

Presentation to the  
House of Commons

## **Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration**

Study on Recognition of the International  
Experience and Credentials of Immigrants

Thursday, May 5, 2005  
11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. – Room 209, West Block

by the

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## Introduction

The Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council (CTHRC) thanks the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration for the invitation to make a presentation on Recognition of the International Experience and Credentials of Immigrants.

In 2003 tourism spending in Canada reached \$52.1 billion and the total tourism GDP was \$22.6 billion or 1.99% of Canada's GDP at market prices.<sup>i</sup> The 1.67 million employed in the tourism sector in 2003 accounted for 10.7% of the entire Canadian labour force. The sector also has a turnover rate of more than 32% per year<sup>ii</sup> which is found largely in the entry level positions occupied by very young workers, a significant proportion of whom are still going to school. With a forecasted growth rate of 1.8% per annum, the tourism sector labour force will continue to grow faster than the Canadian labour force over the next ten years.<sup>iii</sup> That would result in approximately 30,000 new jobs created in the tourism sector per year. This combined with the declining number of young people to fill the 550,000 jobs now being occupied by those in the 15 to 24 age range will result in a serious recruitment challenge.

Tourism GDP: \$22.6 billion
1.67 Million employed in tourism (10.7% of labour force)
Forecasted growth: 1.8%/annum
32% turnover rate
30,000 new jobs each year

The CTHRC is the national "sector council" for the tourism industry. Sector Councils are organizations, supported by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, which bring together the labour market partners (business, workers, education, government) at the national level to address labour market issues specific to a particular sector or group of industries. The CTHRC also brings together national industry associations and one organization in each province and territory whose mandate is tourism human resource development at that level.

The CTHRC was established in 1993. Its activities include: the establishment of occupational standards for over 50 tourism occupations from Housekeeping Room Attendant, to Heritage Interpreter, to Food and Beverage Manager; the national administration of Professional Certification for over 25 occupations, and recognition at stages leading to Professional Certification; the development of workplace training resources based on standards; tourism career promotion; and transition programming providing employment and training in tourism occupations entitled "Ready to Work". Standards, training and professional certification are being promoted under the brand name "emerit" (see [www.emerit.ca](http://www.emerit.ca)).

## Process for Immigrants to Obtain the Canadian Equivalent of their Professional Credentials

For non-regulated professions, few credentials actually exist. (Even in regulated professions where there are recognized credentials, comparisons are unreliable.) Instead, the focus should be on assessment of the newcomer's competencies. These competencies should be defined by industry sectors, and serve as a benchmark. Academic credentials and employer's expectations can both be articulated against and compared to the competencies.

A competency system can also support systemic and cross-sectoral labour mobility. Common competencies can be shown in a range of jobs regardless of the sector. (An example of such a system is that for *Essential Skills*. See <http://www15.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/>.) Additional work is needed to go beyond essential skills, with a focus on technical skills.

The CTHRC's system of occupational standards and professional recognition is a competency-based model. A pan-Canadian system of industry credentials is in place for 28 job classifications. This competency-based assessment model is recognized by employers, and supports full learner or worker mobility.



If a competency-based recognition system is in place in the country of origin of a new immigrant the two systems (country of origin and Canadian) can be compared and credentials recognized with relative ease. There would be some costs associated with the initial analysis and comparison as well as with on-going monitoring of equivalency. If there are fewer competencies in the country of origin system those gaps could be addressed in Canada upon arrival.

Where a system does not exist in the country of origin, and this would be the case for most tourism occupations, the Canadian assessment and recognition system could be used either in the country of origin or upon arrival in Canada. The CTHRC has piloted this with Philippino Housekeeping Room Attendants where training took place in the Philippines (using CTHRC training resources), the written exam portion of the assessment was conducted on-line in the Philippines and the on-site practical evaluation component of the Certification was conducted in Canada after a period employment.

## Challenges

### **Coherence**

In order to support these assessment models, **improved collaboration is needed** among the agencies and educational institutions that provide the service. This is necessary to ensure consistency and to prevent duplication.

The CTHRC is now working with the colleges in Canada to establish a Credit Transfer System. The CTS is envisioned as **a consistent, coherent assessment and recognition system that will be used by all stakeholders**. The system would also rely heavily on updated information and services to assist the range of users, and be centrally coordinated.

### **Skills Gaps**

Colleges, universities, and companies are not currently set up to offer “gap training” – courses to address specific skills, without requiring a person to take full diploma or degree program.

## ***Language***

Newcomers also require **language instruction that is geared to success in the workplace**. In other words, based on *Language Benchmarks* data, and focused on practical application of the language in order to fulfil work requirements. Resources are needed to fund labour market language training. (\*See Canadian Language Benchmarks: [www.language.ca](http://www.language.ca).)

## Recommendations

### ***Immigration System Linked to Competency Assessment***

Meeting labour requirements in the tourism industry may mean increasing the number of new immigrants employed in the sector. This would require lowering skill requirements for immigration to Canada. If this were linked to a competency assessment requirement and an available work placement, a foreign credential recognition system based on competency assessment would work for the tourism sector. Support for such a system, for all stakeholders, would be necessary.

### ***Information on the Canadian Workplace and its Requirements***

It is recommended that the "Going to Canada" portal on the Internet have current, relevant information on jobs, skill and language requirements, and competency assessment in Canada. Individuals should be referred to the modularized on-line or paper-based training offered through the sector council as it is based on expectations and competencies defined by Canadian employers. Individuals in the tourism sector may also choose to start this training in their home country, which is feasible because of self-directed paper-based and on-line training. Complementary services should be identified together with the contact information for agencies that have the expertise and experience to address other needs, such as providing assessment services, language training or facilitating placements. There is a need to operationalize this information so that it can be easily accessed and utilized by all stakeholders.

### ***Assessment***

Where a credential or competency recognition system exists support would be required to conduct those assessments in Canada or in the country of origin with partnering Canadian agencies such as the Association of Canadian Community Colleges or credentialing bodies in that country.

### ***Settlement***

Bridging programs should be based on sector-defined occupational standards, and with opportunity to practice skills in a real job setting. Many sector councils have such programs. Employers involved in these programs also require support to help successfully integrate newcomers. There is a need to raise awareness amongst employers of the value and need for foreign-trained workers, as well as the necessary tools to assist these employers with integration issues such as culture, language, and Canadian workplace expectations.

Support for better collaboration amongst those agencies which can assist with integration is also required to prevent duplication and gain efficiencies, e.g. sector councils, employers, educational institutions, regulatory bodies, assessment agencies, professional associations, settlement agencies, language training specialists.

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<sup>i</sup> Canadian Tourism Commission. *Canadian Facts and Figures 2003*,

[http://www.canadatourism.com/ctx/files/Research\\_Files/F\\_F\\_Brochures2003\\_E.pdf](http://www.canadatourism.com/ctx/files/Research_Files/F_F_Brochures2003_E.pdf), Accessed November 25, 2004, p2.

<sup>ii</sup> Statistics Canada. *Guide to the analysis of the Workplace and Employee Survey, 2001*. Ottawa, ON. August 2003,

<http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/71-221-GIE/free.htm>, p.23.

<sup>iii</sup> Wright, Jennifer. *Total Tourism Sector Employment: 2004 Update*, Ottawa, March 2005. p5.