



ONTARIO ECONOMIC SUMMIT

Together. Building Prosperity.

ONTARIO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE GLOBAL EXPERIENCE@WORK INITIATIVE

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC), in conjunction with its network of local Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade throughout the province, is leading efforts to engage employers in the integration of foreign skilled professionals and workers into Ontario's workforce.

At the Ontario Economic Summit, hosted by the OCC in November, 2006, business, labour, academia and government leaders agreed that in order for Ontario to remain competitive, it must attract and retain the right talent. Our aging population, and the chronic inability of our local youth to enter specific trades, strains our ability to mesh economic growth with the workforce.

Many of our newcomers experience prolonged delays entering the workforce and too often do so in occupations ill suited to their training and potential. "By 2011 immigration will be the sole source of population growth in Canada, making this underemployed segment of our workforce, an even more significant resource."

Global Experience@Work is a new initiative launched by the OCC with the support of Ontario's Ministry of Citizenship & Immigration. Leveraging the chamber network, the initiative involves the creation of local employer partnerships to break down barriers and help internationally trained individuals in Ontario.

Through Global Experience @ Work, the OCC invited local chambers of commerce and boards of trade around the province to design programs that would meet specific community needs around the awareness, training and recruitment or support of internationally trained workers. The chambers were to leverage local expertise, form partnerships and identify specific labour-market opportunities and help skilled immigrants to access those positions. Twelve chambers submitted proposals which were evaluated based on a number of specific criteria including demonstrated need for the integration of foreign trained professionals, involvement of local employers and other community partners, communications strategy and other clear- defined deliverables. A selection committee met over the summer and approving 8 projects which include 11 chambers of commerce and boards of trade. Collectively, the projects have engaged over 80 diverse local groups and partners, including employers, industry groups, training and adjustment boards, academic institutions, immigrant and employment service organizations, and municipal and regional economic development departments.

Utilizing its network in select target countries, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce will also promote Ontario as a destination for skilled workers and ensure that information provided in external markets accurately represents Ontario's opportunities and requirements.

The following projects are in the process of funding for their respective community efforts include: The Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce; Ottawa Chamber of Commerce; Brampton Board of Trade; Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce; Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce; Hamilton Chamber of Commerce; St. Catharines-Thorold Chamber of Commerce; Richmond Hill Chamber of Commerce & Markham Board of Trade (joint project). Programs will be completed over the next 18 months and will be subject to interim and final reporting mechanisms.

PROJECTS

The Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce: *Integration Empowerment (WRIEN)*

- Enhancing integration of skilled immigrants to support the expansion of Waterloo Region's economic growth.
- Buttressing the local economy's capacity building to attract and absorb new workers.
- Mentorships, Internships and availability of training and educational upgrading

Ottawa Chamber of Commerce: *Hire Immigrants Ottawa- Employer Guide*

- Employer Guide for SMEs addressing local challenges
- Focus groups, online surveys and communication strategy to broadcast to employers and target audiences

Brampton Board of Trade: *Skills Without Borders: Connecting Employers & Skilled Immigrants*

- Program co-ordination of existing services, along with Resource Guide for employers
- Seminars targeting employers and newcomers
- Research and Communications

Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce:

- Working in conjunction with SSM economic development agencies to develop strategic direction and capacity building to attract newcomers to the local economy
- Communications, Guidebooks, Ambassador programs
- Evaluation of existing services re: settlement and support systems

The Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce: *Hiring Highly Skilled Professionals*

- Developing synergies among agencies and initiatives with a focus on the integration of foreign trained professionals in the region, using sector specific industries.
- Amalgamating stakeholders including industry, academic and training institutions and identifying key receptor companies
- Recruitment, placements, mentorships programs and services

Hamilton Chamber of Commerce: *Workplace Development Toolkit*

- Advisory service for local business (SMEs), referrals to resources and information services on the licensing and accreditation of foreign credentials, language competency assessments.
- Promotion of best practices in the recruitment and retention of internationally trained workers and professionals.
- Information sessions, and promotion of success stories.

St. Catharines – Thorold Chamber of Commerce: *Information Sessions*

- Series of seminars and workshops with topics ranging diversification of Niagara's talent pool and labour force development, hiring and retention, and skills development of newcomers. Academic credentialing, documentation and best practices.
- Compiling and creating Guide Books, Tool kits, and service

Richmond Hill Chamber of Commerce & Markham Board of Trade: *Employer's Cultural Guide to help Integrate New Immigrants Labour Force*

- To assist and encourage employers to recruit from local Chinese newcomer community and to effectively integrate/manage their employees through better understanding of cultural backgrounds.
- Development of a Cultural Guide including research, writing and marketing in collaboration with local institutions.