

Discrimination or Employers' expectations?

Throughout my professional career, as a long term Brampton resident, and recently more often as a result of my work managing the BBOT award winning project Skills Without Borders, I hear, time and again, complaints from new Canadians about employment discrimination.

The issue of employment integration of skilled immigrants into the Canadian economy is very complex, from its origins (immigration system, countries of origin, destination-cities, Canadian and local labour needs) to barriers related to language disadvantages, foreign credentials and experience recognition, licensing, cultural differences, and up to isolated instances of prejudice and discrimination. It affects both new Canadians who are unable of finding suitable employment, and Canadian employers looking for skills and labour in short supplies. It represents above all, a great loss in tax revenues, a burden for social services and frustration and disappointment heading to a socio-economic divide that may affect social harmony in our communities.

Most barriers preventing skilled immigrants from gaining employment in their fields of training and expertise have been researched, identified and somewhat addressed with limited success.

There is, however, a main aspect of the problem that, although sensitive and controversial, is imperative to analyze:

Do new Canadians meet employers' expectations?

In Canada, as elsewhere, employers expect employees to be:

- On time and meet deadlines
- Polite, friendly, courteous and respectful to customers, co-workers and supervisors
- Co-operative helpful and enthusiastic
- Efficient and proactive
- Proficient and highly productive
- Flexible and adaptable
- Self sufficient and team player
- Honest and trustworthy
- Well groomed

For new Canadians, however, in addition to these universal requirements for employment, there are other preliminary questions to be answered in order to meet employers' expectations and gain meaningful employment:

- Did I choose, as immigration destination, a Canadian city based on the opportunities it offers?



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- Are my qualification and experience in great demand in my chosen destination city?
- How do I get my qualifications and experience recognized in Canada?
- Do I need a license to practice my profession/trade in Canada?
- Which level of proficiency and language skills do I need to work in Canada?
- How can I develop a network of professional contacts?
- How do I search for work in Canada?
- How is Canadian workplace or corporate culture different than in my country?
- Am I familiar with Canadian corporate culture, business practices, and customer service?

Only when these questions are answered, and the necessary steps are taken to become "employment ready" in Canada, should new Canadians expect and demand fairness and equal opportunities to compete for employment.

After all, employers will always look after their bottom line, they will always hire who they consider is the best person for the job, and if a new Canadian is not hired because she/he doesn't meet yet the employers' expectations.

That's not discrimination, that's a sound universal business practice!