
DATE: January 20, 2010

REPORT TITLE: **PEEL IMMIGRATION LABOUR MARKET SURVEY**

FROM: Janet Menard, Commissioner of Human Services

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this report is to inform Council about the findings and recommendation of the Peel Immigration Labour Market Survey.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The Peel Immigration Labour Market Survey is one of three immigration initiatives under the Peel Immigration Project led by the Human Services Department.
- Funding was obtained from the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities to conduct local labour market research that examines the under-utilization of immigrant skills in Peel Region.
- A total of 1425 immigrants and Canadian-born employed and unemployed residents of Peel completed the survey.
- The Peel study reports information that confirms and extends the national data and also fills the data gap that exists at the local level.
- Recommendations outlined in the report are intended to help inform strategies across three groups: community organizations, employers and governments.
- The final report resulting from this study will be disseminated to key policy and decision-makers in the private, public and non-profit sectors following Council's receipt of this report.
- Key findings and recommendations have been previewed by community and employer groups to support engagement in a collaborative strategy for Peel around employment of immigrants.

DISCUSSION

1. Background

The Region of Peel recognizes needs of immigrants in local service delivery and has been actively engaged in collaborations with the broader community on labour market and immigration issues. The Region of Peel in partnership with the United Way of Peel Region co-sponsors the community collaborative known as the Peel Newcomer Strategy Group. The group was formed to help develop a system wide model for Peel to plan, fund and deliver services to respond and support the timely integration of immigrants.

A component of the Peel immigration strategy is the Region of Peel's commitment to develop long-term strategies and sustained processes to ensure that Region of Peel

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services and supports are planned and implemented in ways that improve access, support immigrants and ensure that their contribution to the community is maximized.

Projects include: the Peel Immigration Web Portal (funded by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration), Peel Immigration Discussion Papers (funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada) and most recently the Peel Immigration Labour Market Survey (funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities).

Common requirements to support the Peel immigration strategy have been identified as follows:

- Data (economic, demographic, service, geographic, etc.)
- Local Immigrant Centred Research:
 - Employment skill assets vs. economic needs
 - Housing needs
 - Language/literacy
 - Social needs
 - Transportation & travel needs
 - Health issues
 - Diversity strategies
 - Cultural assets
 - Settlement & language service challenges
- Community engagement
- Consensus building/strategies

In March 2008, the Region of Peel secured funding from the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities to research the under-utilized skills of immigrants in Peel region. The Peel Immigration Labour Market Survey brings Peel Region one step closer to understanding the local needs and experiences of the immigrant population. The study also helps to narrow the gap in available data at the local level and may help respond to labour market contradictions reported by national and local data which points to increasing difficulties filling skilled job vacancies and the strong indications that immigrants bring much needed skills, yet experience significant difficulties obtaining work in their field.

The project was guided by an Advisory Committee with representatives from the public, private and non-profit sectors:

Paul Brophy	Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities
Shalini da Cunha	Peel Halton/Dufferin Training Board
Dr. Paula DeCoito	Peel Social Planning Council
Guilherme Dias	Pitney Bowes Canada
Rodel Imbarlina-Ramos	Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC)
Norm McLeod	Region of Peel
Bhupinder Sanghera	Brampton-Mississauga and District Labour Council

2. Research Methods

The research project was designed to explore the labour market experiences of immigrants residing in Peel. Canadian-born and immigrants ages 15 and older, who have looked for work and/or worked within the past 10 years, were invited to complete the survey online.

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The survey instrument consisting of 160 questions was developed by Ryerson University, Diversity Institute in Management and Technology. Survey respondents were asked about their experience searching for work in Canada, their work experiences in Canadian workplaces, their international work experience, education background and language skill, and their overall experiences in Canadian society.

Respondents who identified their immigration class as principal applicants participated in focus groups/interviews and provided additional information about their international work and education experiences. The survey took approximately 25-60 minutes to complete depending on the individual profile of the respondent. Surveys were completed by employed and unemployed immigrants and Canadian-born individuals from the public and private sectors. The survey was available in four languages: English, Punjabi, Urdu and Chinese. Copies of the survey are available through the office of the Commissioner of Human Services.

3. Findings of Survey Sample

The Peel study was designed to answer eight key research questions. The findings of the survey were compiled and analyzed based on the quantitative responses from 1425 surveys and the qualitative responses from 33 principal applicants. A copy of the published report detailing the full analysis of the survey findings can be obtained by request. The research questions and the sample findings are as follows:

What are the labour market experiences of immigrants and Canadian-born individuals in Peel?

- Immigrants are not faring well in the Peel Labour market on numerous measures: for instance, employment rates, income, and career satisfaction. More specifically, of the immigrant respondents who have international work experience, only about one third was successful in obtaining their desired employment.
- Obtaining more education in Canada helps immigrant respondents earn more income, especially for principal applicant skilled workers.
- Despite their educational credentials, immigrants do not receive the same income returns to their education. Immigrant respondents earn significantly less than their Canadian-born counterparts. While an immigrant's income increases with length of time in working for their current employer and with obtaining more education in Canada, their income is still not commensurate with their Canadian-born counterparts.

To what extent do immigrants and Canadian-born individuals utilize their skills at work?

- Both immigrants and Canadian-born individuals report underutilization of their skills in their current job. Recent immigrant respondents are less likely to utilize their skills at work, but skill utilization improves with length of time in Canada, and through full recognition of credentials by employers.
- Results show a significant change in work industry after migration, as well as a change in occupation level for immigrants. While some immigrant respondents are able to improve their occupation level over time, most were not able to obtain employment in

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jobs at similar levels to what they held prior to arrival, especially those who had previously occupied managerial or professional occupations.

- Immigrants were more successful in obtaining their desired job if they reported that employers in Ontario accepted or partially accepted their previous educational credentials.

How satisfied are immigrants and Canadian-born individuals with their workplaces and careers?

- Immigrant workers did not differ significantly from Canadian-born workers on their workplace satisfaction perceptions.
- Overall, Canadian-born individuals reported higher levels of satisfaction with their careers. However, after five years with their current employer, the career satisfaction levels of immigrants and Canadian-born respondents are almost the same.
- Immigrant respondents are not as satisfied with their career experiences in Peel as their Canadian-born counterparts. They report a lack of available individuals they could turn to for guidance and support within their organizations (more so in the private sector) and continue to explore other career opportunities.
- Of those currently seeking other job or career opportunities, most are looking within Peel Region.
- In general, respondents are positive about their places of work. They feel positive about their co-worker relations: 79 per cent feel their co-workers treat them with respect and support; 66.9 per cent feel supported by their managers; 66.3 per cent reported that there were fair advancement processes in their workplaces; and 77.9 per cent report being highly committed to their jobs. Most Peel respondents work in the same municipality where they live.
- Respondents employed in the public sector, in particular immigrants, are more satisfied with their employment in Peel. They are more likely to be utilizing their skills, report higher levels of management and co-worker support including the availability of mentors. Immigrant respondents employed in the public sector report higher levels of commitment to their public sector organizations and higher career satisfaction.
- Canadian-born respondents were more likely than immigrant respondents to report having a mentor regardless of employment sector. Immigrant respondents in the public sector were more likely to report having a mentor than immigrant respondents in the private sector.

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How do the experiences of principal applicants in the skilled worker category differ from those of other survey respondents?

- Skilled worker principal applicants are less satisfied with their labour market experiences in Peel compared to other immigrants. They were not very satisfied with their progress in finding a job in Canada, were not satisfied with meeting their career goals, goals for advancement, and goals for income.
- Despite having their education and experience assessed prior to immigration, skilled worker principal applicants are not more likely to be employed, are not earning more income nor are they able to find employment in jobs that utilize their skills.

What job search strategies, including use of employment services, do immigrant and Canadian-born workers use to obtain employment?

- Searching in the newspaper or asking for help from friends or family to get a job are strategies reported as used most often to find a job, but they do not necessarily help an individual get a job in their field.
- Immigrants are more likely to use formal employment and research strategies such as visiting employment centres and attending workshops. Networking/contacting employers were reported as the most helpful strategies; however, these are done less often by immigrants. Bridging programs and mentorship are also strategies that were used less often.
- One in four immigrants accessed some government-funded employment services, and just under one-third obtained more education and credentials in Canada.
- Although we know that immigrants are not utilizing some of the programs funded by governments that could help them, we need more research to uncover why.
- Despite knowing where to go for services, not all respondents were able to obtain the help they needed. Nearly 50 per cent of the sample of immigrants reported not getting the help they needed through these services.
- While language training is well funded and attended for many reasons, highly educated and proficient immigrants, in particular principal applicants, do not necessarily find them accessible or useful.
- In general, individuals were more satisfied with the services they received from community agencies than from government employment services.
- Highly educated and trained individuals reported lower levels of satisfaction with government and community services to help them find a job, as they felt the services did not meet their specialized needs.

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How successful are immigrant and Canadian-born workers at getting promotions in their workplaces?

- Few members received promotions. Canadian-born respondents were more likely to apply for promotions compared to immigrant respondents and more likely to receive them. Immigrants in our sample were less likely to receive promotions regardless of whether they were working in the private or public sector.

What barriers do immigrant and Canadian-born workers identify in terms of obtaining employment and advancement in their careers?

- Lack of Canadian work experience was reported as the barrier faced most often for immigrants and correspondingly, lack of work experience was reported most often by Canadian-born individuals.
- Networking was a serious barrier for both immigrants and Canadian-born individuals but more significant for immigrants. Immigrants found that networking was a more serious problem for them as they felt new to the community, and reported the inability to contact/connect directly with employers and the lack of available job references from Canada more often than Canadian-born respondents.
- Lack of recognition of international credentials appeared in our data as an important barrier to employment and a significant contributor to labour market success.
- Discounting international credentials by employers or professional organizations within Canada is a serious problem. Recognition of credentials by Ontario employers appeared as a significant contributor to successful employment in our data.
- Immigrant respondents who had their educational credentials accepted by Ontario employers were more than twice as likely to be employed. They were more likely to get their desired job, a job that utilizes their skills, or a job of the same or higher rank than before arrival. Finally, they also reported higher career satisfaction rates.
- Despite the evidence that obtaining credential equivalency by Canadian employers makes a significant impact on career satisfaction, job status, skill utilization and helps immigrants get jobs in their desired occupations, international credential recognition was reported as the second least likely job strategy employed by immigrants in our sample.

What are the perceptions of immigrant and Canadian-born workers with respect to discrimination in Canadian workplaces, and how prevalent are personal experiences of discrimination?

- In general, individuals believed that immigrants face discrimination in Canadian workplaces. Immigrants, highly educated immigrants and the employed respondents were more likely to believe this was the case. Canadian experience is often taken to mean discrimination by immigrants as 60 per cent of the immigrant respondents believe Canadians feel education obtained in non-westernized countries is inferior.

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- In general, most reported that discrimination rarely happens to them, with no difference between public and private sector respondents. However, immigrant respondents, in particular, skilled worker principal applicants and Black and South Asian immigrant respondents are more likely to report discrimination happens to them often.

4. Proposed Direction

The key findings outlined above suggest that immigrants in our sample are not as successful transitioning into the Peel labour force as Canadian-born individuals. Furthermore, once they are in the workforce, they are not transitioning up or utilizing their skills to their full potential. The key findings point to several areas where action can be taken to help improve the situation. This section highlights, at a high level, what key stakeholders such as community organizations, government and employers can do to help improve the situation for workers in Peel Region based on the findings of the Peel Immigration Labour Market Survey. It also offers some solutions and strategies as examples of what can be done to respond to the key findings of this study in the areas recommended for action.

Community Organizations

It is recommended that community groups in Peel:

1. Adapt their service delivery approach to address the identified barriers and lack of satisfaction with services.

Examples of solution-based approaches in this area include:

- Ensuring a better ethnic match between staff and job seekers of specific ethnocultural groups who are not accessing services or indicate that existing services are not meeting their employment related needs.
- Offering more or adapting current service delivery options to better help immigrants obtain Canadian work experience as part of their job search strategies (e.g., work placements/co-ops).
- Offering more targeted assistance to individuals who have been out of the workforce for long periods of time or those starting a second career so that they can transition back into the workforce.
- Developing courses/workshops more suited to the employment related needs of the highly educated immigrants. These courses could include strategies around career advancement, critical skills portfolio development, formal networking, how to contact employers directly and offer targeted resume and interview skills for higher level jobs.
- Offering various options for language training and other courses, e.g., daytime, evening, part-time options.

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2. Advocate for and offer appropriate staff development to enable services to better meet the labour market integration needs of immigrants.

Examples of solution-based approaches in this area include:

- Providing training to employment staff on a variety of topics such as local and national labour market trends, global economy, employment in the 21st Century and international talent, so they can better meet the needs of the internationally trained job seeker.
- Establishing a formal system that strengthens the employment professional's network and facilitate the transfer of service delivery expertise (e.g., implement and take advantage of front-line professional development days).

3. Engage employers as partners.

Examples of solution-based approaches in this area include:

- Involving employers in course design and program development to ensure they are up to date and relevant for assisting individuals accessing the labour market at all job levels.
- Establishing employer engagement strategies based on the post recession hiring needs of employers and establishing partnerships that support relevant employer participation (e.g., mentors or hosts of job placements).
- Recognizing employers who have shown leadership in hiring immigrants and use them as ambassadors to engage others.

Employers

It is recommended that employers in the public and private sectors in Peel:

1. Create policies and offer in-house programs/services that proactively support employees utilizing their skills to their full abilities in their organizations.

Examples of solution-based approaches in this area include:

- Implementing talent management systems that identify under-utilized skills of new and longer term employees available to employers in their workplaces.
- Offering work placements, on-job training, internship, co-ops to help job seekers expand their Canadian work experience in jobs matching their skills.
- Establishing in-house mentoring initiatives where junior employees are matched with more senior employees who have some natural connection (i.e., work specialization, career aspirations etc.).
- Implementing bias-free, transparent hiring and advancement processes and progressive human resources practices that encourage individuals to achieve their potential.
- Utilizing competency based assessment mechanisms to strike a balance in the hiring process so that hiring decisions are made on applicants' demonstrated skills and not solely on their formal credentials.

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- Ensuring their human resources practices do not perpetuate systemic discrimination in the Canadian workforce and preclude using lack of Canadian experience as a requirement to hire recent immigrants.

2. Invest in their workplaces.

Examples of solution-based approaches in this area include:

- Increasing their understanding of foreign academic credentials, institutions and trends (e.g., Foreign Credential Recognition - FCR).
- Improving linkages with existing credential evaluation services.
- Introducing workplace development standards that support sensitivity, cross-cultural and diversity training on a regular basis for staff at all levels.
- Encouraging (and compensate) employees to become mentors outside the workplace to new immigrants in corresponding occupations.
- Offering interest-free loans and other incentives to employees who upgrade their credentials to meet skill needs of their employer.

3. Engage with other stakeholders who have an interest in employment related access issues (e.g., other employer, employment service providers and community groups).

Examples of solution-based approaches in this area include:

- Seeking out award-winning and model employers in the same sector, and learn from their hiring and promotion practices.
- Working with employment service providers and community groups to ensure that workshops and services are relevant and applicable.
- Sharing the energy and stories of champions to engage other employers.
- Participating in community initiatives that help facilitate immigrants' access to relevant employment.

Government

It is recommended that government continue to support service delivery system(s) aimed at integrating internationally trained individuals into the Peel workforce by way of:

1. Resource Investments

Examples of solution-based approaches in this area include:

- Subsidizing co-ops/internships for recent immigrants to get Canadian work experience.
- Expanding and enhancing employment information on the online immigration portals (e.g. www.immigrationpeel.ca). This could include up-to-date and realistic information about:

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- navigating and networking in the Canadian labour market.
 - the actual labour market experiences of all groups of immigrants. Immigrants could be provided with realistic information before they arrive about the length of time it would take to obtain a job in their field and the costs of upgrading in order that they are prepared financially upon arrival.
 - how to get credentials assessed and the likelihood of being accepted by employers.
 - sample Canadian resumes.
 - how to network and contact employers and other professionals in their field prior to arrival.
- Marketing the benefits of hiring immigrants by linking such hiring to the bottom line and employers' specific needs. Sharing immigrant success stories in the media to educate employers of the caliber of talent and skills that immigrants bring to Canada and how employers who have hired immigrants have benefitted.
 - Providing funding to scale up formal mentoring programs and credential assessment services as part of the full suite of employment services.
 - Funding projects that explore options for alternative employment service delivery models.
 - Funding research and development of competency-based assessment mechanisms.
 - Assisting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) who are looking for talent but who lack the resources to create policies and offer in-house programs/services to support employees.

2. Policy Changes and Ongoing Research

Examples of solution-based approaches in this area include:

- Recognizing employment services as a distinct component of immigrant settlement and integration and design policies that address service delivery barriers at the systemic source.
- Implementing policies that facilitate the timely transition of highly educated and trained immigrants, who have the most difficulty utilizing their skills, to successfully integrate in the labour force.
- Mitigating employment expectation levels of highly educated and trained immigrants that are indirectly or directly influenced by the immigration process.
- Improving access to affordable childcare options for job seekers involved in paid and unpaid work placements.
- Working with community groups to explore reasons for the low satisfaction with services, low numbers using community groups, bridge training and mentorship programs (e.g., research could explore if reasons relate to access, availability, lack of knowledge or cost).

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- Examining the feasibility and value added benefits of incentive programs for employers to recruit, employ, and promote immigrants.
- Exploring what is it about the public sector that makes it a more satisfactory place to work and share this with the private sector.

CONCLUSION

Conducting the research to gather and analyze local data was a critical component of Peel's immigration strategy. The information resulting from the study has been used to guide both policy and service/program related recommendations. It is anticipated that the Peel-based study will help address critical gaps in both local and province-wide data on the success factors and barriers experienced by immigrants in the labour force. The recommendations also have the potential to impact critical planning information for local and provincial labour market development and help employers to meet their recruitment and staff development needs. The Region of Peel and its community partners will work collectively to address the issues identified in the study. Key partners have previewed the findings from the survey and already are discussing how to realistically implement the recommendations. These partners include: the Brampton and Mississauga Boards of Trade, and the Human Resources Professional Association; Peel Newcomer Strategy Group; and the Toronto Regional Immigrant Employment Council. Findings and recommendations were also reviewed by the Conference Board of Canada Leadership Roundtable on Immigration when it met in Toronto in January.



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