly qualified workers, as he knew that work could be assigned and the professional worker as they are conscientious enough to compete the job and are able to supervise others as well. The concern raised here was "Who will fill these positions once all the professional and skilled workers have their credentials to work in their field of expertise and leave for other employment?" He fears the void of employees that is to come.

Our aim was to address six issues. This has proven to be an ambitious target and we faced a number of issues that complicated the task. The first item was that spring break in the school system during the first few weeks of starting the project made it difficult to make the contacts necessary. Second was the fact that though persons were interested in the project and wanted to support it, there was no one to sit on the steering committee. It was the hope of the North Fraser staff that this would form the nucleus Leadership Council.

Our targeted outcomes and summarized results are:

1. *A summary of findings from the delivery of focus groups in four communities to discuss aspects related to the labour market attachment of skilled immigrants in the Fraser Valley Region.*

Five focus groups were held involving the communities of Mission, Abbotsford and Chilliwack. A total of 143 persons took part in the focus groups. In addition to this two presentations were made to the Rotary Clubs in Mission and Abbotsford where questionnaires were distributed. In addition to this, 23 interviews were conducted with professionals from Education, Service Organisations, Municipal Government, Community Services Agencies, Trade Organisations, Builders Associations, Farmers, Health Services and the International Credential Evaluation Society.

Discussion has identified two recommendations that would assist immigrating foreign-trained workers to be better equipped for employment upon arrival in Canada.

- a. *Implement an information toolkit.* That clearer information be presented to applicants for Immigration that outlines the full process and the benchmarks of

each step as one applies for immigration. Present information gives one message but upon arrival in Canada the reality is very different.

- b. *Language skills assessment and placement.* That standardized English language testing be made available at the point of application for Immigration, and minimum benchmark requirements be attached to entering Canada, University and various employment sectors. That more emphasis be given to workplace language skills that could coincide with employment

2. *A demographic study that identifies who came as family-sponsored and how this translates into skilled worker and other professional categories*

Surveys were conducted among Immigrant groups in Chilliwack, Abbotsford and Mission. In total 148 questionnaires were distributed. Only in two instances did we find persons working in their field of training, that of watch repair and social worker. The remainder are employed in service industries and the majority as farm workers. Most of the persons responding to the survey immigrated in the past 5 years with an average age of 25 years old (current age) 77% of those responding were presently working as farm workers. 47% of the respondents were family sponsored. 35% came as professionals and 18% came as independent sponsored. During an interview a farm owner mentioned that 50% of his farm hands were professional and skilled workers.

3. *Recommendations to improve existing trades certification programs offered at training facilities to ensure quicker integration of skilled immigrants into trades*

During discussion among the foreign-trained immigrants, discussion would take one step back from the credential step to the immigration processing and preparation prior to immigration. Streamlining the process at the source and preparing the documentation in advance would go a long way to streamline the process. As documentation was recognised at each step and authorize as it progressed, would assist in the processing of the credential. Four recommendations are discussed:

1. Create a one stop shop for credential validity
2. Develop standardized competency based tests for licensing
3. Begin process in country of origin prior to immigration
4. Allow the challenging of credential exams

Results of the exam will determine what the applicant is required to complete to qualify for the credential.

4. *Identification of practices and policies related to employer involvement in supporting labour market attachment of skilled immigrants.*

The business community responded well to interviews that were conducted. A few examples of the integration and training of immigrants into the trades were discussed. One problem that comes from training persons is that those being trained often move on shortly after they are established. 151 questionnaires were handed out plus the 23 interviews conducted. A number of suggestions were given as to how to address the credentialing issue. One employer stated, "I feel the whole issue of worker shortage is over rated. There are lots of workers and no foreseen shortage" Our survey

underscores that what employers look for above all else is the ability to communicate. The second issue considered is certification.

Incentives for employers and businesses who extend paid graduated work experience and training to qualified individuals could be given. This could include on site training in all facets of the job that would prepare them for testing and certification

5. *Details on the formation of a Leadership Council within the Fraser Valley Region*

As most researchers have found, this is a very difficult area to break into. There were a few employers who were willing to give us time to interview, however, time is money and becoming part of another committee was not priority. This issue will require continual input by employers and other methods of response will need to be studied. At this point we were not successful in establishing this council.

6. *Recommendations related to the integration of Immigrants through bridging projects.*

Two basic bridging program ideas were raised in the discussions. The first is a Work and learn program. This program involves the placement into employment with a partnering employer and offering frequent training blocks that will assist in the industry specific language training as well as offering specifics related to regulations, policy and methods for that industry.

A second program would be a mentorship program. This would begin with determining the competency level of the individual, challenging the credential tests and then placement into a graduated employment setting. Mentoring would ensure that the individual would receive the required training to receive the desired credential.

PROCESS INVOLVED IN EXECUTION OF THE PROJECT

Educators, employers and immigrants were invited for suggestions on executing the project. An initiative was taken to form a steering committee. Quite a few members from educational institutions, community services, Rotary clubs, community and credentialing organisations agreed to provide support in carrying out various activities. However, many of them could not attend meetings because of preoccupations. Therefore no formal committee could be formed. However their opinion and support was sought at every step through telephone discussions, personal interviews as well as through emails.

Existing demographics specifically for the Fraser Valley and BC were collected to form the basis and framework of the study. Other research papers and reports, on previously completed projects, were studied along with referred links.

Procedures currently followed for credentialing of foreign skills were studied in relation to the top occupations in the Fraser Valley Regional District. Other good practices followed in different countries and provinces within Canada were also studied. Major sources of information were; research projects and reports already conducted in BC, Statistics Canada and Stat BC, Community Services, MCAWS and HRSD sites.

Separate questionnaires were prepared for employers, educators and immigrants. Some of them were translated in Punjabi for farmer owners and mill operators who are among the major employers in the Fraser Valley. For compiled information see appendix A.

Focus groups with employers, educators and immigrants were held in Chilliwack, Abbotsford and Mission. However, in Agassiz telephone interviews and personal interviews were held. Personal interviews were held with many individuals who had either been involved in these issues or had thorough understanding of the issue. Presentations were made at Rotary Club meetings in Abbotsford and Mission and at Indo-Canadian Business Council meeting in Abbotsford. Personal interviews of small businesses were also held. The salient points have been compiled and available in Appendix B.

In order to have a collected opinion of various groups a seminar was held at Abbotsford, Legacy Park on May 20, 2004. The objective was to present the findings and identified recommendations and have those who were in attendance to assist in for formulating strategies for implementation of the recommendations. Sixty-four people attended the seminar. For seminar highlights and proceedings see appendix C.

1. A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE DELIVERY OF FOCUS GROUPS IN FOUR COMMUNITIES TO DISCUSS ASPECTS RELATED TO THE LABOUR MARKET ATTACHMENT OF SKILLED IMMIGRANTS IN THE FRASER VALLEY REGION.

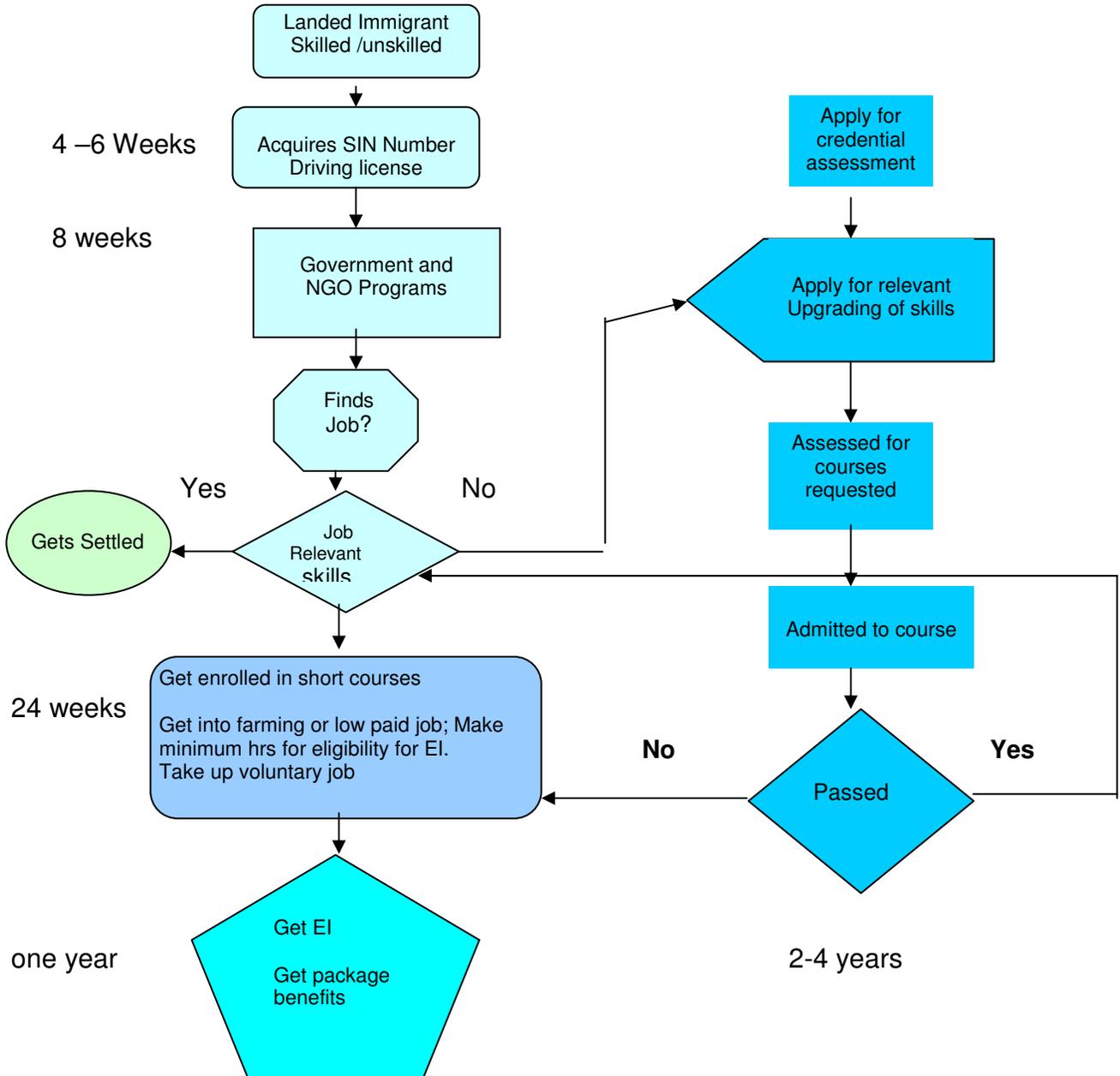
Five focus groups were held involving the communities of Mission, Abbotsford and Chilliwack. A total of 143 persons took part in the focus groups. In addition to this two presentations were made to the Rotary Clubs in Mission and Abbotsford where questionnaires were distributed. In addition to this, 23 interviews were conducted with professionals from Education, Service Organisations, Municipal Government, Community Services Agencies, Trade Organisations, Builders Associations, Farmers, Health Services and the International Credential Evaluation Society.

After looking at the demographics in the Fraser Valley and the research work already done in BC, it was felt there was need to address the issue of linking the immigration policy to the process of access to the job market in the Fraser Valley. This research involves more than just addressing the credentialing issue.

While 72% of the immigrants in the Fraser Valley fall in family class category (Citizenship and Immigration Canada), most of these immigrants are either spouses or parents or younger, dependent children of the citizens or permanent resident card holders. Prior to their training and skill up grading, major occupation of the skilled or unskilled immigrants is in the farming, forestry, lumber, shakes and shingle mills.

The process in the flow chart below can illustrate the general process of integration of the skilled or unskilled immigrants into the job market:

Arrival in BC to Beginning the Job Search Process



From the time of arrival in Canada to actually getting into the job market could take between a few months to a year or more. This in most cases this does not include the time required for getting ones credentials evaluated or securing employment into one's own relevant job market even at the entry level.

The reason for such an ordeal is that after arriving in Canada the onus to prove one's education level as well as experience is totally left to the Individual. Neither the immigration authority nor any of the facilitating services (community services or other employment agency) have capacities to facilitate recognition of the credentials. Although these services may wish to place persons in areas of competencies they are unable to due to the lack of credential recognition. Therefore, the best that case management and placement services can do is direct the professionals to unskilled jobs making the professional and skilled worker to feel no different from the unskilled and illiterate worker.

In terms of investment of time in the whole process of immigration, one has to spend, on an average, a minimum of 3 years before landing into Canada. In addition, he/she has yet to have his/her credentials evaluated to be eligible to apply for the job one is trained and experienced in.

BARRIERS TO TRANSFER OF LEARNING

1. Administrative barriers:
 - Administrative process delays, including delays in generating transcripts, assigning grades, registering receipt of transcripts, and assigning transfer credit, act as barriers to transfers.
2. Lack of centralized regulatory structure
 - No centralized regulation structure that recognizes credentials and other pertinent information that could be passed between employers, learners and educators creating a seamless record. This barrier also makes it more difficult to develop widely accepted transfer standards and practices.
3. Miscommunication and lack of coordination
 - Miscommunication and lack of coordination in conducting transfer agreements among institutions create inefficiencies and ineffectiveness.
 - Program regulations are changed without sufficient advance notice to institutions.
 - Significant drops in learners' GPAs are sometimes caused by receiving institution recalculating a student's average to fit their own scale.
4. Incompatibility and lack of universal standards
 - Multiplicity of provincial, national and international standards makes transfer more complex.
 - Incompatibility between learning institutions, workplaces and occupations creates significant practical problems such as courses that do not match by number of credits or are out of semester sequence between institutions or branches of the same institution.
5. Lack of learner awareness
 - Learners do not know or understand the transfer systems available to them and so do not take full advantage of them.

If I am applying for an immigration visa and need to know the value of my credentials, how can I get my credentials assessed prior to immigration?

- Although regulatory bodies will provide information on what is required to practice a profession or a trade, most regulatory bodies are not set up to assess foreign credentials prior to the immigrants arrival in Canada.
- Assessments are conducted by examinations and interviews, which means that the immigrant must already be in Canada.
- It is virtually impossible to obtain an assessment of credentials that would lead to eventual licensure, certification, or registration in the relevant occupation before you immigrate to Canada.
- Pre-immigration assessment does not guarantee recognition of your credentials for purposes of employment, licensure/certification, immigration, or further studies in Canada.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIES

1. Information Tool Kit for the Immigrant Applicant

- a.** There is enough historic data to understand the trends of immigration into Canada from various countries around the world. Therefore it would make economic sense to have an information tool kit developed and made available in various Canadian High Commissions in the countries of origin of majority of the immigrants.

Recommendation 1 - a:

This information tool kit should be accessible online as well as in the form of a guide in different languages to the potential applicants and should be provided to prospective applicants as soon as they submit their application along with processing fee. The tool kit should contain:

1. General information on culture, geography, and demographics.
 2. Canadian expectations from the immigrants and Canadian ethics
 3. Potential job markets in different provinces, major Industries and labour needs in different provinces.
 4. Information links to major employers, industries and cities
 5. Information links to Universities and the courses available.
 6. Processes of credentialing and recognition of potential immigrants qualifications as well as Internet links to related information.
 7. Processes which potential immigrants could complete before immigrating and those that require presence.
 8. Cost summary of tests and training the potential immigrant will be required to pay
- b.** A database of well known Universities offering professional courses and training in the potential immigrants of country of origin will need to be provided to the credentialing authorities in Canada. The qualification will be measured against Canadian standards to establish the training on Canadian benchmarks.

Recommendation 1 - b:

The High Commission in each country should have a provision to serve as a central information base on the country it is situated in. This department should be a source of updated database and country information on:

1. Well-known and well-recognized Universities within the foreign country
2. Key trades training Institutions in the foreign country and standard certifications for key trades
3. Key employers within the foreign country
4. Main skill strengths of the foreign country

There should be a direct linkage of the High Commission Department to a central coordinating and assessment agency within Canada. This agency could be like ICES or CCPE, which should be able to provide certification of authenticity of the credentials to

Universities, Employers or even the Immigration Department for processing the application.

2. Language Skills Assessment and Placement

Recommendation 2 - a:

English language testing should be standardized for all purposes and provinces and Mechanisms to undertake this proficiency test should be available in all the countries from where majority of immigrants arrive.

Example is TOEFEL, which available in any country and is universally accepted and facilitated in many countries.

Minimum benchmark and standardization requirements should be fixed for purpose of

Entering Canada
 Entering University
 Entering Job Market

For example

Minimum level of ELSA be sufficient for immigration under Economic class
 Minimum level of ESL 70 (UCFV) be sufficient for entrance into any University.
 Minimum Level of ESL 50 be sufficient for entering the Job market.

Advanced English level requirements for each profession or course should be a part of total syllabi and not a pre-requisite for admission to a course.

Universities should offer small modules or evening courses for listening and pronunciation skill development.

In case of Jobs requiring higher level of English proficiency an opportunity to improve while on job within specified period be considered. Concentration on industry specific language should be the objective.

Recommendation 2 – b:

Develop collaborative courses on English language, trades and professional skills with well known Universities or Training Institutes in the countries of origin of immigrants.

1. Develop pilot projects of collaborative programs with well known Universities and Colleges offering course curriculum on the ESL foundation levels that should be acceptable to all Universities within Canada.
2. Establish partnerships with foreign institutions to develop course curriculum and collaborative research in high tech and high skilled areas.
3. Offer modular online programs as refresher courses for understanding of Canadian technologies.

4. Facilitate partnerships among Institutions to share knowledge and ethics. Establish student exchange programs as well as faculty exchange programs.

All these collaborative programs and overseas universities offering such programs should be well recognized by the credentialing authorities and professional associations. Certifications from these universities should be enough to seek eligibility to write exam for the licensing to practice profession in Canada.

This process would also be an opportunity to develop linkage between the immigration process and programs of the federal government and the educational Institutions. These collaborations could prove to bring additional revenue to the Universities of Canada without incurring major running expenditure.

2. A DEMOGRAPHIC STUDY THAT IDENTIFIES WHO CAME AS FAMILY-SPONSORED AND HOW THIS TRANSLATES INTO SKILLED WORKER AND OTHER PROFESSIONAL CATEGORIES

Surveys were conducted among Immigrant groups in Chilliwack, Abbotsford and Mission. In total 148 questionnaires were distributed. Only in two instances did we find persons working in their field of training, that of watch repair and social worker. All other persons are in service industries and farm work positions. Most of the persons responding to the survey immigrated in the past 5 years with an average age of 25 years old (current age). 47% of the respondents were family sponsored. 35% came as professionals and 18% came as independent sponsored.

A demographic study indicates that 55% of persons surveyed are employed while 27% were unemployed. One group interviewed was studying at UCFV. This may contribute to the high unemployment number. There was a good cross section of country of origin and the Professional and Skilled Worker credentials were high. This included Accountants, Doctors, Lawyers, Engineers, Teachers, Pharmacists and other professions. Work experience in the country of origin ranged from 2 years to 20 years. In contrast these same people are presently working as Farm workers (77%), day-care workers, restaurant and service industries, forestry, watch maker and mental health worker.

Language skills for reading and writing was 86% of the immigrant population while ability to speak was less than 50%. The ability to communicate on the job was the number one issue as noted by the employer. Not only was there a need to be able to read write and speak English, but the ability to comprehend and follow instruction was paramount. In particular employers mentioned that industry specific language was required. The general feeling is that one will learn quicker if training and employment were simultaneous. One concern of the immigrant is that many of their skills, if not exercised, would be lost.

The employer indicated that in most cases and depending on the nature of the business, would be willing to offer in-house or on the job training. As noted in the survey (Appendix A Employer Questionnaire question 9) Foreign-trained individuals would be considered for the job and would be tested during an interview. There is willingness on

the part of the employer to bring the person up to speed while on the job. All learning takes time and has the element of cost. The employer indicated that an incentive for this involvement and training would make this option much more attractive. One concern that came out of the questionnaire is that the problem with foreign-trained individuals is that the training is not Canadian or Provincial specific. The large concern is to meet the criteria of regulations, bylaws, and safety issues.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE EXISTING TRADES CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS OFFERED AT CTC AND FRASERSIDE COLLEGE TO ENSURE QUICKER INTEGRATION OF SKILLED IMMIGRANTS INTO TRADES

There was an interest especially amongst those who attended the seminar who were immigrants that would facilitate standardized testing in the country of origin. This would set the stage in identifying levels of competencies in areas of expertise. These results would track with the immigrant applicant as they move through the system. The individual would carry all the required paperwork from the country of origin as well as the results of the testing to the appropriate authorities for verification. These competencies would set the path for the applicant as he/she moved toward accreditation in Canada.

Recommendation 3 – a:

Create a One stop shop for credential validity

Generally there should be a one-stop shop for assessment of credentials in each Province. One credentialing authority should be able to assess the authentication and validity of the foreign credentials and the process should not be repeated by the professional association. Ideally, this information should be seamlessly made available to the professional association. This part should be necessarily completed prior to landing in Canada.

Recommendation 3 – b:

Develop standardized competency based tests for Licensing.

Based on the time of the issue of the credentials from the foreign Universities and the experience of the professional, competency-based exams should lead to licensing and ticketing. These would be measured against the benchmarks established.

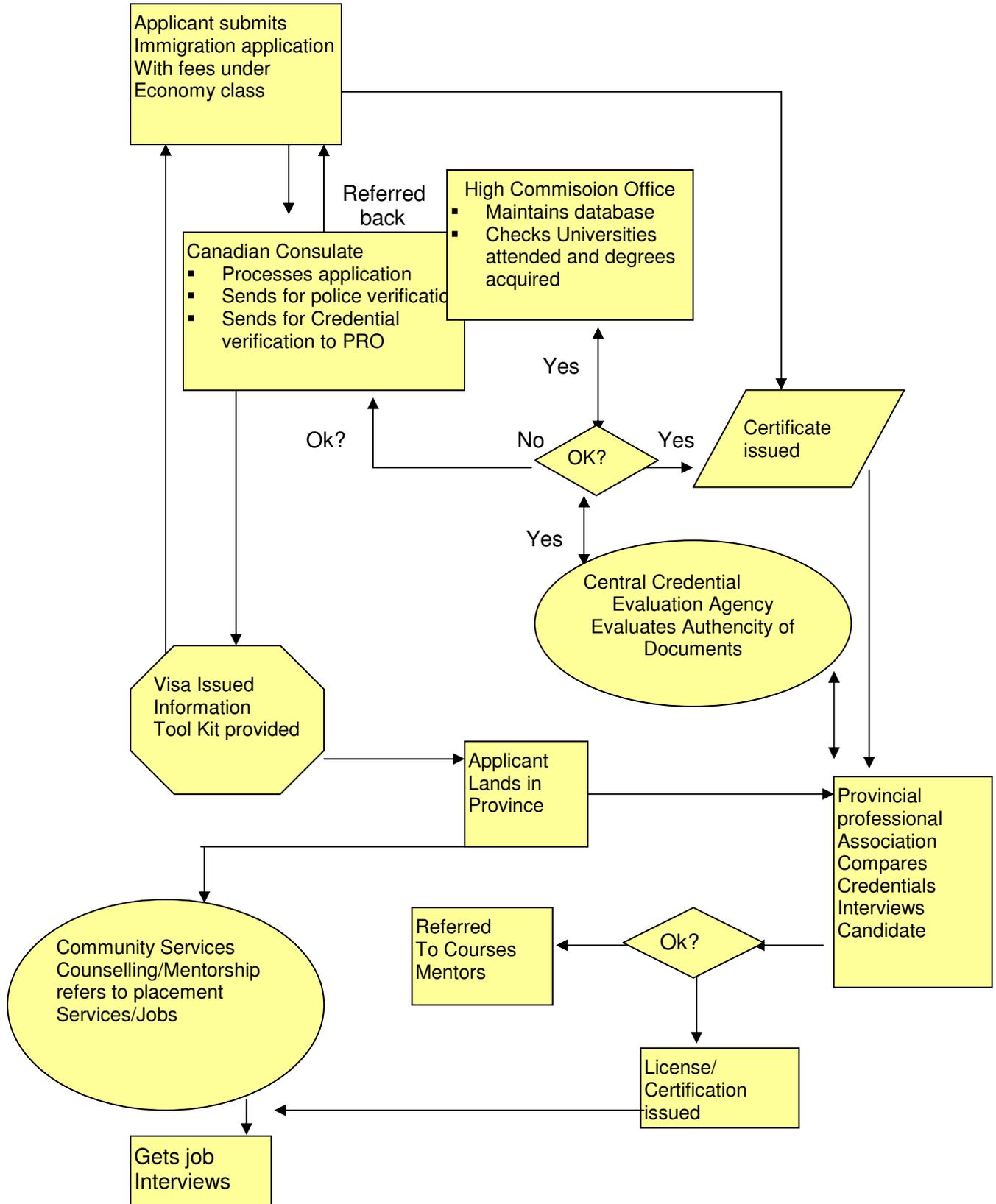
Recommendation 3 – c:

Begin the credentialing process in the country of origin upon application for immigration.

Theoretical exams for licensing could be made possible through distant learning and online means while testing the competency and performance after arrival of the immigrant could be done through arranged internships with potential employers.

In key occupations with labour shortage, the provincial governments should facilitate identification and registration of employers for offering internships between three months to one year. This would provide an opportunity for employer to assess the job skills of the candidate without obligation to employ the candidate. At the same it would provide an opportunity to the immigrant to gain Canadian experience and referrals for the future.

Recommended Process from Immigration to Job search under Economic Class
 (Linkage to immigration and employment)



Recommendation 3 – d:

Encourage the challenging of credential exams (apprenticeship qualifications) to allow for recognition and placement in the system.

Industrial Training Authority has implemented a new apprenticeship program. This program is open to competency based testing rather than exam testing if a person has more than 5 – 10 years of experience. UCFV Trades Department is involved in implementation of new programs that will allow persons to train as framing technicians in a two-year program. The new program does offer opportunities for competency-based assessment of foreign credentials.

4. IDENTIFICATION OF PRACTICES AND POLICIES RELATED TO EMPLOYER INVOLVEMENT IN SUPPORTING LABOUR MARKET ATTACHMENT OF SKILLED IMMIGRANTS.

The business community responded well to interviews that were conducted. A few examples of the integration and training of immigrants into the trades were discussed. One problem that comes from training persons is that those being trained often move on shortly after they are established. 151 questionnaires were handed out plus 23 interviews conducted. A number of suggestions were given as to how to address the credentialing issue. One employer stated, "I feel the whole issue of worker shortage is over rated. There are lots of workers and no foreseen shortage" Our survey underscores that what employers look for above all else is the ability to communicate. The second issue considered is certification.

Incentives for employers and businesses who extend paid graduated work experience and training to qualified individuals could be given. This could include on site training in all facets of the job that would prepare them for testing and certification

5. DETAILS ON THE FORMATION OF A LEADERSHIP COUNCIL WITHIN THE FRASER VALLEY REGION

As most researchers have found, this is a very difficult area to break into. There were a few employers who were willing to give us time to interview, however, time is money and becoming part of another committee was not priority. This issue will require continual input by employers and other methods of response will need to be studied. At this point we were not successful in establishing this council.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO THE INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS THROUGH BRIDGING PROJECTS.

Credential evaluation and assessment by the professional bodies are not sufficient to access a job. It is recognition by the employers that open up opportunities. For the purpose participation and motivation of employers is most important in framing immigration policies for enhancing economy.

One example of how this is working in Canada presently is Financial and Insurance sector Licensing and Certification

The other major area of employment is financial services. In the Banking and Insurance services there is large scope for employment in the future. Large population growth in the Fraser Valley due to immigration would require people with multilingual skills to serve the community. Hence financial sector has already devised programs to provide entry-level employment to the educated immigrants with basic language proficiency and good interpersonal skills. They have their assessment system to employ diverse groups and also have provisions for training on the job.

Some of these courses are very short term and comparatively less expensive to enter the sector. The Modular programs offered on the job allow further upgrading of the skills.

Recommendation 6 – a:

Develop incentives for employers to create mentoring, training and advancement for Foreign-Trained workers. This program involves the placement into employment with a partnering employer and offering frequent training blocks that will assist in the industry specific language training as well as offering specifics related to regulations, policy and methods for that industry.

Larger efforts are required to :

1. Raise awareness of the employers and change their mindset with regard to biases against hiring immigrants.
2. Develop programs of internships and apprenticeships in coordination with training institutes and credentialing organizations.
3. Provide tax incentives for employing foreign-trained workforce.
4. Develop refresher courses for upgrading and enhancement of skilled immigrants in consultation with large employers.
5. Another component to this program would be a develop mentorship. This would begin with determining the competency level of the individual, challenging the credential tests and then placement into a graduated employment setting. Mentoring would ensure that the individual would receive the required training to receive the desired credential. Mentors could be an outside agency that would coordinate the program for the employer and work together with the employer for advancement and process.

Recommendation 6 – b:

Create availability to Credential Assessment Centres within Communities or Regions that would assess and facilitate job search and internship programs with identified employers in the region for the skilled workers more quickly and efficiently.

This evaluation centres would case manage clients to assist in the processing of credentials. General recommendations with respect to expediting the process of credentialing of foreign-trained immigrants have been framed based on surveys, focus groups and conference output. Credentialing processes of some of the key occupations in Fraser Valley have also been studied.

APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Information on job market

1. Did you have any information on the job situation in Canada?
 Yes 41% No 41% N/R 18%
2. Do you think BC was right choice for your landing to get job of your choice/trade?
 Yes 55% No 22% N/R 18% Uncertain 5%
3. Are your other family members happy resettling in the new country apart from the job situation?
 Yes 64% No 22% N/R 14%
4. Did you know that your qualifications would have to be evaluated /assessed again after landing in here to enable you to work in your trade?
 Yes 46% No 27% N/R 27%
5. Did you know which agencies/ organizations could offer you jobs in BC?
 Yes 22% No 73% N/R 5%
6. If not, what helped you do your job search?
 Community Services 4 Referrals 11
 Community/neighbours 3 Newspapers 7
7. How long did it take to get your first job?
 3 months 46% 6 months 14% >one year 14% >two years 8% N/R 18%

Job market barriers

8. What obstacles did you confront to get the first job?
 English 12 Certification 10
 Lack of knowledge of process 3 Lack of finances 1
 Other (please indicate) 2 Family responsibilities and lack of knowledge of Canada
9. Are you happy in your current job?
 Yes 36% No 41% N/R 23%
10. If yes, how did you get the present job? If not go to Question number 16
 Referral 7 Up grading of skills/Education 1
 Licensing 1 Job Search Programs 3

Skill Upgrading

11. Did you have the required skills before immigrating?
 Yes 36% No 46% N/R 18%
 If not, what are the kinds of courses you took to get that job?

List them with the college /university you went to

12. Did you find any up grading was required?

Yes 46% No 27% N/R 27%

13. Do you think you are more suited to another job?

Yes 68% No 9% N/R 23%

14. What is the barrier to accessing job market you are best suited for?

Licensing 6 Language 8 Assessment of qualification 7

Lengthy procedures 2

Other (Note what) 2 finance and experience

II. Alternatives/ options

15. What could have been better alternative to undertaking the courses to provide you with necessary certification and familiarity with the Canadian system?

4 Take such courses in the home country online or in the affiliated Institute

5 Have proper information before immigrating

10 Government funded programs should arrange for upgrading

8 Provide on job training/apprenticeship on contract

16. Do you think that the courses offered for certification could be made simpler and shorter? If so, what are your suggestions?

Combine training with learning

ESL could be combined with other courses

Cultural understanding issues

Better screening and testing then placement into education at competency level

17. What do you think should be done to bridge the gaps in your qualifications/skills to be able get job you aspired for and would bring out the best in you?

Financial aide

Language training while learning the job

Support and mentoring

18. Did you want to go back to your country because of underemployment?

Yes 18% No 55% N/R 27%

If so, what stopped you?

Lack of finance Education of family 9% Others 14% N/R 77%

I. Employer Questionnaire

I. (151 questionnaires distributed 14 responded)

I. Basic Information

Nature of Business: _

Farm work, Law Firm, Social Services, Banking, Home Care, Library, Consulting, Not for profit services, Travel agency, Education, _____

Number of employees: 597 Male: 7% Female: 25% N/R 68%

Number of Immigrant workers: 11% only 46% of business responded to this question

Major trades (Check Applicable):

Farming 1 **Manufacturing** **Construction** 1 **Small Business** 2

Services 5 **Professionals (note credential)** 8 _____

Other (specify) _____

Labour force search (Check (√) most applicable) (14 responses)

1. What sources do you use when seeking new employees?

Advertisement 8 Internet 1 Immigration Services 0 Referrals 7 Other 3

2. What is the education level you look for?

Secondary 5 Post Secondary 4 Trade Certification 3 Professional 7 Combination 5

3. State if your employees need certification or licensing for majority of the jobs in your company?

Yes 57% No 29% N/R 14%

4. If so, whether labour has certification/ license before approaching you?

Yes 50% No 14% N/A 14% N/R 22%

5. If not then, which of the following do you adopt?

Arrange In-house Training 2 On Job Training 4 Accept International Credentials 1
Sponsor Training 1 Certification 0 Licensing 0

6. Do you look for experienced labour force?

Yes 86% No 7% N/R 7%

7. If so, minimum how many years?

> 1 year 4 > 3 years 7 > 5 years 1

Internationally Trained / Experienced Labor force

8. Does your company employ internationally qualified/trained immigrants?

Yes 50% No 36% N/R 14%

9. If a person comes to you with an international training certificate matching the requirements of the job but does not have Canadian experience or certification which of the following would you like to do?

- 4 Send him to the appropriate Association for credential assessment
- 8 Interview him and test him on the job
- 5 Try to understand review his credentials in house
- 1 Consult country assessment office
- 4 Employ him conditionally and provide opportunity

10. On an average, how many of such applicants come to you in a year?

<10 4 >10 3 >30 1 >50 1

11. Do you have highly skilled/qualified employees who are underemployed due to non recognition of their internationally acquired skills/ or lack of Canadian experience?

Yes 7% No 86% N/R 7%

Constraints in employing immigrants

12. Do you face any constraints in employing immigrants?

Yes 50% No 43% N/R 7%

13. If so, which of the following is a major constraint?

- 3 Certification
- 1 Legal requirements
- 0 Non-availability of adequate training
- 0 Licensing Duration
- 2 Lack of knowledge of procedures for licensing
- 4 Language barriers

14. Which of the following in your opinion would help remove these barriers/constraints?

- 3 Adequate information to the immigrants of the barriers before landing
- 3 Creating opportunities for training/ certification processes within their home countries before landing in Canada.
- 3 Transparency and access to job market information
- 3 Access to information on the certification system in the home country
- 3 Shorter duration focused courses for experienced labour/ professionals
- 5 Employment with government subsidy in the profession of the immigrant

4 Full/ partial funding of the training and certification for first job of immigrants own profession.

Courses / Training Needs

15. Do you have knowledge of the certification process in BC for the jobs your company offers?

Yes 57% No 21% N/R 22%

16. Are you aware of the different courses/training required for certification required for majority of jobs you offer?

Yes 57% No 14% N/R 29%

17. Which courses/colleges do you recommend for appropriate training certification for acquiring skills you look for?

BCIT – 4, UBC – 2, SFU – 2, other certified training centres - 5

18. Do you know if institutes of such standard exist in any of the country of origin of majority of immigrants employed in the jobs you offer?

Yes 7% No 57% N/R 36% The problem with this is that training in another country is not Canadian or Provincially specific

19. Any suggestions for improvement in your labour search for skilled Immigrant workers.

English Skills that are job or industry specific
NITEP

20. What concerns do you have in hiring Immigrant workers?

Language

APPENDIX B

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

Personal Interviews:

Personal interviews were conducted to get opinion of diverse group of people with regard to recognition of foreign credentials and employability of the foreign-trained individuals arriving under the economic class.

The individuals were asked following questions

What were the barriers in recognition of foreign credentials?

How these barriers could be removed?

What opinion or policies would help fast track the process?

1. Manager SEEDS, Surrey, BC

Seeds is an organization that assists people to plan and start new small business. Many persons attending the program are from various nationalities and backgrounds. Some areas of concern were identified regarding foreign-trained professionals and possible solution to address these issues.

Issues

- a. Language
- b. Credentials acceptance by employers
- c. Lack of opportunity to upgrade skills
- d. Inadequate Computer skills
- e. Communication + basic ethics
- f. Length of courses: one month to one year
- g. Quality of work: less than B+ not acceptable
- h. Gaps between training needs and programs offered.

Areas that could improve the situation

- a. Courses in the training schools should address changing needs of the market
- b. These courses should be modular and not more than 12 weeks long
- c. An information tool kit of existing credentialing system and job market situation should be made available at the high commission in the home country before landing in Canada so as to allow the potential immigrants make an informed choice.

2. Community Services - Agassiz

The Manager of Agassiz Community Services provided information of community profiles within Agassiz and their main occupations. He discussed how the community was very ill informed about the Government sponsored programs available and how to access these.

Agassiz has a total population comprising of Aboriginal, Russians, Germans, Central Europeans, South Africans, French, Koreans, Japanese, East Indians and Chinese.

There are three prisons, agricultural lands, hotels, tourist spots and a research station in Agassiz which were the main employers apart from few small businesses and retail services.

Issues

- a. Language
- b. Cultural differences
- c. Illiteracy
- d. Lack of understanding of Government's programs
- e. Lack of confidence

Areas that could improve the situation

- a. Present persons who qualify with program materials that will assist them to upgrade their skills.

He found that most of people shied away from coming to Community Services to take advantage of available programs and benefits. There were cultural barriers, especially with respect to women that prevented them from accessing such benefits.

Addition measures that could improve job access for the immigrants were:

- a. Awareness about the jobs and programs
- b. Prior learning programs to improve language and literacy level
- c. Improving the soft skills and Interpersonal skills

3. Manager, PICS

The Manager of PICS suggested the need for creating a strong awareness among the employers' community with respect to the benefits of hiring foreign-trained professionals. There is a need to formulate policies that look beyond immigration in a more holistic manner. As far as training is concerned, he opined that no need for starting education all over again. Job focused refresher courses of shorter duration could be sufficient to integrate the immigrants into job market.

Information and links to the work already done by various organizations in this direction was provided.

4. Engineering Consultant, Abbotsford

As a businessman and himself a foreign trained immigrant, credentialing and Canadian experience is necessary to join the regulated professions. He said small businesses cannot afford to train and employ, therefore, there should be programs to acquire skills for the jobs either at the schools or through employment programs and agencies. Employers look for workers with readily available skills rather than train to perform.

Even if small employers train people, they are unable to retain the services of these trained people, as they tend to leave for higher paying jobs after gaining experience - something that most small business cannot afford.

5. Local Farmers, Chilliwack

Farmers are already facing crisis due to labor shortage as well as competition for the market from across the border. Government policies and programs towards addressing these issues are gradually diminishing and relenting to market forces.

Farmers have no choice but to hire skilled immigrants as a large part of the immigrating and unemployed work force are skilled and educated immigrants. More than fifty percent of the labor force comprised of highly skilled people who were forced to seize the seasonal work opportunities to be able to access the EI and other benefits for upgrading their skills to suit the Canadian job market.

Apart from the programs to attract unskilled and seasonal workforce for the farming, there is need for a training center to train the seasonal workers on the proper handling and use of expensive farming tools and implements. Just like courses for Forklift and Crane drivers, short courses not more than one-month duration are required to train new farm workers to use farming tools and equipment including tractors.

6. Sikh Temple Committee, Abbotsford

The Sikh Temple committee in Abbotsford is taking initiatives to set up an Indo-Canadian Research Center at UCFV. This Centre will strive to resolve some of the issues related to the recognition of Indian training and education as well as devising new ways of developing cultural and information exchange programs and collaborative research.

Members of the committee felt that there was need for introducing:

- a. Punjabi teachings and Gurmat Teachings in the schools where Punjabi is one of the languages and temple committee members should be involved in such teachings.
- b. Homeopathy clinics should be allowed within temples. In practice Homeopathy Licensing was necessary but no associations were available for licensing.

7. Employment Development Office of the, Abbotsford Community Services

The following suggested steps to integrate foreign-trained professionals into the mainstream are:

- a. Educate Employers
- b. Job shadowing
- c. Smaller courses and shorter refresher courses in line with prior education of immigrants
- d. Professional associations should be standardized within provinces and at different levels

- e. Responsibility of government to introduce and fund mentoring programs, networking opportunities and supporting level playing field.

8. **Councilor, Abbotsford City Hall**

The Government is quite aware of the issue and there are some programs already in place to meet the shortage of skilled labour as well as use the skill of the foreign-trained professionals. He informed of using:

- a. A new program that has been launched to attract foreign students to attend university in British Columbia as international students. The students would be offered a work permit for two years instead of one, after acquiring the qualification they were pursuing. These students are also given an option to seek immigration or go back to their home country after completing their education.
- b. Universities and Associations could be directed and motivated to implement the recommendations for fast tracking the credentialing process by avoiding any repetition of the process.

9. **Executive Director, PICS**

A synopsis of the discussion reflects the opinion that it is high time for the government to implement recommendations of many such studies done in the past rather than beating about the issue again and again through more research projects and surveys.

A comment was made that many research surveys have already been conducted and are continuously in progress - the question is what have we actually done?

There are many policies in place; there is a need to implement them.

10. **UCFV, Abbotsford**

UCFV valued evaluations from ICES but for admission to the school, the student was re-assessed for their eligibility to attend specific programs at school.

Apart from the other skills and basic education needed to attend UCFV, each department has its own standards for Basic English level required to be eligible to enter a program or course. For a candidate to seek admission to UCFV details of syllabi already undertaken in home country is compared and mapped for equivalence with the Canadian program and accordingly credits are assigned for prior learning. However, there is no system to account for experience and on the job competence of the student, as the mandate of the University is to educate rather than provide access to the job market.

She agreed that UCFV does not have many links with professional associations or employers nor do they offer programs that address the job market and changes in the job situation. There are very few programs like Nursing and Trades that are linked with the job situation and practical experience.

It is felt that there is a need to address the issue of linkage. One of programs offered by the University is Applied Business Technology, which is linked to the job market.

Although this program is expensive, it is in high demand as most of the people who took this program were employed immediately.

Some suggestions offered for fast tracking the process are:

- a. ICES is ideally suited for credentialing and re-evaluation at UCFV could be curtailed and linked to ICES.
- b. Mentors are very important to guide and provide referrals
- c. Prior learning assessment tools and predictors could help improve capabilities of the foreign-trained professionals to self assess and learn to demonstrate their own skills.
- d. Co-operative internships could help upgrade skills on the job.

11. ESL Department – UCFV

The director explained the process of assessment at the University College including language skills expectation for prospective students. There is a Composition placement test to assess language skills for entry to ESL at the College. One needs to take different levels of ESL courses to enter into different programs of UCFV

To avoid the duplication of efforts of assessment, she felt there was a need for:

- a. Language policy within institutions, provinces and the country
- b. Standardization of language skill testing of immigrants for all purposes.
- c. Compatibility in procedures and eligibility requirements for admissions for International students and the foreign trained immigrants. The policies should be uniform and dedication of the immigrant to study and acquire skills should be given due consideration in comparison to the International students who offer money but lack drive and seriousness to achieve good results.

12. UCFV International Students Department

Assessing foreign credentials for their authenticity is the biggest challenge that the department faced to provide admissions to the international students at UCFV. She explained the process of admission for the International students at the college. One of the basic requirements was to assess the language skills.

Self-assessment tools available include:

- a. SLEP- is a secondary level English Proficiency test that could help in self-assessment.
- b. Accuplacer was another computer adaptive tool to assess English level.

For smooth transition into the Canadian System she suggested that there was need to:

- a. Standardize descriptors
- b. Set up Canadian language benchmarks and ESL articulation guide.
- c. Facilitate execution of self assessment on the Web
- d. Introduce co-operative business programs at UCFV like Applied Business Technologies - which is 6 months long and although expensive is partially sponsored. It is very popular and successful in training students to make them ready for the job market in the retail and services sector.

- e. Offer crash courses of no more than 2 months per semester to utilize and acknowledge foreign credentials as well upgrade them to Canadian requirements.
- f. Online assessment tools suitable for labour market English proficiency. One of such tools was TOEIC.
- g. The courses should be linked to the job market through Chamber of Commerce.

13. UCFV – Trades Department

In the Trades Department an explanation of the process of entry into trades, its links with the Industry and the certification process for the trades.

The requirement of the entry to the trades' courses was successfully clearing the entrance exam that was timed and constituted of:

- a. Reading comprehension test (Grade 11)
- b. Arithmetic Test Grade 5 with 70% passing grade.

There are around 197 identified trades out of which some are compulsory trades that have strict safety standards. Normally the duration of training varies between one year to four years for a journeyman ticket can be achieved for a chosen trade. The training is partly on job as an apprentice and partly class based. Having passed the final level of exam, the journeyman can take the red seal exam to be eligible to work anywhere in Canada.

He informed of the change in the Institutional set-up from the Industrial Training Apprenticeship Council to the Industrial Training Authority. ITA is an autonomous board and is responsible for devising programs that were likely to attract more students to trades training and education as well as introducing shorter programs for improving the earlier system.

The new program does offer opportunities for competency-based assessment of foreign credentials. However he could not say how it would work until the program was completely in place.

14. Internationally Trained Women in Science (IWIS), YWCA

Shauna provided an update on the projects already undertaken in BC and provided links to such projects and research already undertaken by various agencies. She was of the opinion that much has already been done and it is now time to think of ways to implement the existing recommendations.

15. MLA Office, Mission

He is of the opinion that here is a need to address the cookie cutter approach of the Government to facilitate Canadian needs without integrating immigration policies into the provincial and local economic and employment plans and programs.

The University of Ontario and the University of Agriculture at Saskatchewan have already proven the benefits of recognizing foreign credentials and have gone ahead with offering employment, not so in BC. A major roadblock is first hand employers.

There are protocols already in place, which need to be broken down to make opportunities more generic and applicable to large areas. There is need for standardization of assessment through out Canada.

16. **Home Builders Association**, Abbotsford

There is shortage of trades' people like electricians, gas fitters, masons, plumbers, carpenters in the construction industry. Mr. Anderson emphasized the need for credentialing and licensing as the construction field is a regulated profession and adheres too strict safety standards.

It is important for foreign trained people to understand the safety and building codes, which requires training in BC and Canada. For the purpose a new pilot project has been introduced at CTC College for secondary school level students to train them as framing technicians. It's a two-year program.

There is a provincial program to introduce technical trades training at the Grade 10 level, so that students get lessons on trades in the early years of life. Students would spend 40-60 hours at school learning trades. This could generate interest in these professions.

17. **President**, PICS

There is a need to raise awareness about a future crisis situation posed by skilled labour shortage in Canada unless due recognition is given to the foreign skills brought into the country. It is the mindset of the Canadian population needs to be dealt with before taking up any further programs.

For this purpose, analysis and research has to be directed to make economic sense out of engaging and employing the foreign trained skilled workforce and removing the barriers in recognition of their credentials.

Presently, there are intellectual smoke screens that do not accept the change. This has lots to do with racism. The decision-makers in every sector need to feel the pinch of the skilled labour shortage to remove those screens. They have to feel the urgent need.

He recommends:

- a. Benchmarking of language standards at all levels local, provincial and University.
- b. Have information on Universities in place and allow people access to that information before they land in the country.
- c. Lots of credentialing can be streamlined by avoiding duplication
- d. Allow collaborative programs with Universities overseas to sell diplomas and degrees of local Institutes and Universities.

- e. Identify tests and challenge exams, just like Cambridge University system of international accreditation of package of skills acquired anywhere in the world.

He cited an example of introducing short refresher course in Vancouver community college for librarians to upgrade their computer skills in Library Science. There is no association for assessment of a Librarian's credentials. This was done when UBC refused to introduce any such courses. It was a great success and the program was finally accepted by UBC. Similarly funding should be made available to other Institutions and bodies for assessment of skills as well as offering shorter courses for upgrading them to the Canadian needs. This would set in competitive advantage and motivate others to follow.

18. Industry Training Council

The Industry Council provides certification to the people who qualify at different levels of apprenticeship and training programs at any registered school and employer.

The process is to join the apprenticeship and get admission for classroom training for requisite level of the program. There used to be an Entry-Level Trade Training (ELTT) program, which has been removed. It is now possible to challenge and get placement at any level of the program.

There is an opinion that there is misconception with respect to shortage of skilled people and the job market, which needs to be corrected. According to him there are no employers registering for apprenticeship. The challenge at this point of time is to find an apprenticeship.

He pointed out that the new system is more flexible in terms of allowing entry at any level and timing courses for convenience of employers. There was much more flexibility in terms of tests linked to performance.

Recommendations:

- a. Large employers to be motivated to register for apprenticeship and incentives Misconception with respect to shortages of skilled labour be removed.
- b. The skilled immigrants should challenge the trades program based on their work experience.
- c. Competence based tests be evolved to allow entry into the program.

19. Coordinator BCITPNET

There needs to be an emphasis that clearly differentiates between licensing and certification. Certification occurs after acquiring education and licensing enables one to practice a profession. Acquired basic qualifications do not qualify one to practice a profession. Supervised experience is crucial.

There is a need to document the best practices and successful models of mainstreaming foreign-trained professionals in the North American culture.

There is a need for providing incentives to mentoring programs.

20. **Health Services UCFV**

It was explained that different courses on health care offered at UCFV and informed about the possibilities of undertaking some of the programs like Nanny training is being undertaken in collaboration with overseas institutions.

There have been experiments to import nurses from overseas and also some faculty exchanges programs with China. The challenge is to find sufficient clinical space and funds to undertake such exchange programs more frequently.

21. **Industrial Training Authority (ITA)**

ITA is newly created autonomous body for funding and governing certification and training of trades. There are 197 trades and 24000 people practising in these trades at present. ITA provides funding to the training Institutions, colleges universities, provincial credentialing organizations and private institutions to meet the demand.

ITA is open to competency based testing rather than exam based testing if a person has more than 5-10 years experience. ITA is trying to link career planning in schools by introducing Entry Level Trade and Training Program. New modules are being developed for training at different levels of trade.

ITA is ready to fund innovative projects and training systems. A major challenge is to get industry to offer apprenticeships. One of the best attempts was by Cam Sum College at Victoria that followed a flexible program allowing entry into the program whenever required.

23. **Principal, Rick Hanson; Secondary School, School District #34 Abbotsford**

Certification from the BC College of Teachers is necessary. Normally a bachelor's degree plus one year teaching qualifying certificate from the BC College of Teachers is required for entry into this profession.

Foreign-trained teachers could also get one-year training after assessment of their qualifications is done by the BCCT. On recommendation by the BCCT, a practical training of 6-10 weeks is supported by the School Boards.

24. **International Credentials Evaluation Society**

ICES is a self supported society and its main function is to provide assistance and certification in evaluating the foreign credentials.

Recommendations for recognition of credentials:

- ❖ Introduce special bridging programs. Open Universities normally have such programs in place.

- ❖ Information should be available with the potential immigrants before landing in Canada about the challenges they have to face including jobs, regulated occupations, fees and costs.
- ❖ Counselling should be available with opportunities to network
- ❖ Mentoring model is the best for such programs

Focus Group Results

A few focus groups were held and presentations were made to various forums like Rotarians in Mission and Abbotsford as well as at the Indo-Canadian Business Council meet.

Questions posed to these groups were:

1. What do the employers look for while hiring?
2. Was there any hesitation in hiring foreign-trained individuals?
3. What could help remove those hesitations and apprehensions?
4. How could the recognition of credentials and experience of foreign-trained immigrants be expedited?

Focus Group – I Employers at Chilliwack (17 persons)

Hiring foreign-trained individuals is not very comfortable for an employer.

An employer in Canada looks for:

- Authentication of qualifications and universities attended
- Performance in the past job
- Communication skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Referrals

How does the employer make sure of the above in the case of foreign trained individuals? Employers look for foreign-trained professionals with:

- Credentials evaluated through standard procedures
- Qualifications from a University or recognized post secondary institution within Canada
- Canadian experience with another employer that provides further assurance of the capacity and capability of the person to handle the assigned job.
- Well accepted English proficiency test scores
- Referrals from other Canadian firms or professionals from their area of work

The onus of the proving or bridging the gaps between his skills and the Canadian requirements lies with the applicant and not the employer. They should be able to present their case and be able to convince the employer they are suited for the job.

- Communication skills can be judged through interview. But interpersonal skills at the workplace are difficult to judge unless Canadian experience is available.
- Barriers like language pronunciation and listening comprehension though equally important can be improved over time.
- Immigrants should be ready to take up entry level jobs in the professions that are not regulated and do not require any kind of licensing. They can apply for licensing later.

- There are issues like unionized jobs and foreign-trained professionals find it difficult to take up entry-level jobs.
- Another barrier is language interpretation for certificates evaluation and understanding of skills during personal interviews.
- Foreign-trained professionals need to understand workplace ethics and system in which they have to operate and understand guidelines, rules and regulations. It becomes much more difficult when these skills are not there in public dealing professions.
- It is a question of demand and supply of the required skills. If there is a shortage of certain skills, employers would be willing to relax on their prerequisites and give it a try.

Focus Group II **Financial Institutions, Abbotsford (7 persons)**

Financial Services sector staff have to deal with public. Employers in this sector look for:

- Language proficiency
- Interpersonal skills
- Pleasant personality
- How one carries oneself
- Public relations background
- Computer proficiency

There is no pre certification necessary. Graduation from most insatiate is acceptable and personal interviews provide an opportunity to the applicant to prove his/ her suitability for the post. The employer provides on-the-job training.

One should be willing to take an entry-level position, as the employer likes to promote its own employees to higher positions. Each organization in this sector has its own criteria for selection and screening of applicants. On-line applications are also accepted.

Each organization has its own promotion policy, which is linked to the acquisition of skills on the job and undertaking various courses related to the job. There is no barrier to hiring immigrants. In fact multilingual skills of immigrants come handy while dealing with a multicultural society.

Focus Group-III: Educators at UCFV (11 persons)

The questions posed to this group were:

1. Is it possible to repeat the assessment process for evaluation of credentials?

2. Is there any possibility of standardizing the language proficiency requirement across the provinces and within the institutions within the province?
3. Is there any possibility to link with the credentialing organization or employers to offer short courses relevant to their needs?
4. Is there any possibility of collaborative programs with overseas Universities?
 - Credential evaluation by ICES is not enough. It has to meet the standards of the University as the purpose of evaluation is different for an educational institution.
 - Assessment of English proficiency has to be done, as the literacy requirements in English are different for each department within the University.
 - Educators do not find it realistic to have standardization of English level all over the country. Educators would not agree to any standardization of test even between the departments within the University.
 - There was no consensus on language policy.
 - English or languages could be modular. Modular courses could be offered in continuing studies programs but not in regular courses.
 - Quality standards of each institution have to be maintained. Hence assessment and evaluation of all prospective students is a must.

Introduction of new vocational programs requires money and a minimum number of students to enroll for the program. Pilot projects are possible but sustainability requires funding and support from the Government.

Any collaboration overseas is possible if funding were available. One of these initiatives is being setup by the Indo-Canadian research center at the UCFV.

Focus Group IV: Immigrants (75 persons)

The questions asked were:

1. What were the barriers to recognition of their skills?
2. What did they think could expedite recognition of their credentials?
3. Did they think part of process or information on the process in the home country could have helped?

Barriers

- Language
- Qualification recognition
- Certification
- Assessment of credentials
- Employment in the field of education
- Have to take up survival jobs and remain underemployed
- ICES evaluation not sufficient.

- Lack of funds to carry out further education
- Courses offered by the educational institutes may not meet the requirements of the professional association

Issues and Recommendations

A single place for credential evaluation would be sufficient. The University should accept evaluation from ICES. Different agencies providing different evaluation confuse the immigrants.

Very little credits are offered for foreign education even if there is a lot of similarity/ overlapping of the syllabi with the programs offered in Canada.

ESL courses have to be completed before getting into courses of the chosen profession. It should be possible to simultaneously undertake those courses along with the professional courses after basic minimum level of English proficiency has been attained.

Improvement in English pronunciation and listening is not possible within ones own country. Classes should be undertaken along with Canadian students to be able to gain day to day use of the language.

Achievement of ESL level exams is not sufficient to improve communication and fluency skills. It comes with practice and has to be learnt on job while interacting with different people.

Focus Group V

Employers – Farmers and Manufacturers (Shakes and Shingles), Transporters, Restaurant Owners (33 persons)

Issues

1. Labour shortage
2. Immigration policy not favourable to farmers and mill owners
3. Unemployment Insurance policy unfavourable to Millers community
4. Skilled labour force no good for farming and physical labour in the mills
5. Most of the farm workers are old and affect productivity
6. Face strong competition with the USA

Farming productivity is not affected by immigration and welfare policy of the government. At the same time, skilled immigrants were under-utilised as they were forced to take up jobs as farm labour to sustain them and be eligible for EI and related welfare benefits.

The recommendations are:

1. Human resource policies favouring special pool of labour force for farming and milling

2. Policy should be linked with immigration policy where in PNP program should be extended to the unskilled labour that is in high demand in the farming and lumber sector, the largest employment sector in Fraser Valley
3. Special licenses to be issued to landed immigrants employed as long haul truck drivers for cross broader transportation of goods and services to be able to serve bigger market in the US and Europe.

APPENDIX C

SEMINAR RESULTS

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the surveys and focus groups certain recommendations isolated for expediting the process of foreign credential recognition.

In order to solicit feedback from the representative mix of employers, educators, officials from credentialing agencies and foreign trained immigrants so as to formulate an action plan a one day conference was organized on 20th May, 2004 at Abbotsford. More than 350 Invitations were widely circulated and public announcements were made in local newspaper and over the radio. The conference carried no registration fee while some Credit Unions, an employers and an Indo-Canadian community sponsored the lunch. 64 persons attended the conference.



As per the agenda, presentations were made by Mr. Stan Martens, Team Leader CFDC of North Fraser and the project leader, Mr. Patrick Coady, coordinator, BCITPNET, Mr. Rolf Arnold, Head of the Trades Department at UCFV, Ms. Taranjot Gadhok, consultant on the project.

Mr. Stan Martens introduced the objectives of the project and highlighted need for such a project. Mr. Patrick Coady explained the process of credentialing of the doctors and the Engineers. Mr. Rolf Arnold spoke about the trades.



Mrs. Taranjot Gadhok, highlighted some of the findings and recommendations framed on the basis of focus groups, surveys and questionnaires compiled for the project. She distributed worksheets for working groups to formulate recommendations and suggest strategies.

Each group was asked to prepare an action plan and strategy to implement one recommendation from the list presented. The action plans in the form of answers to four questions to obtain a guided response. These action plans were presented to a panel. The panelists were:

Mr. Stan Smith, President, Progressive Intercultural Community Services
Ms Dorine Garibay, Head ESL UCFV

Mr. Patrick Coady, Coordinator, BCITPNET
 Mr. Rolf Arnold, Head Trades Department,
 UCFV
 Ms. Karen Spence, Prospera Credit Union

The panelists intervened and commented on the presentations and finally the conference concluded with the vote of thanks from Stan Martens and Taranjot.



Implementing General Recommendations

Recommendation no I: Information Tool Kit

- 1) Information access to immigrants
- 2) Database of well known universities
- 3) Linkage of the High Commission (PR) department to a central coordinating agency

1. How do you think this can be implemented? Suggest actions and prioritize them.



Canadian High Commissions/ Consulates should be able to provide current and up to date information about job market trends, employment opportunities, pre-requisites for accessing the job market, various trade and professional associations' etc. Ideally a Web portal where all this information and more is aggregated from various sources so that it can be researched in a manageable manner and customized to individual needs.

2. Who do you think would play a major role to implement it? Who would benefit the most from it?

Immigrant serving agencies, professional bodies/ trade associations/educational institutions and coordinating bodies of the government

3. Where do you think it needs to be implemented?

Until such time as the portal is developed, detailed information along the above lines should be available with all-Canadian High Commissions and Consulates outside Canada which should have a public section so that those who are interested are able to browse through the information.

4. What constraints do you anticipate?

Access to this information may not be available beyond working hours. Once the portal is developed, keeping the links and information updated would require dedicated effort. Many people around the world may have limited or no access to computers.

5. How do you think these constraints can be removed?

Not answered

III. Recommendation No. 2: Language Skills

- Standard test for language skills
- Develop collaborative courses with overseas universities
- Well recognized by the credentialing authorities & PA's
- Introduction of modular refresher courses

1. How do you think this can be implemented? Suggest actions and prioritize them.

Create incentives to employers and support for the immigrant

2. Who do you think would play a major role to implement it?

The government needs to implement programs
 The Immigrant needs to want to succeed and complete programs with the support of a mentor.
 The employers need to be convinced that this is a win-win opportunity for all involved.

Who would benefit the most from it?

All win

3. Where do you think it needs to be implemented?**4. What constraints do you anticipate?**

The two highest levels of concern is language and credentials. As immigrants learn they need to utilise the skills and practice the language.

5. How do you think these constraints can be removed?

Integration is the key

Recommendation No. III: Process of Credentialing

- One stop shop for credential validation
- Competency based tests for licensing
- Assessment of the credentialing should start in the country of origin

Action 1. One stop shop for credential evaluation

How do you think this can be implemented? Suggest actions and prioritize them.

Web based portal and on-line tracking and follow-up. Once credentials are evaluated, all those who need or are authorized to access this information (universities, employers, trade associations etc.) should be able to do so seamlessly. If an organization has more stringent requirements and needs to carry out further evaluations, it should do so from the point already reached and not start the process all over again. The essential idea is to avoid duplication of effort that is the case now because of involvement of multiple agencies.



Who do you think would play a major role to implement it?

Independent body comprising of representatives from various stakeholders includes government, educators, industry, professional associations' etc.

Who would benefit the most from it?

Win -Win for all

Where do you think it needs to be implemented?

The system has to be conceived, planned and implemented in Canada with the active involvement of all concerned. The Web based solution once implemented would have its foot print across the entire globe and many processes can then be initiated and some even completed by the immigrants in their home countries even before they set foot in Canada.

What constraints do you anticipate?

- Mindset of all stakeholders.
- Huge coordinating exercise
- Consensus on many issues may be very difficult
- Conflicting interests of many involved organizations

How do you think these constraints can be removed?

Change of mind set through awareness campaigns seminars, workshops, education and media coverage. Economic value of the whole exercise and the direct benefit to all concerned would have to be very clearly brought out.

Action 2. Competency based tests for licensing

1. How?

Allowed to work in the relevant profession under supervision

2. Who do you think would play a major role to implement it?

Employers, Government and professional associations would play a major role

3. Who would benefit the most from it.?

Immigrants, employers and the country as a whole would benefit from the brain gain

4. Where do you think it needs to be implemented?

Partly in the home country where knowledge based competence can be evaluated by mutually agreed institutions and partly in Canada during on-the-job evaluation.

5. What constraints do you anticipate?

Apprehensions of employers
Collaborative programs may be difficult to take off
Necessary funding for such an effort may not be available

6. How do you think these constraints can be removed?

By providing appropriate economic incentives like tax benefit to employers for hiring foreign trained skilled personnel for on-the-job assessment

Recommendation No. IV: Right people for the right job**1. How do you think this can be implemented? Suggest actions and prioritize them.**

- Special policies for the migration of labour for the farmers and millers (e.g. PNP programs for unskilled labour)
- Disincentives to skilled labour for working in farms and other unskilled jobs
- Policies to allow non-school going 21 year olds as dependants to serve on the farms under the family class
- Special programs for training and licensing of skilled labour
- Special policies to replicate Mexican labour import on work permit

2. Who do you think would play a major role to implement it?

- Federal Government (Ministry of Immigration and Citizenship)
- Community Services
- Ministry of Human Resources

Who would benefit the most from it?

- Skilled workers
- Farmers
- Millers

3. Where do you think it needs to be implemented?

- First at federal level and then at provincial level and community level.

4. What constraints do you anticipate?

- Major policy decision
- Skilled immigrants initially affected until the other policies are in place.

5. How do you think these constraints can be removed?

- Pressure from the farming and Millers community
- Projecting cost benefit analysis of implementing such benefits

Recommendation V: Larger Participation of Employers

1. How do you think this can be implemented? Suggest actions and prioritize them

- Educate employers, Employers and Associations on pre-immigration assessment process
- Employer subsidies or incentives

2. Who do you think would play a major role to implement it?

Stakeholders Associations, Governments (all levels)

3. Who would benefit the most from it?

- Employers
- Employees
- Government

4. Where do you think it needs to be implemented?

Areas with high immigrant population

5. What constraints do you anticipate?

- Lack of funding for educators
- Lack of incentives for employers
- Lack of government initiative
- Negligible political will
- Employers concerns with respect to turn over

6. How do you think these constraints can be removed?

Not answered

APPENDIX D

REGULATORY BODIES FOR CREDENTIALING AND CERTIFICATION

Different regulatory bodies for credentialing and certification**1. Credential Assessment Services in Canada****Provincially-Mandated Services****Alberta****[International Qualifications Assessment Service](#) (IQAS)**

Alberta Learning
4th Floor, Sterling Place
9940 - 106 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2V1 Canada
Tel: (780) 427-2655; Fax: (780) 422-9734
E-mail: iqas@gov.ab.ca
<http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/iqas/iqas.asp>

British Columbia**[International Credential Evaluation Service](#) (ICES)**

4355 Mathissi Place
Burnaby, British Columbia V5G 4S8 Canada
Tel: (604) 431-3402; Fax: (604) 431-3382
E-mail: ICES@ola.bc.ca
<http://www.ola.bc.ca/ices/>

Manitoba**[Academic Credentials Assessment Service - Manitoba](#) (ACAS)**

Manitoba Labour and Immigration
Settlement & Labour Market Services Branch
5th Floor, 213 Notre Dame Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3B 1N3
Tel: (204) 945 - 6300 or (204) 945 - 5432
Fax: (204) 948 - 2148
E-mail: glloyd@gov.mb.ca
<http://www.gov.mb.ca/labour/immigrate/english/newcomerservices/7.html>

Northwest Territories***[International Qualifications Assessment Service](#)**

Alberta Learning
4th Floor, Sterling Place
9940 - 106 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2V1 Canada
Tel: 1-866-692-7057 (toll free from within NWT)
or (780) 427-2655
Fax: (780) 422-9734
E-mail: iqas@gov.ab.ca
<http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/iqas/iqas.asp>

* The Government of the Northwest Territories provides this service through an inter-provincial agreement with the Government of Alberta.

Ontario**[World Education Services-Canada](#) (WES Canada)**

45 Charles Street East, Suite 700
Toronto, Ontario M4Y 1S2 Canada
Tel.: (416) 972-0070
Fax : (416) 972-9004
Toll-free: (866) 343-0070 (from outside the 416 area code)
Email: ontario@wes.org
<http://www.wes.org/ca/>

Quebec**[Service des évaluations comparatives](#) (SEC)**

Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration
800, boulevard de Maisonneuve Est, 2e étage
Montréal (Québec) H2L 4L8 Canada
Tél : (514) 864-9191 ou (877) 264-6164; Fax : (514) 873-8701
Email: equivalences@mrci.gouv.qc.ca
<http://www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/anglais/education/educational-report.html>

Saskatchewan***[International Qualifications Assessment Service](#)**

Alberta Learning
4th Floor, Sterling Place
9940 - 106 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2V1 Canada
Tel: 1-800-999-3965 (toll free within Saskatchewan)
or (780) 427-2655
Fax: (780) 422-9734
E-mail: igas@gov.ab.ca
<http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/igas/igas.asp>

* The Government of Saskatchewan provides this service through an inter-provincial agreement with the Government of Alberta.

Other provinces and territories

For credential evaluation services in New-Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Prince-Edward-Island, Nunavut, or the Yukon, you can contact any of the services listed on this page.

Comparative Chart

EVALUATION SERVICES¹				
	Province	Basic Evaluation	Detailed Evaluation	Processing Time
Academic Credentials Assessment Service (ACAS)	Manitoba	Free ² for MB residents	Free ² for MB residents	6 to 8 weeks
International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES)	British Columbia	CAD\$ 115	CAD\$ 200	4 to 8 weeks
International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS)	Alberta, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories	CAD\$ 100	CAD\$ 200	3 to 8 weeks
Service d'évaluation comparative (SEC)	Quebec	CAD\$ 105	not applicable	45 days 9 weeks
World Education Services, Canada (WES)	Ontario	CAD\$ 100	CAD\$ 200	10 days

For further information visit <http://cicic.ca/professions/indexe.stm>

APPENDIX E

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<http://www.qualification.org/index2b.htm>

<http://www.cicic.ca/evaluation/fptactivities.en.php>

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