

**Report on the
Immigrant Skills Workforce Integration Project:
A Plan for Hamilton**

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INTRODUCTION

The issue of immigrant workforce integration has recently become a crucial issue of concern on the national agenda in Canada. Immigration trends have changed significantly over the last few decades. Some of these reflect changes in the immigration policy to eliminate discrimination based on race, religion and country of origin. During the 1960s the government introduced the 'points system' to attract more economic immigrants such as skilled workers, investors and entrepreneurs.

On account of these changes many of the immigrants arriving in Canada currently are professionals or trades persons with high educational qualifications, experience and skills. Despite high education and skills a great many recent immigrants (i.e. persons who have arrived within the last five years) are unable to access employment that is consistent with their skills and knowledge. They experience several barriers in their job search and remain underemployed or unemployed and their skills remain unutilized resulting in a loss to our community and economy.

This problem demands a serious response especially since several business sectors have already begun to feel the shortage of skilled labour. In five years almost all labour force growth in Hamilton will be dependent on immigration.

Recognizing this, the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton committed to implementing the Immigrant Skills Workforce Integration Project (ISWIP) with funding from the Hamilton Community Foundation. The purpose of the project was to develop a community plan for Hamilton that would fully integrate immigrant professionals and trades people into the local labour force at their optimal skill level.

Every community has unique economic and social characteristics in terms of the immigrants they attract and are able to retain and their labour market outcomes. These factors will shape the challenges, issues and priorities each community has to address. Integrating immigrants into Canadian society involves addressing their housing, education, employment and health care issues but the scope of this project is limited to one crucial factor that is increasing access to the labour market. There are currently a number of programs and services in Hamilton to integrate immigrants into the Hamilton workforce. However, these programs do not constitute a systematic approach which addresses all the different facets of the issue. The approach of the Immigrant Skills Workforce Integration Project was to address labour force integration by examining the system of supports currently in place and developing a community plan that would improve our systemic response to integrating immigrants into the labour force. This approach required a review of the way in which services were linked or coordinated, identification of gaps in services, policy or regulatory issues that present barriers and the development of strategies to strengthen this systemic capacity to meet immigrant labour force interests. In the end, the objective of the project was to engage a wide range of local stakeholders in the development of a community plan to integrate immigrants into the labour force.

The declared goals of the project at the outset were to:

- a) mobilize the community behind this vision and to secure the 'buy-in' or commitment of key stakeholders to change (i.e. to create an improved system);
- b) develop the blueprint for an improved system and the strategies to achieve it and,
- c) create the core structure that will launch and oversee the new system.

The following outcomes were further defined for the project:

- a) formation of a coordinating body to implement the recommended actions emerging from this project
- b) development of a blueprint or strategy for immigrant workforce integration and implementation plan

- c) increased awareness and understanding of immigrant workforce integration issues among employers and other stakeholders;
- d) development of collaborative networks among community and government service providers, government policy and planning agencies, employers and business groups, business and professional associations;
- e) recommend processes that improve prospects for immigrant employment;
- f) increase accessible workforce information for immigrants and refugees;
- g) empowerment of disadvantaged groups through their direct involvement and shared leadership in addressing workplace integration issues

The Immigrant Skills Workforce Integration project committed to a change model to achieve results. This was defined at the outset as a community planning and mobilization process, which includes consultations, action research, and communications, aimed at:

- bringing together all the relevant stakeholders around the same table;
- building relationships with stakeholders and securing their commitment to change – e.g. raising awareness of the issue, sharing the vision, negotiating roles, securing resource commitments;
- building consensus re a coordinated system for immigrant workforce integration and related strategies to achieve it;
- identifying and consolidating related data and information resources for planning and decision-making purposes;
- establishing the core structure for implementing the vision.

To implement this process of change a number of key activities were planned and included the following:

- Community outreach and consultations - with identified stakeholders and stakeholder groups, to raise awareness, engage interest and support;
- Data analysis and review to identify available supports for immigrant workforce integration; service gaps; current and projected workforce needs; immigrant labour force skills profile; employer needs and expectations.
- Development of a “system” model for immigrant workforce integration. The model would identify what services and other resources would connect in a way that better meets the needs of immigrant job seekers as well as employers and maximizes the effectiveness of service providers.
- Development of community consultation materials that would indicate options for an immigrant workforce integration “system” model.
- Consultation with key stakeholders and community groups to confirm viability of the model and explore and build related partnerships

Formation of a Coordinating Body on immigrant workforce integration with a defined mandate and role; implementation plan and updated blueprint of the immigrant workforce integration system.

The community consultation held on December 14, 2005 involved stakeholders from the federal government, provincial government and the municipal government, employers, business organizations, educational institutions, immigrant service providers, community organizations, funders, labour union representatives, local politicians, immigrants themselves, representatives from Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) and Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Council (WRIEN), Career Bridge besides other stakeholders.

The community consultation was most successful in providing information on the current unemployment and underutilization of immigrant skills in Hamilton. The representatives from the Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Council (WRIEN) and the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) presented information about the solutions developed by these two councils in their respective regions to address the issue of underutilization of immigrant skills. Following these presentations participants were asked to discuss and provide inputs for developing the community plan for Hamilton. A detailed discussion on the input from the community consultation is presented in section 6 of this report.

There are eight sections in this report that provide a complete record of the project and development of the community plan for Hamilton. The first is the research on immigration trends and labour force issues in the national and provincial context. The second section provides an overview of immigration trends in Hamilton and their employment and income. The third section looks at programs and services serving immigrant job seekers in place in Hamilton and the identified gaps. The fourth discusses the systemic and non-systemic barriers to immigrants accessing employment in Hamilton. The fifth section provides an analysis of the recommendations from the Community Consultation and the Immigration Summit. The sixth section discusses local solutions developed in Toronto and Waterloo regions and its relevance to Hamilton. The seventh elaborates the community plan for Hamilton to integrate immigrants into the workforce. This last section is the conclusion of the report.

The Immigrant Skills Workforce Integration Project was directed by an Advisory Committee, (See APPENDIX A for a list of Advisory Committee members) which met regularly to direct and review the progress of the project and helped in organizing the community consultation to develop a Hamilton response to the problem. Additionally a Reference Committee consisting of key stakeholders in the city helped in developing an action plan to utilize and integrate immigrant skills into the Hamilton workforce (See APPENDIX B for a list of Reference Committee members).

1.0 A NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL OVERVIEW

An overview of the immigration trends in Canada over the last few decades indicates the decreasing labour market outcomes of recent immigrants, their untapped potential, and simultaneous skilled labour shortages. This section of the report puts these conditions in the context of demographic trends and the implications for the future prosperity of the Canadian economy. It reviews the findings of the national survey of employers, their reports of experience and attitudes towards immigrant employees and the recommendations of the conference organized by the Public Policy Forum to address this situation. This section concludes with comment on the implications of these trends for immigrants, their families and the Canadian economy.

1.1 The National Context

Canada has always relied on immigrants to boost its labour supply and economic growth. Every year an estimated 220,000 to 240,000 new immigrants come to Canada in search of a future. Between the years 1991-2000, 2.2 million people immigrated to Canada, the highest number of immigrants for any decade in the past 100 years. Canadian immigration trends have changed significantly over the last few decades (Strategic Research and Statistics & Infometrica, 2005).

During the 1960s the government introduced a new immigration policy to eliminate discrimination based on race, religion and country of origin. Following this a new 'point system' was introduced and revised over the years to its current form to encourage economic immigrants (Sweetman, 2005). Under the point system, prospective immigrants who wish to immigrate as independent immigrants are required to meet certain primarily education and occupation related criteria to qualify. Additionally, immigrants are also assessed according to age, their language ability, type of work they intend to do here, and their skills, qualifications and experience in that area (Brouwer, 1999). The changes in the immigration policy brought in a dramatic shift in immigration trends. Firstly, the source of immigrants to Canada changed from United Kingdom and other European countries to Asia, Africa, Central and South America and Caribbean countries. Prior to 1961 over 90 per cent of immigrants came from United Kingdom or other European Countries. In the past decade this group constituted only 20 per cent of the total immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2001). With the changes in the source country, the number of immigrants with a mother tongue other than English or French has also increased.

A related change was the substantial increase in the visible minority population over the last twenty years. In 1981 visible minorities constituted only 4.7 per cent of the total population in Canada, by 2001 this group increased to 13.4 per cent of the total population. In the last decade over 70 per cent of the immigrants were members of visible minorities groups. In 2001, almost four million identified themselves as members of visible minority groups (Statistics Canada, 2003). It is estimated that if the current immigration trends continue, visible minority population by the year 2016 will account for one fifth of the total Canadian population. This has altered the demographic composition of several cities in the country.

The second major change in immigration trend was the shift in the composition of immigrant categories arriving in Canada. There has been a substantial increase in the number of immigrants in the economic class, i.e. skilled workers or business immigrants such as investors and entrepreneurs. The preference for economic class of immigrants is currently reflected in the immigration pattern. Statistics for the five year period 1996-2000 show that economic immigrants accounted for more than half (58%) of all immigrants. Whereas immigrants in the family class, that is those sponsored by close relatives already living here was 29 per cent and refugees constituted only 13 per cent of the total immigrants for the same period (Strategic Research and Statistics & Infometrica, 2005).

The increase in percentage of economic immigrants arriving in Canada with high educational qualifications and experience has been significant especially since the late 1990s onwards. The educational level of recent immigrants is higher than Canadian-born. According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada, three in ten women and four in ten men of the recent immigrants have university degrees compared to 14 per cent of both men and women in Canada (Strategic Research and Statistics,

2005). However, recent immigrants are unable to access the labour market and are most likely to be unemployed or underemployed.

1.2 Decreasing Labour Market Outcomes

Prior to 1980s immigrants experienced difficulties entering the job market but over a ten year span most of them were able to move up the ladder and earn comparable salaries and their occupational status began to correspond with that of Canadian-born workers. The time taken to 'catch up' with Canadian-born workers was two years in the case of university graduates. Often their earnings exceeded the Canadian-born and their occupational status began to correspond to the Canadian-born with the length of residence (Galabuzi, 2005; Harvey and Siu, 2001).

However, the employment experience of immigrants who arrived after the 1980s has been strikingly different from their previous cohorts. According to Galabuzi a disproportionate number of recent immigrants as compared to Canadian-born remain stuck at the bottom of the economic ladder, in terms of income, employment, access to high-paying sectors and jobs and employment status" (2005). Recent immigrants most often face deteriorating labour market outcomes and they experience serious difficulties in integrating into the workforce. Schellenberg and Hou observe that declining employment rates and earnings are reflected in the increasing share of immigrants in the low income category. The poverty rate among immigrants living in Canada for ten years or less has increased from 23% to 35% between 1980-2000. This trend has affected immigrants across all categories irrespective of their age, level of education and reported language abilities. In fact the largest difference in low-income rates between Canadian – born and recent immigrants was among university graduates particularly those with engineering and applied sciences degrees (2005). Furthermore, recent immigrants from Africa, Asia and Southern Europe are disproportionately represented in the low-income category (Picot and Hou, 2003). Immigrants now take on an average 15.6 years to secure the same employment rate as Canadian-born, despite higher skills and education (Thomas and Rappak, 1998).

Galabuzi further states that key social indicators such as rates of poverty, labour market participation, unemployment rates, sectoral and occupational segregation and health status increasingly suggest that the social and economic status of recent immigrants is in decline (2005). The period of transition to the new country and comparable jobs and salaries to the Canadian-born has increased for many of the new immigrants. Immigrants are no more able to 'catch up' with the Canadian-born. The period of transition to the new country has increased and is today come to be known as the "transition penalty". Immigrants that have settled in the major Canadian cities today constitute a sizeable proportion of the urban poor (Schellenberg and Hou, 2005).

Racial discrimination and exclusionary practices are significant factors accounting for the labour market disadvantage of immigrants (Sadiq, 2005, Pendakur and Pendakur, 2002).

According to Galabuzi racial discrimination continues to remain as a barrier to secure, full time employment in well-paying sectors of the economy. Since most jobs continue to be filled through word of mouth or through internal labour markets that tend to reproduce the composition of the workplace. Recent immigrants thereby experience labour market segregation, unequal access to employment, they are over represented in low income sectors and occupations and under presented in high income sectors and occupations; and they have higher than average rates of unemployment and underemployment (2005).

Galabuzi mentions:

The differential economic outcomes identified can be attributed to racially discriminatory systemic practices such as:

Differential treatment in recruitment, hiring and promotion;

Extensive reliance on non-transparent forms of recruitment such as word of mouth which reproduce and reinforce existing networks;

Differential valuation and effective devaluation of internationally obtained credentials; and

Use of immigrant status as a proxy for lower quality of human capital (2005).

1.3 Untapped Potential

The barriers faced by recent immigrants in accessing employment in their area of expertise have been well documented, discussed later in the report. Statistics Canada's longitudinal survey of nearly 12, 000 immigrants across Canada reveal that 6 out of 10 immigrants already working did not work in the same occupational field as they did before coming into Canada. Recent immigrants with professional degrees were less likely to be working full-time compared to other educated recent immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2003). Most of the new comers were employed in sales and service and in processing and manufacturing occupations. Lack of Canadian experience and transferability of foreign credentials were the most common hurdles for new immigrants.

The Conference Board of Canada estimates that the elimination of skills waste (notably among immigrants) would result in Canadians having an additional \$4.1 to \$ 5.9 billion in income annually (Bloom and Grant, 2001).

1.4 Labour Shortages

Shortage of skilled labour is a reality and is already eroding the growth of the economy across several sectors. According to the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, Management Issues Survey Report (2001), 28 per cent of the respondents reported lack of qualified personnel as one of the constraining factors in improving their competitive performance. Companies reported significant difficulties in both finding and retaining personnel with specialized skills. When enquired about the factors that determined their investment location 74 per cent mentioned access to skilled labour as an important factor in selecting a location for a new facility.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) representing 105,000 small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) from all sectors and regions of the country similarly reported difficulties hiring people. In a survey conducted by CFIB in 2003 the vast majority (82%) of firm owners indicated that they encountered difficulties hiring people. There were an estimated 250,000 to 300,000 vacant jobs among Canada's million or so small and medium-sized enterprises. Furthermore nearly 60 per cent of the businesses anticipated labour shortages in the near future. SMEs have had to cope with shortage of skilled labour and on account of this growing shortage one third of firms chose to ignore new business opportunities thereby depriving themselves and the economy of growth. The small and medium enterprises create most of the new jobs and account for 43 per cent of Canada's gross domestic product. The shortage of qualified labour is already having a significant impact on the growth of businesses (2005).

1.5 Demographic Trends

Canada's population is aging at an increasing rate mostly due the low fertility rates. According to estimates, by the year 2011 Canada's net labour force growth will depend on immigration and by 2026 immigration will account for all of Canada's population growth. Immigration is already a significant contributor to the growth of the labour force in Canada. According to RBC Financial Group's report (2005) entitled *The Diversity Advantage*, the exit of the baby boomers from the workforce over the next 20 years will lead to the rapid decline of the dependency ratio, (i.e. the ratio of working versus non-working members) in Canada since there will be fewer Canadians to replace them. The report observes that at the current rate of immigration the size of the labour force will stop growing in the latter part of the next decade. Canada will need an additional 2.75 million workers in the next 20 years over and above Statistics Canada's long-term population projections.

Several other industrialized countries are also facing similar problems with an aging workforce and the prospect of a declining population. Immigration has now become the most important source of replenishing the labour force to ensure the sustained growth of the economy. Canada, United States and many other countries are now in the race to attract immigrants. Canadian government has announced raising immigration targets to meet labour shortages.

1.6 Employer Attitudes and Immigrant Employment

Despite higher education and experience than Canadian-born the labour market outcomes of recent immigrants has been abysmal to say the least. The problem of unemployment and underemployment of immigrants continues to persist regardless of labour shortage as claimed by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. The CFIB recommends the government to be more flexible in its immigration practices and recommends SMEs to sponsor immigrants to overcome the chronic labour shortage (Dulipovici, 2003). Notwithstanding the shortage immigrants are unable to access the labour market and their skills remain underutilized.

The Public Policy Forum's survey and conference provides some insight into employer attitudes, experience in hiring immigrants and recommendations by participants to address this issue.

Survey of Canadian Employers and Human Resource Managers

EnviroNics Research Group conducted a national survey of 2091 business owners, managers, administrators, human resource managers and other responsible for hiring employers across Canada. The survey asked employers about their experiences with 'recent immigrants' i.e. immigrants who had arrived within the last ten years. Additionally, ten focus groups were conducted with employers in four cities to confirm and validate the findings of the survey.

The survey findings reveal that employers generally had a positive attitude toward immigrants and immigration. Recent immigrant employees were seen as hard working, loyal, with new ideas and good work attitude, often highly skilled and willing to work for less money.

When employers who had hired immigrants were asked about their actual experience with immigrant employees, the majority (70%) mentioned that it was about the same as they had expected and twelve per cent mentioned that it was noticeably less challenging than they had expected. However when they were asked if they would follow a strategy in addressing their labour force needs only twenty per cent of the employers indicated that they would very likely hire recent immigrants with foreign training, whereas 45 per cent of the employers mentioned that it was somewhat likely that they would hire recent immigrants. Among the total respondents 82 per cent could not name any organization that provided credential recognition services to foreign trained immigrants.

In response to the training needs of immigrant employees the majority (77%) of the survey respondents mentioned that recent immigrants did not require special training. Their training needs were about the same as Canadian-born employees. Whereas 14 per cent of the respondents mentioned that immigrant employees required training that was somewhat different from Canadian-born employees.

The survey and focus groups also found that employers:

- overlook immigrants in their human resource planning;
- do not hire immigrants at the level at which they were trained; and
- face challenges integrating recent immigrants into their workforce

Perceived Barriers to Integrating Immigrant Employees into Organization

The employers were asked about the barriers they were very likely to face as a result of hiring immigrants. A language difficulty was mentioned by 18 % of the employers. The next most common identified barrier to integrating immigrant employees into the organization was communication difficulties (14%), verifying foreign work experience (14%), lack of Canadian work experience (13%), and cultural misunderstanding among staff / with customers (9%), additional training costs (8%), unreliable credentials (7%), tension between immigrants and other employees (4%). These were some of the barriers as perceived by the survey respondents.

Factors That Would Encourage Hiring of Immigrants

Employers were asked about the factors that would encourage them to hire more immigrants. More than a quarter of them (26%) mentioned skills shortage would be a factor that would encourage them to hire immigrants. 13 per cent mentioned better English/ French language skills among immigrants, 12 per cent wanted a better assurance on value of credentials to hire more immigrants, 6 per cent mentioned experience/ job skills, and 5 per cent mentioned financial hiring incentives for employers would encourage them to hire more immigrants while 26 per cent of the employers did not mention anything.

The Public Policy Forum developed several recommendations to address the challenge of integrating immigrants into the workforce. These recommendations include:

1. Employers in regions with a high concentration of immigrants should be informed and engaged in discussions about selection and levels
2. Employers should be engaged in regionalization strategies
3. Employers should be encouraged to develop strategies to hire immigrants more effectively
4. Hiring practices that may discriminate against should be addressed
5. Promote existing credential recognition services and develop new services or procedures where appropriate
6. Improve language training, especially occupation –specific language training
7. Promote and create tools to encourage cultural understanding
8. Provide Canadian work experience for immigrants, especially in small and medium sized companies

The Bringing Employers into the Immigration Debate conference organized by the Public Policy Forum in 2004 discussed the findings of the Environics research and the recommendations further. The participants supported the Public Policy Forum's recommendations and in addition also highlighted other areas for future research and action.

1. Encourage employers to provide more training opportunities for immigrants
2. Re-examine immigration selection criteria
3. Provide more information and services to immigrants prior to arrival
4. Rethink how temporary foreign students can become a bigger part of the overall immigration strategy
5. Continue to engage employers and industry, especially at the community level.

The conference participants noted that public and private sector employers need to be more engaged in immigration issues. They also mentioned the need to support and promote initiatives engaging employers and other sector stakeholders already underway at the community level.

The changes in the immigration patterns in the last decade encouraging economic immigrants, the decreasing labour market outcomes of recent immigrants, the unemployment and underutilization of immigrant skills especially in a situation where is a growing labour shortage indicates the disconnect between the intent of the immigration policies and the reality as faced by recent immigrants. Immigrants despite their high qualifications experience difficulties in accessing jobs at appropriate levels. This has serious implications for the Canadian economy especially in an era of globalization and economic restructuring. The emergence of knowledge based industries entails the effective utilization of the skills and knowledge of its workforce to compete in an international market. Utilizing immigrants' skills and experience is a thus critical to business and a key resource in enhancing Canada's competitive edge globally. The underutilization of immigrant skills also has implications for the immigrants themselves and their families. One of the key recommendations of the Public Policy Forum was to engage the employers at the community level.

2.0 IMMIGRANTS, EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME IN HAMILTON

This section provides an overview of demographic trends in Hamilton, the population decline and its effects on the labour supply. It also looks at the changes in immigration patterns over the years, the composition of recent immigrants their educational and occupational background, employment rates, and their poverty level as compared to other groups in Hamilton.

2.1 Demographic Trends

Hamilton has the fourth largest population of all cities in Ontario and ranks ninth in terms of population of all Canadian cities. Hamilton's population grew at a rate of 4.8% for the period 1996-2001 which is less than the provincial growth rate of 6.1% (Statistics Canada, 2001). Besides growing slower Hamilton's population is also ageing faster than Ontario. The HR Matters (2002) research focuses on population trends and its implications for Hamilton's labour force. Some of the major findings of the HR Matters study are as follows:

- Hamilton's population growth is declining and is becoming much older.
- By 2013, the number of adults in the labour force pre-retirement (55-64) age group will exceed the number of youths in the labour force pre-entry (15-24) age group, and the gap widens in future years.
- Shortly after 2016, Hamilton's labour force growth will cease altogether and the absolute size of the workforce will actually begin declining.
- Various sectors of the Hamilton economy are already beginning to experience skill shortages. The shrinking labour force will adversely affect Hamilton's growth.

Declining population is not unique to Hamilton it is a national trend. It is estimated that by 2011 immigration will account for all of Canada's labour market growth and for all of Canada's population growth in 2026. However Hamilton faces a unique situation since the city is ageing faster than Ontario. The median age of Hamilton is 37.6 years which is one of the highest in Ontario (Statistics Canada 2001).

A comparative analysis of Hamilton and Ontario's labour force population reveals that educational levels are lower in Hamilton especially at higher levels of educational achievement (HR Matters, 2002). The Towards Prosperity, Researching Immigrant Skills in Hamilton Report (2005) citing Regional Analytics observes that there are indications that various sectors of the local economy are beginning to experience skill shortages. There are fewer Canadian-born employed in skilled trades and there are skill shortages in certain sectors.

The sectors experiencing shortages in trained professionals and trades people include:

- processing and manufacturing,
- retail trade
- health (physicians, nurses pharmacists) and social services
- teachers
- trades and skilled labour (contractors, carpenters and electricians)
- elemental sales and services (security guards, nannies, cashiers)
- intermediate sales and service (sales representatives, hotel clerks, bartenders)
- utilities

According to the HR Matters study, Hamilton has an employer base of approximately 16,000 employers. The top three employment sectors in Hamilton are the manufacturing (20.4%), retail trade (12.4 %) and social services (11.9%) (Statistics Canada, 2004).

Manufacturing continues to be the most important sector. A disturbing trend noted by the HR Matters report is the loss of people in Hamilton during the 1990s on account of inter-provincial and intra-provincial migration. This trend appears to have improved in favour of the city by the end of the decade. On the other hand, international immigration flows into Hamilton have been able to offset the losses from inter and intra-provincial migration (2002). Immigrants already contribute 82 per cent of the labour force growth in the city. The skills shortages as identified in the different sectors can be bridged to some extent by the skilled immigrants in Hamilton.

2.2 Immigrants in Hamilton

Hamilton has historically been a port of choice for many immigrants to Canada. The city has a relatively high proportion of immigrants as compared to other cities in Ontario. During 1960s, 8% of Ontario and 4% of Canada's immigrants chose Hamilton as a port of destination. In fact, nearly 60 per cent of the immigrants in Hamilton arrived before 1980. However its significance as a popular destination for immigrants has been dwindling over the decades. Currently, Hamilton shares only 3.5 % of recent immigrants to Ontario and 1.9 % of the total recent immigrants to Canada (Strategic Research and Statistics, 2005). A related fact is that Hamilton's immigrant population is much older than Ontario's and Canada's immigrants.

Similar to the rest of Canada, immigrants to Hamilton were traditionally from Western European countries. According to the City of Hamilton "Facts and Figures" report, Italian, Polish, German, Portuguese and Spanish are the top five non- official languages spoken by Hamilton residents in 2001. The immigration pattern in Hamilton changed over the last two decades following national immigration trends. Immigrants now come from different regions in the world.

Between 1981- 1990 there were 18,690 immigrants to Hamilton. In the following decade 1991-2001 the number of immigrants to Hamilton grew by almost 60 per cent. More than half of the new comers are currently from Asia. Immigration from Africa, Central and South America and the Caribbean has also substantially increased in the recent decades. This has changed the demographic composition of Hamilton.

	Total Population	Immigrant Population	Immigrants as % of total population
Hamilton	490, 268	119, 805	24.4
Ontario	11,410,000	3,030,075	27.8
Canada	30,007,094	5,788,229	19.3

Source: HR Matters, 2002 - Statistics Canada-Special Tabulations - Small Area Data Division

Immigrants constitute almost one fourth of the total population which is slightly less than the proportion of immigrants in Ontario but Hamilton has a higher percentage of immigrants than the national level. Hamilton is also the recipient of secondary migrants from other cities.

Visible minorities currently comprise 11 per cent of Hamilton’s population. The top three visible minority groups in Hamilton are the South Asian (21%), Black (20%) and the Chinese (14%). Females constitute 52% of the total immigrants and nearly half of the recent immigrants are in the prime working age group of 25-44 years. In contrast, this age group constitutes 29.8% of the total of Hamilton’s Canadian-born. Immigrants contributed 82 per cent of the labour force growth in Hamilton during the years 1996-2001. With current low birth rates, immigration is expected to account for the net population growth in Hamilton by 2011 (HR Matters, 2002). Hamilton has the highest retention rates of immigrants in the whole of Canada. According to the Hamilton Immigrant Skills Research study, immigrants chose Hamilton as a destination because it had a university and many colleges. Hamilton is also attractive to immigrants because it has cheaper transportation, housing and is in close proximity to Toronto. Additionally, immigrants noted that Hamilton was promoted to them as an industrial city with job opportunities (2005).

2.3 More Skilled Workers than Family Class

Since 1995 the number of immigrants in the skilled workers category, principal applicants as well as spouses and dependents has become the largest immigrant category in Hamilton. Between, 1996-2000 immigrants in the economic category (skilled workers and business category) comprised 44% followed by the family category 36% and refugees accounted for 19% of the total immigrants to Hamilton CMA (Strategic Research and Statistics, 2005). The percentage of economic immigrants to Hamilton is low in comparison to other cities such as Toronto (61%) or Ottawa (51%). Skilled immigrants and investors and entrepreneurs are choosing other cities over Hamilton as a destination.

2.4 Education and Training of Immigrants

One of the most significant trends following changes in the immigration policy is the large proportion of new immigrants arriving with higher skills and credentials than previous decades.

Educational Level	Canadian Born	Recent Immigrants
Doctorate	0.3 %	1.6 %
Graduate Degree	2.8 %	6.4 %
Bachelor’s Degree	14.9 %	23.0 %
Trades Certificate	9.1%	9.2%

Source: Canadian Labour & Business Centre, 2005b

According to the 2001 Census data 31 per cent of the recent immigrants in Hamilton had university degrees compared to 18 per cent for the Canadian-born. Furthermore, the vast majority (85%) of the recent immigrants who arrived in 2001 can conduct a conversation in English and 7% could speak both English and French. In fact immigrants accepted under the “skilled workers” category of immigration are admitted based on their labour market qualifications, professional credentials and knowledge of one or both of official languages.

Table 3
Immigrants to Hamilton by Professions – (1996 – Present)

Professions		Number
1.	Engineers	1346
2.	Computer programmers/System analysts	589
3.	Banking, Finance & Accounting	254
4.	University professors/teachers	217
5.	Technologists/Technicians	177
6.	Nurses & Other Medical Professionals	126
7.	Scientists	211
8.	Chemists/Pharmacists	194
9.	Economists/Economic Development Officers	94
10.	Physicians/General Practitioners	53
11.	Mathematicians/Statisticians	40
12.	Veterinarians	31
13.	Psychologists	27
14.	Dentists/Dental Hygienists	23

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada data as cited by Lomotey et al., 2005

Table 4
Immigrants to Hamilton by Trade – (1996-present)

Trades		Number
1	Construction Millwrights	55
2.	Tool and Die Makers	51
3.	Heavy Duty Equipment Operators	49
4.	Welders	45
5.	Industrial Electricians	37
6.	Aircraft Mechanics	25

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada data as cited by Lomotey et al., 2005

The above data reflects the occupational profile of immigrants who chose Hamilton as a destination that is primary immigrants. This data does not reflect the profile of secondary migrants to Hamilton. The data gathered by Settlement and Integration Services Organization (SISO) from secondary immigrants also mirrors the same profile of immigrants as the CIC data.

2.5 Immigrant Employment

Access to labour market is one of the crucial factors in the integration of immigrants into society. Though recent immigrants have higher educational levels than non-immigrants they are less likely to be employed because of the barriers they face in the labour market.

	Canadian Born	Recent Immigrants
Hamilton	5.4%	15.3%
Canada	7.4%	12.7%

Source: Canadian Labour & Business Centre, 2005b

The unemployment rate among recent immigrants in Hamilton (15.3%) is higher than the national level (12.3%). In contrast, the unemployment rate among Canadian-born in Hamilton (5.4%) is lower than all of Canada (7.4%). The high unemployment rate among recent immigrants demonstrates that their potential contribution to the economy is not fully utilized.

Census data reveal that in Hamilton a large number of recent immigrants are employed in processing, sales and service occupations and in manufacturing, hospitality and service occupations and there are fewer employed in the public sector in comparison with the Canadian-born (Strategic Research and Statistics, 2005). Immigrants, especially recent immigrants tend to be under-represented in management and professional occupations relative to Hamilton's Canadian-born population. Recent immigrants had the lowest index for senior and middle management positions and were only slightly higher than immigrants (1986-1995) in professional occupations in business and finance ((Lomotey *et al.*, 2005).

HTAB's survey of employers in Hamilton during 2005 clearly indicates the low employment rates of immigrants in the city. The fifty respondents to the online survey included the private, public and the not for profit sectors. The main findings of the survey provide some insight into employers attitudes and the job market for recent immigrants.

The survey data shows that among the total new employees hired in the last twelve months, only 5 % were recent immigrants. The public sector was the major employer in the city over the twelve month period. However recent immigrants only constituted less than one per cent of the total hired in the public sector. It suggests a poor employment equity record of the public sector in Hamilton. Among the total number of persons employed in the private sector, 17.5 per cent were immigrants and 3 per cent in the not for profit sector.

2.6 Poverty Among Immigrants

The economic outcomes of recent immigrant families are deteriorating over the last two decades on account of the barriers they face in finding suitable employment. According to the Income and Poverty Report of the Social Planning and Research Council more than half the recent immigrants in Hamilton are living in poverty.

Select Groups	Incidence of Low-Income
Total Population	20%
With Immigrant Status	24%
Recent Immigrants	52%
With Aboriginal Status	44%
With Visible Minority Status	37%

Source: Fraser, M. Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton, 2004

Recent immigrants in Hamilton top the list with 52% poverty rate, followed by persons with aboriginal status and visible minorities. This is in stark contrast to poverty in the total population. Among the total recent immigrant families in Hamilton who arrived between 1996-2001, 29.4 per cent live on an income which is less than half of the LICO (Statistics Canada, 2001 Census).

Hamilton's demographic trends signal a decline in the labour force in the immediate future with an aging population. The shortage of labour is already affecting several sectors in the economy. These skills shortages can be met to some extent by the immigrants. Though immigrants in Hamilton have high education and skills they are unable to transfer these skills at appropriate levels in the local labour market. The survey findings reveal that immigrants are unable to access jobs especially in the public sector in Hamilton. The unemployment rate among recent immigrants in Hamilton is higher than the national level. Poverty among recent immigrants is staggering. Despite these facts Hamilton has one of the highest retention rate of immigrants in Canada probably because of the low cost of living and its proximity to Toronto. On the other hand Hamilton's attraction as a popular destination to immigrants has been on a downward slide over the decades. Skilled immigrants and investors are choosing other destinations over Hamilton. These factors pose certain advantages and challenges in utilizing immigrants as a resource to ensure the growth and prosperity of the economy.

3.0 BARRIERS TO IMMIGRANT EMPLOYMENT

The previous section discussed the labour market outcomes of recent immigrants and the overwhelming poverty rates. Many of the highly educated and experienced immigrants are unable to access jobs in their own field in Canada. This section will discuss the identified systemic and non-systemic barriers facing immigrants accessing employment.

Every year increasing number of immigrants come to live in Hamilton with high skills, education and experience ready to join the workforce and contribute to the economy. Unfortunately many of these immigrants face several barriers in their job search. Most of them are unable to work or secure jobs which commensurate with their qualifications and experience resulting in underutilization of their skills, abilities and expertise to the detriment of our economy and our community. Immigrants are often overlooked in human resource planning and they are often forced to take up survival jobs in the process.

Lomotey et al., (2005) in their study titled "Towards Prosperity Researching Immigrant Skills Research Report" for the (HTAB) Hamilton Training Advisory Board provide a summary of the barriers identified by five immigrant focus groups in Hamilton. The barriers are broadly categorized as systemic and non systemic. The systemic barriers are

i) requirement of Canadian work experience ii) non-inclusive employment practices iii) difficulty assessing and verifying foreign credentials and lastly iv) inadequate funding for language training programs.

Whereas the identified non-systemic barriers are i) immigrants lack of English language and job-specific communication skills ii) cultural differences in behaviour at the workplace.

3.1 Systemic Barriers

3.1.1 Requirement of Canadian Work Experience

Lack of Canadian experience is one of the most common barriers faced by immigrant job seekers. The employers surveyed by HTAB mentioned that 'Canadian experience' is one way of assuring themselves that the candidate is able to work in a Canadian work environment and is able to fit into the culture of the organization. It is also easier for the employer to make hiring decisions when they see qualifications, experience and training institutions familiar to them. More than half (53%) of the employers mentioned that Canadian experience was an important factors in employee selection. On the other hand immigrants perceive 'lack of Canadian experience' as an unfair practice designed to keep them out of the system. The report claims that "employers benefit from under-employing immigrants because they get loyal and qualified employee while believing they are providing the immigrant employee with Canadian experience".

3.1.2 Non-Inclusive Employment Practices

The focus group participants mentioned that employers discriminated against immigrants by not recognizing foreign training and experience. Employers often undervalue their training, skills and experience. The participants of the focus group also stated that they were discriminated against because of nepotism in the workplace. Most often it was possible to get a job in an organization if you knew someone working there. Some employers also lacked cultural awareness and hence were concerned about immigrants' ability to "fit in" their organization.

3.1.3 Difficulty Assessing or Verifying Foreign Credentials

There were several problems associated with assessing or verifying foreign credentials. To verify the authenticity of foreign certificates and their Canadian equivalency is a cumbersome and time consuming process. It is one of the major barriers for entering the workforce. Immigrants with foreign credentials have to pass professional exams which are expensive and even after they pass they encounter several

other obstacles before they can seek a job and practice in their professions. The participants claimed that there is a 'fear of change' among employers when it comes to recruiting immigrants.

3.1.4 Inadequate Funding for Language Training Programs

There is inadequate funding for to provide language training programs for immigrants. Agencies providing pre-employment services are unable to provide the required services since they are facing budget cuts. Participants noted that there is a need to provide adequate funding to provide services to immigrants.

3.2 Non-Systemic Barriers

3.2.1 Immigrants' Lack of English Language and Job-Specific Communication Skills

Lack of English language skills and workplace specific communication skills is one of the major barriers affecting immigrants accessing jobs. Immigrants can converse in English but they may lack occupation specific language skills. The survey of employers also confirmed that language proficiency was one of the important factors in selection of applicants.

3.2.2 Cultural Differences in Behaviour at the Workplace

The focus group participants mentioned that Canadian work places need to adapt to people from different cultures. Similarly immigrants also need to consider their cultural practices and beliefs in order to fit into the Canadian work place.

These barriers were identified by participants of the focus groups organized by HTAB in Hamilton. In the next section we will look at the employment programs and services in Hamilton and the identified gaps in services that help immigrants access employment.

4.0 EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES IN HAMILTON

There are different employment programs and services directed to immigrant job seekers currently provided by local immigrant serving agencies, educational institutions through partnerships with various governments. This is not an inventory of agencies providing services to immigrants in Hamilton but this section provides a broad overview of the services and programs and identified gaps in services. The services range from job search preparation and techniques workshops, labour market information, resume writing, job interview preparation, careers counseling, language assessment and training, job placements etc.

A research study conducted by the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (2003) to assess the feasibility of developing a resource centre for internationally-trained professionals and trades people in Hamilton. This study provides information on the programs and services provided in the city. This is a summary of the different services available to immigrant job seekers in Hamilton.

4.1 Information Service

Employment service providers provide information on the local labour market, academic assessment processes and local educational and training opportunities. The information provided on academic assessment process is usually not up to date and there seems to be confusion among employers and service providers on the process of licensing for regulated professions and academic assessment.

4.2 Job-Search Supports

Job-search supports are provided for immigrant job seekers. The training provided for immigrants to develop their skills is not always adequate. Immigrants require other supports such as self-marketing skills. The local service providers are unable to meet the demand for such services because of the limited funding.

4.3 Credential Assessment

Immigrants planning to pursue further education or apply for professional licensing and certification or seek employment have to get their international credentials assessed. There are no credential assessment services in Hamilton. One of the local service providers offers support to immigrants applying for educational credential assessment services through the assessment service organizations in Ontario. The individual applying for assessment has to pay for the service. However not many employers are aware of these services and they do not have confidence in foreign earned qualifications. There is no resource in Hamilton to provide this service locally.

4.4 English Language Training

English language training is provided to recent immigrants by the Boards of Education and a local College. The ESL programs are helpful in providing language skills for non-English speaking adults. The program focuses on the language skills of ESL learners in the areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing with specialized pronunciation lessons. While immigrants who are able to converse in English may not require basic language training instead they may need training in occupation specific terminology.

Hamilton currently offers an Enhanced Language Training program funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The program is for internationally educated immigrants with higher language skills (Canadian Language Benchmarks 7, 8, 9 and 10). The program provides language instruction at those levels for employment and academic purposes as well as job placements. There is a lack of adequate funding to provide language training for more immigrants.

4.5 Volunteer, Mentoring and Work Placement

Employers prefer persons with 'Canadian experience' while hiring recent immigrants. Immigrants can gain this required experience by either volunteering, or co-op or job placements. A local service provider has developed a mentoring program to match newcomers with other professionals or trades persons in their field. Volunteering can also be a means to gain some experience but the volunteering work should be relevant to the immigrants' field of expertise. Volunteering has limitations since it involves cost and time for the immigrant job seeker. A local service provider developed a thirteen week work placement program for immigrant women to enhance their skills. Work placements provide women with local work experience, networking contacts, and an open door to the Canadian labour market.

4.6 Database for Immigrants and Employers

A local service provider has developed a web site link to employment related information for internationally-educated professionals and trades people. The web-site connects local employers to immigrant job seekers.

4.7 Identified Gaps in Employment Programs and Services

These are some of the gaps in services for immigrants and recommendations for actions identified by the research study and by the immigrant summit. Addressing these gaps are vital to integrating immigrants into the Hamilton workforce.

Language Training

- Inadequate sector specific language training programs
- Lack of a standardized language assessment system

Accreditation and Licensing

- Lack of uniform prior learning assessment and recognition system among all educational institutions and employers and professional bodies.
- Inadequate resources to help immigrants' access upgrading/ recertification training

Employment Access

- Inadequate mentoring programs for immigrants

Other identified Gaps

In the roundtable held by the Canadian Labour and Business Centre to engage regional stakeholders to integrate internationally-trained workers into the workforce gaps in services were identified by the stakeholders in Hamilton.

Participants mentioned the lack of inadequate information for immigrants at the point of immigration regarding their professions and requirements to practice in Canada.

They also mentioned the need to establish local partnerships to develop local solution to meet the needs of immigrants.

The services and programs available to immigrants in Hamilton as in most other cities do not represent a comprehensive solution to immigrants. The services are narrowly focused and do not help address the systemic barriers faced by immigrant job seekers. This underscores the need to develop an effective and comprehensive approach to address the barriers in all its facets for the integration of immigrants into the local workforce. It would be useful to review the recommendations of the Community Consultation and the Immigrant Summit to address these barriers face by immigrants.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMUNITY CONSULTATION AND THE IMMIGRATION SUMMIT

This section analyzes the recommendations provided by the participants of the Community Consultation. It also discusses the recommendations developed by the Immigration Summit groups and the findings of the employer survey conducted by HTAB. The recommendations from these two consultations and the findings from the HTAB survey form the basis for the community plan to integrate immigrants into the labour force in Hamilton.

The Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton's - Immigrant Skills Workforce Integration Project organized a community consultation at Liuna Station, Hamilton on December 14th 2005. The Consultation was organized to bring together relevant key stakeholders to discuss the development of a community plan for Hamilton.

The Consultation provided the participants with information on what a community plan should do for immigrants in Hamilton, besides providing background information on the issue of unemployment, underemployment and poverty among immigrants. This was followed by presentations from two immigrant workforce integration models in Toronto –Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) and the Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network-(WRIEN). Following these presentations participants were asked to discuss and provide recommendations to help develop a community plan to integrate immigrants into the workforce. A total of 94 participants attended the Community Consultation representing different sectors. These include the different levels of government, employers, community organizations, immigrant serving agencies, educational institutions, immigrants, funders, religious institution representatives, elected officials and others. The recommendations from the community consultation are arranged under the following themes.

5.1 Community Consultation Recommendations

5.1.1 Engaging High Level Players

One of the main recommendations by participants in the consultation was the need to get the commitment of high level leaders from the employers (such as CEOs of private companies) government and other stakeholder groups and engage them as champions to lead the council/network to integrate immigrants into the workforce. Participants noted that involving high level leaders will help to get credibility, strong leadership and also help to coordinate and get the commitment of the employers.

5.1.2 Engaging the Employer Community

A similar recommendation by participants was the need to outreach and engage employers in Hamilton. Participants recommend that to effectively integrate immigrants into the workforce, employers have to be involved from organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Insurance companies, banks besides business persons. They recommend that employers be engaged in the process similar to the TRIEC and WRIEN models.

The recommended actions to engage employers include: workshops, e-bulletins, open forums to meet other stakeholders. There was a significant SME base in Hamilton which could be engaged in the work of integrating immigrants into the workforce.

5.1.3 Government Involvement

Another recommendation by the participants was to engage the different levels of government and involve them in the development of the Immigrant Workforce Integration Council/Network. Participants also suggested that the need to link with the government to develop the city and other governmental organizations as model employers.

Other stakeholders to be involved include:

Labour Unions

Immigrant community members (specifically unemployed immigrants)

Accrediting bodies

Experienced fund raisers

5.1.4 Organizational Structure

The consultation participants provided several recommendations with regard to developing an organizational structure to address the issue of immigrant workforce integration. Participants suggested that the proposed structure should be organic and fluid to be amenable to change when required. Participants also mentioned that the proposed organizational structure should be

- a) neutral body
- b) community-owned
- c) use gender analysis

Participants noted the need to build on and coordinate existing initiatives into one representative body. Several participants mentioned the need for better coordination between stakeholders such as service providers and forums e.g. HR Matters and Poverty Roundtable. They recommended developing a structure for a council with a advisory committee, secretariat and working groups.

Specific components of the model mentioned were i) Career bridge program, ii) mentoring, iii) best practices for employers, iv) intergovernmental committee. Participants recommended modifying the TRIEC model to suit Hamilton. In order to develop the council/network participants recommended forming a advisory committee initially to lead the process. A host should be identified to function as a 'hub' and coordinator.

5.1.5 Marketing and Communication strategy

Participants recommended developing a marketing and communication strategy to engage employers, attract more immigrants to Hamilton and to create awareness among stakeholders on the concept and ideas. The buy-in from employers could be done by developing a strong business case for employing immigrants. The media could be engaged in communicating the business case and sharing the success stories of immigrants in Hamilton. They also noted the need for a communication strategy to share information about inclusive hiring practices learnt from other jurisdictions and to educate the community about an immigration and workforce strategy.

5.1.6 Other recommendations

The other recommendations from the participants were as follows:

Work with the government to provide information to immigrants prior to their immigration about the requirements to practice in their professions in Canada.

There should be accountability in the process.

They noted that there was a need to focus on the “big Ideas” that were strategically chosen and attainable within a short period of time.

The issue of racism should be addressed more directly as a means to promote immigrant employment.

Conduct research on labour market data to identify skills shortages and match immigrant skills to shortage and inform policy to increase employment rates of immigrants.

Find ways to relate the issues of immigrants to the whole community.

5.2 Immigration Summit

The Hamilton Training Advisory Board held an ‘Immigration Summit’ in June 2005 to discuss the challenges and issues facing immigrants in Hamilton and to provide recommendations for action. The Immigration Summit participants were divided into several groups and each group discussed an issue related to immigrant settlement and integration. The scope of the topics discussed in the Immigration Summit covered almost the whole gamut of settlement issues. The following is a summarized version of the recommendations from the summit.

5.2.1 Accreditation and Licensing

The Accreditation & Licensing group explored the challenges and issues faced by internationally trained professionals with regard to credential assessment, credential recognition, regulatory bodies, and bridging programs. The identified several gaps in this area were, lack of information for employers to enable them to effectively assess foreign qualifications and credentials.

Participants noted the inadequacy of funding for additional training to adapt immigrant skills to the Canadian system and the lack of information provided to immigrants at the point of immigration regarding licensing and requirements of regulatory bodies to practice their professions in Canada as one of the major gaps. They discussed the closed-door policies of some professional associations and labour unions who deny immigrants fair access to those professions and trades. The group however recognized the initiatives in Hamilton that are aiding the accreditation of some foreign trained professionals that need to be built upon. The group made the following recommendations:

The need for all educational institutions, employers, and professional regulation bodies to offer Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) to foreign trained professionals.

Canadian embassies and high commissions in various countries should provide information to people applying to relocate to Canada about the requirements and costs of joining regulated professions in Canada.

The participants recommended close liaison among community leaders, community organizations and government to establish effective and accessible process of accreditation for foreign trained professionals.

5.2.2 Skills and Language Training

This group explored the issues and challenges that immigrants experience in accessing language training such as ESL programming, LINC, sector specific language, literacy, tuition funding, and skills training. Participants noted that there were a small number of ESL programs with daycare facilities to support immigrant caregivers. They also identified the lack of comprehensive and easily accessible information

about community programs and training opportunities for immigrants and refugees. The group's recommendations were to:

Involve federal /provincial chambers of commerce representatives in immigrant employment support programs. The inputs by these stakeholder groups into initiatives for providing skills and language training for immigrants is essential to their success in the job market.

The participants noted the need to develop a standardized, independent language assessment at regular intervals for immigrants and refugees at language levels recognized and understood by employers and service providers.

Promote co-ordination of efforts between service providers and Canadian Centre for Language to educate employment counselors on Canadian language benchmarks.

5.2.3 Accessing Employment

Participants discussed barriers facing immigrant job seekers such as the requirement of Canadian experience and lack of opportunities for immigrants to acquire such experience, the lack of workplace specific language programs, inadequate funding for immigrant employment support programs. The other issues were challenges to entering regulated professions and lack of progress on employment equity among Hamilton's employers. The participants recommended actions include the following:

All the stakeholders should work together to develop and implement bias free hiring policies and make provisions for effective monitoring.

Participants also identified the need for a more coordinated effort in public relations and advocacy among immigrant serving organizations. Efforts should focus on engaging employers and providing them with the knowledge and support they need to hire immigrants.

5.2.4 Workplace Integration

The summit participants discussed issues related to immigrant integration in the workplace and the challenges faced by employers in employing a diverse workforce. Issues identified included indirect discrimination against immigrants, lack of cultural awareness, and union blockade. The recommended actions to resolve these issues include;

legislation to make employers accountable for observing the laws on employment equity. Such legislation must provide standardized means for monitoring to ensure that all employers abide by its provisions.

need to provide employers incentives for hiring immigrants. Incentives could take the form of tax breaks or funding assistance for immigrant employee retraining programs.

an integrated funding mechanism for immigrant employment support programs by the three levels of government based on immigrant employment support needs.

5.2.5 Refugees

The participants of the immigration summit explored the challenges and settlement issues faced by refugees. These included literacy issues, lack of documentation, trauma, inadequacy of funding and coordination of refugee programs and the non-involvement of refugees as stakeholders in identifying issues facing them. The group recommended that forums on refugee issues should include refugees as a key stakeholder in its deliberations to enable them to make inputs, prioritize and identify solutions to the problems that affect them.

5.2.6 Immigrant Children/Youth

The participants also discussed issues regarding immigrant children and youth and identified some of the issues and challenges faced by the children and youth. Such as inadequate volunteering opportunities, lack of access to leadership opportunities, school curriculum needs regarding cultural diversity, impact of vulnerability of immigrant families on children. The recommendations include a review of the content of teachers training around cultural diversity issues to help them better integrate children into the educational system. The other recommendations were to provide supports and services to this vulnerable group.

5.2.7 Social Integration

The issues faced by immigrant families include; the need for language support programs for immigrants in the school system, and supports for women, besides the need for providing adequate information for immigrants as they adapt to life in Canada. The participants discussed the need for more accountability for all services to be accessible and available to immigrants. The participants also discussed the need for more awareness on immigrants and refugees social issues to the whole community.

5.2.8 Marketing Hamilton to Newcomers

This group explored strategies and services that will attract newcomers to Hamilton. The participants recommended involving various stakeholder groups to develop a comprehensive and realistic strategy to market Hamilton both locally and internationally. Locally, marketing strategies were to be developed to target people in Ontario and other provinces. Internationally, Hamilton should be promoted as a destination at Canadian embassies and high commissions around the world.

The recommendations of the Immigration Summit cover a whole range of issues in addition to employment which obviously constitutes a major part of the settlement and integration process.

5.3 Hamilton Training Advisory Board Employer Survey

HTAB conducted a survey of employers in Hamilton to identify services and supports that would encourage employers in Hamilton to hire immigrants. The employer survey is an adaptation of the national survey conducted by Environics for the Public Policy Forum. The findings of the survey provide useful data which could be used to develop programs and services for immigrants in Hamilton.

Table 7
Programs That Will Increase the Employability of Immigrants

Program	Percentage of Survey Respondents Saying Will Help
Language Courses and Integration Programs for Immigrants	93.6
Mentorship Programs	93.6
Upgrade Programs/Courses for Foreign Trained Professionals	87.1
Providing Canadian Work Experience for Immigrants Through Small Business	74.2
Financial and Technical Support for Community Agencies that Connect Immigrants to Employers	71.0
Training Immigrants to Improve Job Search Skills	58.1

Source: Towards Prosperity Researching Immigrant Skills in Hamilton Report, 2005.

The above table shows the percentage of respondents who either mentioned “will help a lot” or “will help moderately” to the programs that will increase the employability of immigrants. Language courses and mentorship programs top the list of programs recommended by employers in Hamilton. These programs will help to build on the skills of immigrants and integrate into the local labour force.

Table 8
Factors That Will Encourage Employers to Hire More Immigrants

Factor	Percentage of Survey Respondents Saying Will Help
Enhancing Inter-Cultural Understanding	72.4
Shared Information on Foreign Training and Experience	68.9
Financial Incentives for Hiring Immigrants	58.0
Easier and Cheaper Means for Verifying Foreign Credentials	55.1
Resource Books on Issues and Challenges in Immigrant Employment	51.7
Addressing Hiring Practices that Inadvertently Discriminate Against Immigrants	51.7

Source: Towards Prosperity Researching Immigrant Skills in Hamilton Report, 2005.

The survey findings show the factors that will encourage them to hire more immigrants, as identified by the employers themselves. Employers identified inter-cultural understanding as one of the main factors in helping them know about the ethnic communities. Many of the employers are not aware of the quality of foreign training and experience and credential assessment services available to help them make hiring decisions. The findings of this survey will help to inform the strategies developed to integrate immigrants into the workforce.

Hamilton Training Advisory Board's Towards Prosperity Researching Immigrant Skills in Hamilton Report, (2005) provides several recommendations to integrate immigrants into the labour force. One of the main recommendations is for the government to increase funding for immigrant employment support programs. The report emphasizes the need to strengthen language training programs in the community and to establish effective processes for assessing international credentials and establishing their equivalence to Canadian credentials to enhance their employability. The other major recommendations are for the stakeholder groups especially the employers, to work collaboratively to find solutions to address this issue of immigrant workforce integration. Finally, there is a need for the entire Hamilton community to be more open to accepting cultural diversity.

There are common themes which emerge from the recommendations of the two consultations namely: Community Consultation and the HTAB Immigration Summit. Both the consultations identify and recommend the need to work with a multi-stakeholder group. It also recommends action to address the need for an effective process of accreditation for foreign trained professionals, besides promoting language training, advocacy and work on the issues of accessing employment and workplace integration of immigrants. Both the consultations also identify the need to attract new immigrants and recommend developing strategies to market Hamilton as a destination to new comers.

The other common themes relate to providing information to immigrants prior to their arrival on requirements to practice in Canada in their professions, need to provide opportunities to get work experience for immigrants and supporting employers in this process. The employers in Hamilton also emphasize the need for language training programs for immigrants. They also mention that providing opportunities for gaining work experience for immigrants will enhance their employability. The employers recommend providing mentoring programs and upgrading programs for immigrants besides enhancing inter-cultural understanding and providing supports to the employers such as sharing information on foreign training and experience. These recommended actions have to be taken into account to develop a well coordinated and comprehensive community plan to enhance immigrants access to the labour market.

6.0 DISCUSSION ON RELATED INITIATIVES

This section looks at the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council and the Waterloo Immigrant Employment Network models developed in Toronto and Kitchener- Waterloo to integrate immigrants into the workforce. These two models are examples of local solutions to the problem of unemployment and underutilization of immigrant skills. Furthermore, similar immigrant employment councils are currently being established in cities such as Ottawa, Vancouver and Nova Scotia. Organizing Immigrant Employment Councils has now become an effective mechanism for local communities to effectively utilize immigrant skills to ensure the growth and development of the local economy. An analysis of these two models will help us to shape and develop our own local solution.

Naomi Alboim and the Maytree Foundation in their paper entitled Fulfilling the Promise: Integrating Immigrant Skills into the Canadian Economy (2002) recommend practical solutions and strategies to facilitate labour market entry of skilled immigrants in their field of expertise. They suggest a 'systems approach' to get all stakeholders working together to find and implement solutions. They observe that only with the collaboration and participation of a multi-stakeholder group can the 'right mix and quality of programs, services and practices' be developed to ease the entry of skilled immigrants into the labour market.

The hallmark of the proposed system would be the following components:

- a. Incentives for all stakeholders to collaborate in designing, delivering and evaluating programs and services, and for skilled immigrants to access them.
- b. Access by skilled immigrants to programs and services that provide:
 - information on labour market, occupational requirements and available programs
 - assessment services to identify qualifications and any gaps to be filled
 - expert advice from Canadian practitioners
 - bridging programs to fill identified gaps
- c. A leadership council to foster collaboration, identify priorities and linkages, and communicate results.

The paper notes that each of these components are interdependent and its success is dependent on the commitment from the affected parties. The Maytree Foundation helped to move this concept to reality with the development of the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council.

The Maytree Foundation supports the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council by serving as a secretariat and some of the Maytree Foundation staff also work for the TRIEC secretariat.

6.1 Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC)

The Toronto City Summit Alliance (TCSA), a coalition of civic leaders from the private, voluntary and public sectors and Maytree Foundation formed the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) in 2003. TCSA recognized that the future success of the region was tied to its ability to take advantage of its immigrants skills. TRIEC was formed with multi-stakeholders across the sectors to meet the challenge of integrating immigrants into the labour market.

TRIEC has been very successful in mobilizing some of the key players in labour market access for immigrants such as the assessment service providers, community organizations, employers, foundations, labour, occupational regulatory bodies, post secondary institutions, and the federal, provincial and municipal governments. TRIEC has been providing internship and mentorship opportunities for immigrants in the region. TRIEC has also been the precursor for similar initiatives across Ontario and

Canada. The primary goal of TRIEC is to find and implement local solutions that lead to more effective and efficient labour market integration of immigrants in the Toronto region.

TRIEC is comprised of a council, working groups and committees and a secretariat. Each committee and working group perform a specific function.

6.1.1 Council

The Council is made up of members that represent the various stakeholders. employers, labour, occupational regulatory bodies, post secondary institutions, assessment service providers, community, funders and all three orders of government. Members are leaders in their respective communities, and have the capacity to engage their communities in TRIEC's work. Members are also champions of labour market integration of immigrants among stakeholders and the general public. A Governance Committee has been established to develop the policies concerning the inner workings of the Council

6.1.2 Secretariat

The Council, its co-chairs and working groups are supported by a small secretariat led by The Maytree Foundation. The secretariat provides administrative support, communications and networking capabilities, as well as research and policy analysis expertise. The Executive Director of Maytree Foundation is also the Executive Director of the Secretariat and an ex-officio member of the Council.

6.1.3. Working Groups

The working groups and committees are dedicated to finding solutions to the barriers that immigrants face when entering the labour market. They are task oriented, each chaired by a Council member with group membership comprised of both Council members and non-members who have a particular expertise critical to the task at hand. Terms of reference have been determined for the Council and for each working group to frame their actions and objectives. They will meet as required, will keep Council apprised of activities and progress and will report to Council as appropriate.

6.1.4 Career Bridge Advisory Committee

Career Bridge is a program to provide skilled immigrants with their first relevant Canadian work experience through a four-month internship. This program is run by Career Bridge, Toronto. Career Bridge aims to fulfill the Canadian work experience component that most employers require before hiring.

6.1.5 Employers Promising Practices

The Employer Promising Practices Working Group identifies and develops the necessary partnerships, strategies and tools to help employers in the Toronto Region to become better able to integrate skilled immigrants into their labour force.

6.1.6 Information, Public Awareness and Recognition Working Group

The work of this group focuses on three main tasks: 1) effective access to labour market information for immigrants; 2) public awareness of issues surrounding labour market integration; and, 3) recognizing demonstrated excellence in labour market integration.

6.1.7 Intergovernmental Relations Committee

This committee creates the necessary partnerships and strategies to facilitate the creation of a new culture of intra/inter-governmental relations. This will allow for coordination and collaboration that will identify gaps, maximize existing resources, improve impact, and inform program and policy directions.

6.1.8 Occupation and Licensing Bridge Working Group

Work revolves around two main issues: 1) gaps exist in the Canadian labour market that immigrants have the skills to fill; and 2) some immigrants may have gaps in skills or knowledge that need to be filled before they are able to work in Canada.

This group has evolved into four sub-groups: Financial Services, Technical Professions, Nursing Integration, and Alternative Employment Planning for International Healthcare Professionals.

6.1.9 TRIEC Restructuring

TRIEC has evolved and has changed its structure to be more effective in its operation. According to the TRIEC, the coordination of the working groups and committees and all its members was difficult to carry on by a small secretariat staff. The secretariat staff provided research and policy analysis expertise in addition to networking the working groups and committees and organizing the logistics for the meetings. TRIEC has changed its structure and is now focusing its energies on selected initiatives. The working groups have now been amalgamated and it is now focusing its efforts on three objectives mentioned below, with key outcomes related to each:

- a) Increased access and availability of value added services that support labour market integration of skilled immigrants
- b) Change the way stakeholders value and work with skilled immigrants.
- c) Change the way government relate to one another in planning and programming around this issue.

In order to achieve the first objective TRIEC has developed the Career Bridge and Mentoring program.

Career Bridge: This program creates paid internship opportunities for skilled immigrants from 4-12 months duration with a wide range of employers. This program piloted in November 2003 has created 225 new internships in the GTA.

85 per cent of those who have completed their Career Bridge internships are working full-time in their fields.

The Mentoring Partnership: This program launched in 2004 matches new immigrants with mentors who share the same profession. The mentoring relationship is intended to provide immigrants with insights to help them understand Canada's workplace culture and introduce them to professional networks and build their social capital. This program is administered by a coalition of community agencies. The mentoring partnership is a collaboration of funders, agencies, employers and TRIEC.

To change the way employers work with immigrants TRIEC has developed a web site with information on human resource strategies. The web site: [Hireimmigrants .ca](http://Hireimmigrants.ca) is a compilation of stories and strategies from the corporate world on how progressive organizations have been able to recruit, retain and promote skilled immigrants within their organization. The goal of this site is to share these practices and learning to improve HR practices with regard to skilled immigrants in the employer community. This website will serve as a platform to launch a comprehensive employer strategy to help employers recruit and work better with immigrants.

TRIEC's Intergovernmental Relations Committee works to change the way government relate to one another in planning and programming around issues related to workforce integration of immigrants. The committee consists of representatives from all departments and ministries in all three orders of government that have an interest in the issue. The committee meets to look at the impact of collaboration and how it can be used as a new mechanism for funding and policy making. Included on this committee is local representation from several departments such as Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), Canadian Heritage, Human Resource and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), Industry Canada, Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, Ontario Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, the City of Toronto, the Region of Peel and the Region of York.

Funding is one of the issues facing TRIEC. Maytree Foundation funded TRIEC over the last two tears of its operation along with other funders such as Heritage Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Human Resource and Skills Development Canada, Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities. The continued success of TRIEC will depend on its ability to get itself self-sustaining and independent over the next few years.

Another noteworthy initiative which has developed a model to integrate immigrants into the workforce is the Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network (WRIEN).

6.2 Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network

The Centre for Research and Education in Human Service (CREHS) is the lead agency which initiated the Waterloo Immigrant Employment Network. CREHS is an independent, non-profit social research organization based in Kitchener, Waterloo.

CREHS organized an immigrant summit in 2004 as a launching point for the immigrant employment council. The summit brought together local leaders in an effort to coordinate and network with similar initiatives in the region to develop the council. Local business leaders are committed to attracting and integrating immigrants into the region's labour market. The Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce is currently co-leading the network. The Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network is currently in its preparation which will be followed by the implementation phase.

WRIEN follows a de-centralized model, wherein the primary direction is provided by the work groups. Issues to be addressed by the Council would be identified by these work groups. Resulting projects would be guided and carried out by the work groups. The Leadership Roundtable would not administer projects on its own, but would support and augment the activities of the work groups.

6.2.1 Leadership Roundtable/ Coordinating Council

The Roundtable/Council provides leadership, coordinates and acts as the collective voice of the network. This body is responsible for a common region wide communications strategy, systems advocacy, information clearing house and evaluation.

6.2.2 Secretariat

The work of the network is supported by a secretariat which will provide staff support, accountable to the network host.

WRIEN currently has five work groups. In its preparatory phase WRIEN developed a detailed action plan for each of its work groups. The work groups and a summary of the action plan are as follows:

6.2.3 Employer Initiatives

Summary of recommended action plan:

- a. Enhance the workplace language and communications skills of immigrants.
- b. Promote workplace cultures that support the integration of immigrants.
- c. Build inclusive hiring practices that recognize foreign credentials and experience.
- d. Provide Canadian work experience for immigrants.
- e. Integrate immigrants into the broader community.

6.2.4 Qualification Recognition and Enhancement

Summary of recommended action plan:

Qualification Recognition

- a. Create greater awareness of available qualification assessment services.
- b. Advocate for credential assessment as part of the immigrant selection process.

Qualification Enhancement

- c. Expand and increase access to programs and courses for internationally trained professionals and trades people in Waterloo Region.
- d. Enhance language training programs for immigrants.
- e. Encourage and facilitate the retention of international students.
- f. Advocate for a review and updating of the current occupational classification system.

6.2.5 Immigrant Support

Summary of recommended action plan :

Addressing Individual Barriers

- a. Provide current, complete, and reliable information to immigrants at multiple access points.
- b. Conduct a routine assessment of the emerging needs of immigrants in Waterloo Region.

Addressing Systemic Barriers

- c. Improve the responsiveness of community-based organizations to meet immigrant needs.
- d. Implement a region-wide public education campaign of immigrant contributions to our Region.
- e. Advocate for improved immigrant support at federal, provincial and municipal levels.
- f. Advocate that employers be more accountable for their hiring practices.

6.2.6 Immigrant Attraction

Summary of recommended action plan:

Analysis: Understanding the skills needed for Waterloo Region

- a. Designate a local HRSDC labour market analyst for Waterloo Region
- b. Coordinate local labour market analysis

Recruitment: Recruiting the immigrant skills needed for Waterloo Region

- c. Develop consistent messaging to market Waterloo Region to potential immigrants.
- d. Develop a coordinated immigrant recruitment strategy
- e. Advocate for a Labour Market Development Agreement for Ontario including a provincial nominee program

Retention: Retaining immigrants in Waterloo Region

- f. Connect immigrants to other citizens in Waterloo Region
- g. Create a profile for Waterloo Region as being a welcoming environment for immigrants
- h. Promote immigrant leadership in Waterloo Region

6.2.7 Investments

The investments group has been recently constituted to mobilize resources to support the work of the overall network and work groups.

The preparatory phase of the Waterloo Immigrant Employment Network is co-led by the Greater Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber of Commerce and the Centre for Research and Education in Human Services. The work of the network is guided by a multi-stakeholder advisory group. The activities to be completed during this phase will include:

- Identifying council host
- Securing Council funding
- Hiring Council staff
- Draft terms of reference for work groups and leadership roundtable
- Recruiting work group and leadership roundtable members
- Determining how the Council will be integrated into and relate with the existing infrastructure of immigrant employment agencies in the Region

WRIEN has been successful in mobilizing the employer community and the key players in the region. It has so far been able to raise funds for the preparatory phase and has also submitted proposals for continuation of the work initiated by CREHS.

The TRIEC and WRIEN models are examples of local solutions which have evolved from within the communities and hence are unique in their approach to the challenge of immigrant workforce integration. TRIEC has been operational since 2003 and has restructured following lessons learned from their experiences. It has been supported and also funded partly by the Maytree Foundation. Its focus is now primarily on the Career Bridge and Mentoring programs, employer support and the inter-governmental committee to influence the process of planning and programming on this issue. TRIEC model represents strengths in this regard. However TRIEC does not have a specific strategy for attracting immigrants to the region since it is currently the main destination for immigrants to Canada.

WRIEN on the other hand is relatively new initiative which was modeled after TRIEC. It has been very effective in mobilizing local stakeholders in the planning process and has also raised funding for the present phase. WRIEN's strategy represents a more comprehensive approach to the issue of immigrant workforce integration taking into account the regions demographics, labour market needs and labour supply. Given the situation in Hamilton with a declining population, the city will need to attract more immigrants to sustain the growth of its economy.

7.0 COMMUNITY PLAN FOR INTEGRATING IMMIGRANT SKILLS INTO THE WORKFORCE IN HAMILTON

The Immigrant Skills Workforce Integration Community Consultation, the Immigration Summit and the Towards Prosperity Researching Immigrant Skills in Hamilton (2005) study have provided a number of recommendations to address the barriers faced by immigrants in accessing employment. This section provides the rationale for a community plan and then defines a community plan to tackle the issue of underutilization of immigrant skills in Hamilton.

Hamilton is on the verge of facing a serious labour shortage with an aging labour force. Utilizing the readily available immigrant skills is a practical solution to addressing this labour shortage. Immigrants already contribute 82 per cent of the labour force growth in the city. However, many of these well educated and skilled immigrants are unable to transfer their skills to the labour market. They are least likely to be hired and are often over looked by employers in their human resource planning. Several research studies and focus groups have discussed the barriers faced by immigrant job seekers.

The identified barriers in Hamilton include:

- ❑ A requirement of Canadian experience for employment
- ❑ Difficulties in assessing foreign credentials
- ❑ Lack of language and communication skills
- ❑ Inadequate funding for language training programs
- ❑ Non-inclusive hiring practices
- ❑ Cultural differences in behaviour at the work place

The government and service providers offer immigrants a range of employment support activities and resources. The services range from job search preparation and techniques workshops, to resume writing, job interview preparation, career counseling, language assessment and training, labour market information sessions, job placements, mentoring and contacts with potential employers. These programs are intended to help immigrants enter the competitive job market. Still, the current array of employment supports for immigrants needs to be more effective in helping immigrants overcome the barriers they face in the job market. This is evidenced by the high poverty and unemployment rates among recent immigrants. Immigrant serving organizations are often constrained by lack of adequate funding and the employers lack appropriate supports to access and utilize the skills and abilities of immigrants.

It is argued that there is a lack of a coordinated strategy to integrate immigrants into the workforce since this issue involves multiple stakeholders. Critics claim that the system of funding employment for immigrants is fragmented and piecemeal, with little cohesion between different government departments. There has not been much attention to the systemic barriers faced by immigrants and employers that currently prevent their immediate access to the labour market. There is no analysis of our current formula for investment of resources compared to results we are getting in Hamilton.

Developing a comprehensive community plan to integrate immigrants into the local labour force requires a systemic approach that is built on effective coordination among all stakeholders including the municipal, provincial and federal governments as suggested by Naomi Alboim and the Maytree Foundation. According to Alboim and the Maytree Foundation a 'systems approach' has many advantages over the current scenario of ad hoc initiatives because solutions are designed as part of an overall system, wherein the different parts of the system reinforce each other for maximum impact (2002).

A local level community plan to integrate immigrants into the labour market while adopting a systems approach has many advantages since it is grounded within the context of local demographic

characteristics, labour market skills and shortages, employment trends and industrial growth. Solutions develop locally are more relevant to the local situation because of a shared understanding and analysis. It also builds on existing programs and services already available in the community hence economically efficient. Above all it builds the capacity of the community in the process thereby ensuring the sustainability of the initiative in the long run.

The Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) and the Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Council (WRIEN) are examples of local solutions to these problems. Immigrant employment councils are currently being established in cities such as Ottawa, Vancouver and Nova Scotia.

7.1 What Can a Community Plan Do?

- ❑ Identify where results need to be improved
- ❑ Make recommendations for actions to be taken to improve services, target and secure new resources when needed.
- ❑ Ensure programs/services work in an integrated way across government, voluntary sector and private sector providers.
- ❑ Monitor and report on our success in integrating immigrants into the labour force.
- ❑ Develop proposals for reformulating or increasing investment in our community to enhance or create the programs/services needed to improve our outcomes with respect to success and integrating immigrants into the workforce.

7.2 Key Elements of a Coordinated Program Model

- ❑ Manage system planning, coordination and funding at the local level.
 - ❑ Engage the community in local service system planning and setting of priorities, including establishing formal channels for citizen input and community consultation.
 - ❑ Through greater integration of programs and services, improve the accessibility of services to immigrants to allow people to move more easily through the system.
 - ❑ Bring economic efficiencies to delivery of employment services, promoting service innovation, improving quality of service, and making the system more sustainable and accountable.
- a) *Local service system planning*
Develop a local Integrated Immigrant Employment Services Plan in accordance with community defined strategic directions
- (b) *Local system integration and service coordination*
Work with service providers to adapt and customize services to address local employment needs of immigrants
Collaborate and integrate with other local networks and the funders to develop and implement strategies at the Provincial and Federal levels
- (c) *Accountability and performance management*
Develop local area accountability and performance frameworks and agreements with service providers that would be funded by the consistent and coordinated efforts of funders
Set performance baselines, priorities and improvement targets in accordance with provincial framework with service providers

- (d) *Local community engagement*
Develop and carry out community engagement strategies
Develop mechanisms and channels for community dialogue
Respond directly to unique local concerns and requirements

- (e) *Evaluation and reporting*
Evaluate and report on local system performance to funders and community
Contribute to provincial system-level evaluation and reporting activities
Evaluate and report on best practices in service integration and coordination

- (f) *Funding*
Provide funds to service providers within the scope of the local coordinating committee and within the available funding limits. Provide advice on capital needs to the funders.

7.3 Recommended Action Plan

The Immigration Summit held by HTAB and the Community Consultation provided suggestions for actions to address the barriers facing immigrants accessing employment in Hamilton. The following actions are recommended for Hamilton after reviewing the solutions developed in Waterloo and Toronto.

7.3.1 Recommendation :

That an immigrant employment network/council be formed in Hamilton to bring together all the relevant stakeholders for the integration of immigrants into the workforce.

The Community Consultation participants recommended the development of an immigrant employment council/network in Hamilton to integrate immigrants into the local labour market.

The Council/Network will have the following responsibilities:

- ❑ Co-ordinate and facilitate partnerships among all stakeholders
- ❑ Maintain an organizational framework that would address local needs
- ❑ Act as a clearing house of information on immigrant employment programs and services
- ❑ Manage system planning and coordinate existing projects to address gaps in service delivery
- ❑ Advocate for a shift in the philosophy of the funders, promote innovation, improve quality of service and make the system more sustainable and accountable
- ❑ Advise funders to ensure efficient allocation of financial resources
- ❑ Mobilize investment from government for the development of immigrant employment initiatives
- ❑ Partner with other Immigrant Employment Councils/Networks and lobby senior levels of government to make legislative changes that facilitate more immigrant employment
- ❑ Facilitate community participation in program planning, setting priorities, including establishing formal channels for community input and consultation

7.3.2 Recommendation:

That employers be mobilized and supported to address barriers in recruiting more immigrants

- a) Enhance the sector specific/workplace language communication skills of immigrants
- b) Promote employer promising practices for sourcing, recruiting, developing and retaining more immigrants
- c) Provide information about foreign credential assessment services to employers
- d) Build an inclusive workplace by enhancing inter-cultural understanding
- e) Promote programs which provide a bridge to work for immigrants e.g. mentoring, internships, and work placements.

7.3.3 Recommendation:

That actions are taken to address issue of licensing, credential assessment and enhancement of immigrant qualifications to access jobs

Credential Assessment

- a) Create greater awareness of available qualifications assessment services
- b) Advocate for an effective and accessible system for assessing and verifying foreign credentials
- c) Advocate for credential assessment as part of the immigrant selection process

Enhancement of Qualifications

- a) Expand and increase access to bridging programs for internationally trained professionals and trades people
- b) Enhance language training programs for immigrants

7.3.4 Recommendation:

That immigrants be supported to overcome barriers to employment and social integration

Immigrant Support

- a) Provide information to immigrants at multiple access points
- b) Integrate the programs and services of community organizations to meet the employment needs of immigrants
- c) Advocate for employers to develop bias free hiring practices
- d) Promote immigrant leadership in Hamilton
- e) Implement a communications plan to create awareness about immigrant contributions to the local community

7.3.5 Recommendation: *That actions be taken to attract more economic category immigrants to Hamilton.*

Immigrant Attraction

- a) Coordinate labour market analysis
- b) Attract more economic class immigrants to Hamilton

7.4 Development of Hamilton Immigrant Workforce Integration Network (HIWIN)

To expedite the development phase, the following description for the network is provided based on the experience of the Waterloo community model.

The development of the proposed Hamilton Immigrant Workforce Integration Network could be carried out in two phases i) Development phase and ii) Implementation phase. In the development phase the relevant stakeholders could be organized and the recommendations could be discussed, prioritized, changes incorporated to the content and form of the proposed network. Funding could be sought to employ staff to develop a policy for the governance of the network, organize the network with its different working groups. Identify the host organization to house the network, and to seek funding for the future work of the network.

Vision:

To bring together all the relevant stakeholders for the purpose of developing a well-coordinated, efficient and effective system that facilitates the smooth integration of immigrants into Hamilton's workforce.

7.4.1 Guiding Principles for the Network

- Coordinate, cooperate and build partnerships among all stakeholders
- Build on existing initiatives
- Keep focused on outcomes
- Ensure the participation of immigrant communities in the development, implementation and evaluation of the network activities
- Promote equity in all forms (gender, ethno-racial)

Objectives:

- To develop partnerships and support employers to hire immigrants and to integrate them into their workforce
- To ensure that immigrant credentials are recognized and they are enhanced wherever necessary to improve their access to the job market
- To support immigrants to access the labour market and to attract new immigrants to settle in Hamilton
- To mobilize resources both financial and human from stakeholders to develop and implement the network's activities
- To create awareness on immigrant issues and to engage stakeholders in the activities of the network

7.4.2 Outcomes of the Network

That the long term outcomes of the Hamilton Immigrant Workforce Integration Network would be the social and economic integration of immigrants into the Hamilton community. The short-term outcomes could be determined by the Network members.

7.4.3 Stakeholders of the Network

The membership of the network should be broad based involving all the relevant stakeholders in the community.

Educational Institutions
Immigrant Service Providers
Community Organizations
Individual employers
Business Organizations (Chambers of Commerce)
Funders- Hamilton Community Foundation, United Way of Burlington & Greater Hamilton
Labour Unions
Occupational Regulatory Bodies
Immigrant Groups
Credential Assessment Agencies

Since many of the issues and barriers are multi-jurisdictional the success of the initiative requires most importantly partnerships with the three levels of the government: federal, provincial and the municipal.

Federal Government: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Service Canada, Heritage Canada, Industry Canada.

Provincial Government: Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade.

Municipal Government: Economic Development, Community Services.

7.4.4 The Structure of the Network

The proposed network would require:
Advisory Committee
Working Groups
Secretariat

The Waterloo Immigrant Employment Network model is more appropriate to Hamilton since it represents a comprehensive system. Moreover Waterloo has similar demographical characteristics as Hamilton and the immigrant issues and barriers facing immigrants in Waterloo are very much similar to Hamilton.

8.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

From the outset of this process the planners and participants in this Immigrant Skills Workforce project worked towards the development of a community plan for Hamilton that would integrate immigrant professionals and trades people into the local labour force at their optimal skill level. The community plan that has now been articulated will ultimately serve to benefit a population of several thousand immigrants and their families in their search for adequate employment. The process of developing this plan directly engaged over two hundred groups and individuals. Their suggestions, ideas and contributions are reflected in each feature of the resulting plan.

Participants played an active role through a variety of planning processes: membership in the project Advisory Committee, the larger Reference Committee, the community consultation meeting and through written review and comment in response to mail/email circulation of project draft plans. Participants reflected a wide range of perspectives including: federal, provincial and municipal government departments, voluntary sector service providers, Boards of Education and post-secondary education institutions, labour organizations, businesses and individual immigrants.

Over the course of the project a variety of activities took place to develop the plan. The project's Advisory Committee met many times to detail and prepare each step in the process to create the plan, organize events and make strategic choices that would increase participation and clarify issues. A larger Reference Committee met on several occasions to provide guidance to the planning process through a wider range of perspectives, define priorities for the community plan and to extend through their networks to range of participation in the planning process. The community consultation event held in December 2005 involved over one hundred people as participants, presenters and facilitator/recorders in a participatory process that elicited comment and input from a wide range of community members. A direct mail/email exercise provided a first draft of the community plan to over two hundred individuals in Hamilton that were identified as having an interest in the recommendations developed. Their written responses were used to further refine the community plan.

At the conclusion of the project, additional meetings were convened to establish and define membership and terms of reference the Hamilton Immigrant Workforce Integration Network (HIWIN) that would assume responsibility for carrying on the work of implementation of the community plan.

It is this final stage of development of the HIWIN committee that offers the greatest promise for continuing progress in Hamilton in successfully integrating immigrants into our local labour force. Membership in HIWIN is strong, varied and brings together a wide variety of perspectives and stakeholders to carry out collaborative work on this issue.

This community planning exercise at its conclusion has created a strategy for change and defined actions that if taken over the next several years will make a significant change in the lives of unemployed and underemployed immigrants. Implementation of the plan should produce measurable improvements in the employment condition of the immigrant population in the years ahead as the plan influences labour market and community practice.

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**APPENDIX A:
Immigrant Skills Workforce Integration Project
Advisory Committee**

**Immigrant Skills Workforce Integration Project
Advisory Committee**

Len Falco
Hamilton Chamber of Commerce

Nella Roque
Program Manager, City of Hamilton, Public Health & Community Services, Employment & Income Support

Sylvia Renshaw
Business Development Consultant, City of Hamilton, Planning and Economic Development

Aurelia Tokaci
Employment Manager, Settlement and Integration Services Organization (SISO)

Judy Travis
Executive Director, Hamilton Training Advisory Board

Jim Jones,
Chair, Applied Arts, Mohawk College of Applied Arts & Technology

Don Jaffray
Executive Director, Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton

Sabin Mukkath
Research Assistant, ISWIP Project, Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton

APPENDIX B
Immigrant Skills Workforce Integration Project
Reference Committee

Immigrant Skills Workforce Integration Project Reference Committee

Roseema Alvi, Advisory Committee on Immigrants and Refugees, City of Hamilton

Peter D'Amico, DOFASCO

Nancy DiGregorio, Superintendent of Education, Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Board

Len Falco, LCM Associates (Hamilton Chamber of Commerce)

Gayle Holmes, Assistant Vice President, Human Resources, Hamilton Health Sciences

Don Jaffray, Executive Director, Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton

Jim Jones, Chair, Applied Arts, Mohawk College of Applied Arts & Technology

Casey Korstanje, Associate Editor, Hamilton Spectator

Jack Maga, Principal, St. Charles Adult Education

Joe Mancinelli, President, LIUNA

Wayne Marston, President, Hamilton District Labour Council

Sabin Mukkath, Research Assistant, ISWIP Project, Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton

Frank Passaro, Manager, Scotia Bank Centre Mall

Jan Potts, Area Manager, Service Canada

Chuck Reid, Superintendent of Education, Hamilton Wentworth District School Board

Jo-Ann Relf, Manager, Client Care, Royal Bank of Canada

Sylvia Renshaw, Business Development Consultant, City of Hamilton, Planning and Economic Development

Ines Rios, Executive Director, St. Joseph Immigrant Women's Centre

Nella Roque, Program Manager, City of Hamilton, Public Health & Community Services, Employment & Income Support

Jo-Ann Savoie, Constable, Hamilton Police Services

Aurelia Tokaci, Employment Manager, Settlement and Integration Services Organization (SISO)

Judy Travis, Executive Director, Hamilton Training Advisory Board