Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council

Proposal
Research towards Foreign Credentials Recognition
Model for Non-Regulated Professions

1. Name of Project

Foreign Credentials Recognition (FCR) Research

2. Information about the CTHRC and key players

(a) Background and mandate

Background

In 1984, six national industry associations came together with Tourism Canada, a branch of the federal department of Industry, Science and Technology to address the industry's human resource issues. It was agreed that five of those associations would develop occupational standards for six occupations. These standards would set benchmarks for a competitive skill level in those occupations and guide the development and delivery of education and training.

Between 1986 and 1989 a number of provincial organizations were formed in response to recommendations in training needs studies. They too focused on occupational standards and created professional certification programs based on those standards.

Provincial and territorial organizations joined national associations and formed the Tourism Industry Standards and Certification Committee in 1989. They came together to co-ordinate their activities, avoid duplication, ensure consistency, and share information and ideas to ensure that, ultimately, there would be only one national standard and certification program for any tourism occupation.

In March 1993, a National Tourism Human Resource Symposium was held in Ottawa. The labour market partners attending the Symposium came from businesses representing all sectors in tourism, from labour unions, industry associations, education and training, first nations and government. Participants discussed human resource issues facing the tourism industry and strategies to address those issues. At the conclusion of the Symposium they were unanimous in their support for the formation of a national sector council.

In November 1993 the Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council was created. The Council's structure was designed to be inclusive. The industry is organized into a large number of associations at both the provincial/territorial and national levels. It was recognized that these associations play an important role in human resource development as the industry is too large for any one organization to meet its needs. It was also important for all players to be united in one forum in order to share resources, avoid costly duplication, and to ensure some consistency across Canada. Full participation in the decision-making of the Council would ensure that the

labour market partners would also commit to implementation of the Council's policies and programs.

Since 1993 the Council, with the assistance of HRSDC, the industry, provincial governments, and other groups (both national and provincial), has carried out its mandate and undertaken hundreds of projects the results of which are described in Attachment A.

The Council has been working for the last three years with ACCC and Canada CHRIE (Council on Hotel Restaurant and Institutional Education) on a project which endeavours to link the outcomes of institutional post-secondary tourism management programs to the Council's Supervisory Skills Standards and the Food and Beverage Manager Standards. The ultimate objective is to ensure credit for all learning (including learning that takes place in the workplace) with no need for an individual to repeat programs. The Council has also connected with Campus Canada and others involved in similar activities.

The Council has assisted, with HRSDC, in working with the Temporary Foreign Workers Program to facilitate the temporary and permanent entry of lower-skilled foreigners to work in entry level positions in the industry: Fairmont workers from Mexico working in the Mountain Parks Fairmont properties (summer 2001); Philippino workers trained in the Philippines with CTHRC resources admitted to Alberta hotel properties (summer 2004).

The Council's occupational standards were used as a base for the development of standards for the tourism industry in the Caribbean. There is an agreement in place and a current interest in working towards recognition of equivalency. The Council recently established an agreement for delivery of many of its programs (standards, training and certification) in Hong Kong SAR, Macao SAR, The People's Republic of China, and Vietnam. Like the work in the Caribbean, the intent is to work towards joint program recognition. A small comparison has also taken place between the Australian certification programs for Front Desk Agent and Food & Beverage Server and the Canadian programs.

Mandate

A national organization that facilitates and co-ordinates human resource development activities which support a globally competitive and sustainable Canadian tourism industry.

(b) A description of the CTHRC relationship with sectors/constituents and participants or end users where applicable

The relationship of the CTHRC with sectors/constituents is a representative one. The CTHRC includes as members representatives from business, labour, and business and worker organizations, and works with end users in the development and implementation of resources and programs.

This particular project will involve extensive consultation with many stakeholder groups, including: its own stakeholders (above), federal departments, e.g. Canadian Citizenship and Immigration, Heritage Canada, HRSDC; businesses – small, large, urban and rural; education and training

institutions; immigrants; settlement, assessment and language service agencies; and groups that have done significant work with immigrants, such as the Maytree Foundation, or the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women in Canada.

The Council will be engaging employers via its provincial and territorial tourism education council (TEC) partners[1]. These councils are founding Board Members which have direct contact with employers and other stakeholder groups. They are the provincial and territorial representative of all CTHRC programs and services.

One of the key roles of these partnering councils concerns research and program development. The TECs are responsible for identifying and engaging industry participants for activities such as focus group meetings, surveys, or participation in product development committees.

(c) Capacity of the CTHRC to carry out the project (both activity & financial management)

The Council has managed approximately 275 projects involving the development of occupational standards, certification testing mechanisms, and training resources. The Council has also managed four youth transition and three career awareness programs over the past nine years. In the process the Council has developed comprehensive processes around contract management, including a database of qualified contractors, requests for proposal, proposal evaluation, contracting and project and product tracking. The Council also has developed processes to protect copyright, for project management, and to provide HRSDC with the information it needs. The Council has also developed strict policies and processes around the development of standards, training, and certification to ensure integrity and validity. The Council has developed and works with project management databases to host all pertinent information and manage project deliverables. The Council recently established a new brand: *emerit*. Privacy policies have been put into place as of December 2003. The Council is currently working on a robust on-line environment for program delivery.

(d) Constituent/sector/key stakeholder support for the Project

The Council's Board of Directors (Attachment B) is supportive of work in this area. The Standing Committee on Issues has discussed the use of immigration to solve labour shortages and has advised to proceed, emphasizing the need to continue to put most of the Council's efforts into a "made-in-Canada" solution. The Council's "Ready to Work" program which prepares individuals without employment for work in the industry has moved in recent years to providing that assistance to the "under-represented" groups including new immigrants. This program is seen as ideal to provide support for those admitted to Canada.

3. For those projects involving unincorporated groups

Not applicable.

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[1] There is a representative tourism education council in each province and one serving all of northern Canada. For more information on these councils, please link to their respective websites via the CTHRC site: www.cthrc.ca.

4. Labour market or skills issue(s) that the project will address

The project involves research and significant consultation with stakeholder groups. The overall goal is to determine how the Council will be able to facilitate or play a role in assessing and recognizing foreign credentials, ergo support labour mobility and the ability to respond to labour supply issues. It is anticipated that the tourism industry will face increasingly serious labour shortages over the next ten years. This project will inform and assist the Council in meeting some of its employment requirements through immigration and to increase the efficiency of the skills development system in Canada to offset shortages through productivity gains.

5. How the project fits into the group/organization's (e.g. the sector's) overall long term plans to address human resource and/or skills issues

The project responds to the CTHRC's overall mandate to provide leadership and direction for human resource development in the tourism industry. A key interest of the Council is to support labour mobility and to address labour market concerns for the supply of qualified workers.

A foreign credential recognition (FCR) model must be aligned with the sector's existing and recognized occupational standards and professional certification (credential) program. Beyond these cornerstone programs, FCR is also associated with learning and education credits and credentials from other means, such as post-secondary institutions or workplace training initiatives. Recognition of foreign credentials generally requires effective advocacy and coordination among different levels of government, professional bodies, employers, education and training providers, and a host of immigrant service agencies. A long-term goal is to realize a comprehensive *Credit Transfer System* (which is well defined in the next category).

The professional certification program is an essential foundation for a FCR model. The program contains stringent, valid assessment tools to test one's knowledge and to test one's performance – all measured against the industry standards.   Certification is about recognizing the achievements of an individual based on his/her current knowledge and abilities, regardless of how they came to acquire that knowledge and ability; the model is rooted in a prior learning and assessment approach. Recognition of non-regulated professions will involve the recognition of the same type of achievements.

6. Details of Project Proposal

Background

1. Fulfilling Skill and Labour Shortages

1.1 The pending shortage of skilled workers has heightened the need to find more effective ways to recognize foreign credentials, and to better assimilate foreign-trained individuals into the Canadian workforce. Data from the latest census (2001) shows that the labour force grew by 1.4 million people between 1991 and 2001, and that 70% of this growth is attributable to immigration.

By 2011, it is estimated that the net growth of the labour force will depend entirely on immigration. This fact takes on even greater significance because of the aging workforce and an unprecedented wave of retirements that is expected, together with the ever-decreasing number of young people born in Canada.

1.2 The tourism sector employs ten per cent of the Canadian workforce, or roughly 1.67 million people. Based on the latest census data, between 1997 and 2003 the tourism sector grew by 274,500. This means the sector grew on average by 45,900 per year over this six year span. Assuming this same level of yearly growth will occur over the next 10 years, that would equal a growth of 459,000 people and this does not take into account the number of people that will retire, nor the turnover rate (which is conservatively estimated at 30 per cent, due to the large number of voluntary part-time workers, many attending an academic institution). The shortage, therefore, is even greater than this number. CTHRC is finalizing its current labour market survey results to confirm the actual projections. Although this data is not yet available, it does provide some indication of the alarming predicament. **The Council, therefore, sees FCR as one of the important initiatives towards addressing labour supply needs**.

1.3 Put simply, Canada is dependent on skilled immigrants to fulfil skill and labour shortages. Jeffrey Reitz, University of Toronto, has also argued that recognition of foreign credentials has emerged as central issue "because of Canada's distinctive and continuing commitment to mass immigration in the emerging knowledge economy" coupled with the fact that "existing institutional means do not work well for foreign-acquired qualifications", and because the employment prospects of newly arriving immigrants have deteriorated.[2] Without immigration, the development of the economy would be repressed.

1.4 Focusing on the *institutional means* issue, Reitz contended that "the emphasis in Canadian government policy on human capital points-based immigration selection, and in particular on even higher educational standards, clearly is not having the desired impact."[3]

1.5 "Some have described Canada's efforts to attract qualified foreign workers as *seduction and abandonment*. These people are lured with promises of jobs and quality of life… but once they arrive, they are left to their own devices."[4] The host of barriers faced by new Canadians, summarized in the *Seduction and Abandonment* Report are:
• lack of recognition of prior experience & qualifications;
• less proficiency in the language of work;
• poor knowledge of practices & standards in the work world;
• cultural barriers, including discrimination; and
• poor knowledge of programs and sources of financial assistance and training.[5]

1.6 Through the Multiculturalism Program, the Department of Canadian Heritage has supported many research projects that identify issues faced by immigrants, and the recommendations or

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[2] The Institutional Context of Immigration Policy and Foreign Credential Recognition in Canada, abstract
[3] Ibid, p.3
[4] Food for Thought. Workers Educated Abroad: Seduction and Abandonment, p.2
[5] Ibid., p.3

solutions that stakeholders have identified. A mere sample of issues cited in a 2001 report [6], in addition to the ones listed above, include:

- the need to consider national standards for professional accreditation processes;
- the need for establishing greater collaboration among all stakeholders; and
- financial burden; lengthy and costly processes.

1.7 With these barriers, it is no surprise that new Canadians face great challenges getting a job. The chances of a foreign-trained individual gaining a job over a Canadian-born individual with roughly the same qualifications, is much lower. Furthermore, recent immigrants "are less likely to obtain training from an employer than those living in Canada for a long time".[7]

1.8 Once a skilled immigrant gets a job, it takes them 10 years longer to reach the same level of employment as a Canadian with approximately equivalent credentials. "One of the ways to ensure this state of affairs is not perpetuated is to do a better job of evaluating and recognizing the foreign credentials that attest to the skills and knowledge immigrants possess and that Canada needs."[8]

1.9 The federal government in the last two Throne Speeches promised to *work with its partners to break down the barriers to the recognition of foreign credentials* and *to do its part to ensure speedier recognition of foreign credentials and prior work experience*. Currently there are several federal departments that are directing efforts to address this issue.

1.10 To date, foreign credential recognition has focused on regulated professions, such as physicians, nurses, and engineers – where chronic labour shortages exist, and a myriad of jurisdictional challenges are present, such as unnecessary licensure constraints imposed by regulatory bodies.

1.11 Non-regulated professions have had little profile and lack tools or systems to better facilitate the credential recognition and immigrant placement process. Non-regulated professions often have elements of the job that are regulated, such as requirements for incumbents to have a gaming or hunting licence, or to have a food safe handling certificate. These licensing requirements are governed by a host of provincial or territorial bodies, and often the corresponding requirements in one jurisdiction are dissimilar to those in another jurisdiction.

1.12 **The Council must work at identifying and reviewing the regulated practices that affect tourism occupations in Canada. Part of this process will be to identify the governing agencies and determining the best way to work with these agencies, where needed.**

2. Consistent, Coherent Assessment and Recognition Model

2.1 In the Canadian tourism industry, much like other sectors with non-regulated professions, there is a need to create a consistent, coherent assessment and recognition process, and to improve on the information and support requirements that both immigrants and employers need. For such a system to be realized, several elements must be addressed. One example is the need to raise awareness amongst employers on the value and need for foreign-trained workers,

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[6] Recognition of Foreign Credentials: A Survey of Recent Community-Based and Research Projects (c. 1995-2001)
[7] Food for Thought. Workers Educated Abroad: Seduction and Abandonment, p.3
[8] Foreign Credential Recognition: An Overview of Practice in Canada, Forward

as well as the necessary communication and support tools to assist these employers. Another example is the need to *harmonize and centralize* information and services. This would involve the identification of complementary agencies that have the expertise and experience to address particular 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.

2.2 A fundamental issue that must be addressed in order for foreign credentials to be assessed and recognized, is the need for an equivalent system within Canada. Until there is equivalent assessment and recognition of competencies and credentials across Canada, it's not promising that foreign qualifications could be addressed properly. For such a system to operate there must be agreed-upon standards and valuation.

2.3 In June 2000, the *Canadian Labour and Employment Law Journal* reported that "to date there are no national standards for the recognition of professions and trades and the assessing of educational and occupational qualifications. Standards still vary, sometimes substantially from province to province making it difficult not only for foreign-trained professionals but also for Canadian-trained professionals moving from one province\territory to another."[9]

2.4 Relative to the tourism sector, this statement is not correct. The Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council (CTHRC) has national occupational standards and pan-Canadian recognition of the individuals that are assessed and recognized against these standards (i.e. 'Professional Certification'). The CTHRC Certification Program is a valid, reliable assessment and recognition model which can serve as a strong base for FCR, although it has not yet been used for this purpose. For the Certification Program (and underpinning National Occupational Standards) to be used as a model for assessing foreign credentials, rationalization with credentials gained in Canada – most notably diplomas or degrees offered by post-secondary institutions – is also necessary. This *credit transfer system* would serve as a common currency for all competency or credential recognition, including scenarios that involve private sector training and other non-traditional forms of education.

2.5 Ontario's 1989 *Access! Report,* which looked at barriers to foreign credential recognition, recommended "a move from a 'certificate-based system' to a 'competency-based system' with the implementation of a prior learning assessment network."[10] The emphasis here is on the recognition of prior learning, or contexts beyond academic credits and in particular the recognition of practical experience. Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials defines Prior Learning and Recognition (PLAR) as the "identification and measurement of skills and knowledge acquired outside formal educational institutions. Assessments are most often used to grant academic credit or determine eligibility to practice a trade or profession. Recognition is based on an assessment of skills and knowledge obtained through work and other life experiences."[11] The CTHRC's Certification Program is a PLAR model, including psychometrically sound assessment procedures.

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[9] Strategies for Challenging Discriminatory Barriers to Foreign Credential Recognition, p.6
[10] Access! Task Force on Access to Professions and Trades in Ontario
[11] Guide to Terminology in Usage in the Field of Credentials Recognition & Mobility (2003), Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials

2.6 Employers seek individuals with relevant work experience, and even more so, *Canadian experience* - and less emphasis on actual credentials."[12] This might be because employers have expressed dissatisfaction with graduates of academic programs. "Many employers would like graduates and post-graduates to have a wider set of skills to bring into the workplace. Evidence suggests that a large proportion of the initial skill deficiencies reported by employers relate to these skills and knowledge that are best acquired on the job."[13]

2.7 The Conference Board of Canada's Employability Skills[14] set is an example of the skills that employers have identified as essential to new hires and as foundation skills for any Canadian worker. The CTHRC has built on the Conference Board's work and incorporated HRSDC's Essential Skills to establish a practical, relevant program geared at preparing individuals for employment in tourism operations. This is an important point because it illustrates the need to look at FCR as fundamentally the recognition of skills and competencies and that the continuum of these skills and competencies is far ranging – including generic, entry, job-specific up to highly specialized skills.

2.8 In the *Assessing and Recognizing Foreign Credentials (2001)* report, this point is reinforced. The report states that employers stressed relevant experience over paper credentials. "Some firms and sectoral organizations had developed occupational standards against which anyone, whether foreign- or Canadian-trained, can be assessed in a transparent manner. The principles of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition were a strong feature of these innovative approaches."[15]

2.9 **The Council aims to build on its earlier work on the National Credit Transfer System (CTR), referenced in paragraph 7.2**. The objective of this work is to establish a pan-Canadian recognition system that all stakeholders will utilize. Building on the earlier work means engaging educators, assessment agencies, training providers, and employers – to name a few – in order to inform a model that can serve all interests.

3. Required Practices and Standards, Liabilities and Obligations

3.1 A system to assess and recognize foreign credentials is complex, and there are inherent responsibilities and obligations. For example, the Labour Mobility Chapter of the 1995 *Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT)* indicates that *the agreement* has an "important impact on the recognition of foreign-trained professionals since the steps required to remove inter-provincial barriers are similar to the steps needed to reduce barriers to foreign credential recognition." The Chapters sets out specific steps for addressing the barriers. The Chapter states that "licensing, certification and registration requirements must relate principally to competence" and defines other requirements such as the system being readily accessible, and costs or fees not "imposing a burden". [16]

3.2 Several other obligations of a *foreign credential recognition system* have also been identified by a number of parties. These include the requirements to access accurate information, maintain

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[12] The Institutional Context of Immigration Policy and Foreign Credential Recognition in Canada, p.9
[13] Lambert Review of Business-University Collaboration, Final Report, p.111
[14] Conference Board of Canada's Employability Skills 2000+ can be accessed at http://www.conferenceboard.ca/.
[15] Assessing and Recognizing Foreign Credentials in Canada – Employers' Views, p.2
[16] Strategies for Challenging Discriminatory Barriers to Foreign Credential Recognition, p.6

this information and provide it in a timely manner. Reitz suggested that this would include the need to have "access to individuals in a position to provide reliable advice regarding the performance of individuals as they acquired those credentials, and access to assessment of the performance of similarly-qualified individuals in employment situations comparable to the one for which the employer is hiring."[17]

3.3 Where these national occupational standards and assessment models are in place, there is a requirement to ensure that the programming is not a barrier to foreign-trained immigrants. In 1999, the Supreme Court of Canada reviewed a case involving a woman challenging test standards. The Court ruled that there is a "positive obligation", which, among other things means that "licensing bodies and employers must do all that is reasonably possible to initially develop professional standards which work for both foreign-trained and Canadian-trained individuals rather than developing standards based on Canadian training and then later deciding whether to make any exceptions to those standards for foreign-trained individuals."[18] **In the case of the CTHRC, standards were not developed with this provision in mind, and although the standards would likely be highly applicable, they warrant a review to ensure this provision can be met.**

3.4 In 1990 Canada ratified the 1979 UNESCO *Convention of the Recognition of Studies, Degrees and Diplomas Concerning Higher Education in the States Belonging to the European Region*. At the time this was signed, there was discussion on establishing a Canadian 'higher education' database, and in 1994 Citizenship and Immigration Canada committed to establishing a 'national clearinghouse' on accreditation for the recognition of foreign credentials.

3.5 The *Not Just Numbers (1997)* report recommended that a new pan-Canadian authority "take measures with existing assessment authorities to develop national standards and a shared database with the longer-term objective of providing a Canada-wide equivalency assessment of professional qualifications, which would be accepted in each province and territory". [19] To our knowledge such an organization has not been created.

3.6 "Generally speaking, most of the arrangements for helping immigrants comply with Canadian standards in their field and find employment consistent with their qualifications are *ad hoc*. There are no national accepted standards for assessing foreign qualifications, although the existing five provincial assessment services have developed *General Guiding Principles for Good Practice in the Assessment of Foreign Credentials* (CICIC document)."[20] The Association of Accrediting Agencies of Canada (AAAC) and the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) seem to have adopted the same key requirements, which are largely based on the European framework. For example, these requirements state:

> ***Concerning assessment procedures:***
> • Need to publish standardized information on the procedures and criteria for assessment of foreign qualifications;
> • Applications processed promptly (and not to exceed four months);

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[17] The Institutional Context of Immigration Policy and Foreign Credential Recognition in Canada, p.8
[18] Strategies for Challenging Discriminatory Barriers to Foreign Credential Recognition, p.14
[19] Strategies for Challenging Discriminatory Barriers to Foreign Credential Recognition, p.7
[20] Foreign Credential Recognition: An Overview of Practice in Canada, p.7

- Authority should provide advice on possibilities and procedures for submitting applications;
- Inventory of typical cases should be 'drawn up', and these examples considered in subsequent cases [21]

Concerning fees:
- If possible, a "public service free of charge"; where not feasible, fees kept as low as possible and should not constitute a barrier
- Special measures aimed at low income groups, refugees and displaced persons or other disadvantaged groups are needed [22]

Concerning verification of authentication:
- Need to ensure that documents are genuine, and rightfully issued to applicant
- For applicants unable to provide necessary documentation, "it should be considered whether alternative ways of recognizing these qualifications may be found" [23]

Concerning assessment of individual qualifications:
- Recognition of foreign qualifications may be sought for a variety of purposes
- "Before undertaking the assessment, the competent recognition authority should establish which national and international legal texts are relevant to the case, and whether these require any specific decision to be reached or procedure to followed." [24]
- Assessment should take into account similar cases, and strive for consistency in outcomes of the assessment
- "Qualifications of approximately equal level may show considerable differences in terms of content, profile and learning outcomes. In the assessment of foreign qualifications, these differences should be considered in a flexible way, and only substantial differences in view of the purpose for which recognition is sought (e.g. academic or de factor professional recognition) should lead to partial recognition or non-recognition of the foreign qualifications." [25]
- Recognition of foreign qualifications should be granted unless a substantial difference can be demonstrated. In applying this principle, the assessment should seek to establish whether:
    1. the differences in learning outcomes are too substantial
    2. the differences in key elements of the program(s) leading to the qualification are too substantial
    3. a credential evaluator can document that the differences in the quality of the program and/or the granting institution are too substantial

    and in any of the above scenarios, if the difference are "too substantial", then partial or conditional recognition be granted
- "Competent recognition authorities and other assessment agencies should be encouraged to focus on the learning outcomes and competencies, as well as the quality of the delivery of an educational program and to consider its duration as merely one indication of the level of achievement reached at the end of the program. The assessment process should

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[21] Adapted from Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Credentials, pp.3-4
[22] Ibid, pp.4
[23] Ibid, pp.5
[24] Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Credentials, p.6
[25] Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Credentials, p.7

acknowledge that recognition of prior learning, credit transfer, different forms of access to higher education, double degrees and life-long learning will all shorten the duration of some academic qualifications without diminishing the learning outcomes and a decision not to grant recognition should not be motivated by duration alone."[26]

3.7 "Where recognition cannot be granted according to an applicant's request, the competent recognition authority or assessment agency should, as far and as precisely as possible, assist the applicant in identifying remedial measures the applicants may undertake in order to obtain recognition at a later stage."[27]

3.8 The point of raising examples on the requirements of a credentials recognition system is to illustrate the complexity of such a system and the liability burden that the authority must assume. **A key strategy of the CTHRC will be to explore the liability concerns, and to identify the best means to provide services, such as the ability to partner or work with the agencies that have a stake in these services.**

3.9 The federal government has no agency to assess qualifications; however, a number of provincial and federal resources may contribute to the process. For example, aside from a range of provincial agencies, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Canadian Heritage and HRSDC all are identified as links on the Canada International website for this purpose. Credential evaluations are being done currently by provincially- and territorially-funded assessment agencies in BC, AB, MB, ON and QC and by a handful of other commercial agencies.

3.10 In terms of the provincial agencies, issues have also been identified. Consider this statement from a report on the barriers faced by new immigrants: "Although some prior learning assessment is currently being performed in Ontario… we found in many cases, significant weaknesses in the methods of assessing the background of applicants. Sometimes no credit at all is given for training outside an accredited program. Even where a structure for assessment does exist, the information gathering often tends to be unsystematic and the standards imposed subjective and ad hoc. In addition, there is, with some exceptions, a general reluctance to give credit for any learning obtained outside a formal program of education, no matter how relevant and well documented that learning may be."[28]

3.11 **The CTHRC needs to implicitly understand the conditions and risks associated with assessment concerning foreign credentials. The Council's knowledge and performance assessment mechanisms, which form the basis of its certification program, also need to be looked at in this context to understand the possible impact and requirements for changes or additions.**

4. Role of Employers

4.1 A minority of employers is concerned with foreign credentials. "However, when an individual employer is having current problems hiring a foreign-trained worker, immigration issues become a

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[26] Ibid, p.7
[27] Ibid, p.8
[28] Strategies for Challenging Discriminatory Barriers to Foreign Credential Recognition, p.2

primary and immediate concern."[29] In the case of non-regulated occupations, employers look for relevant experience and place relatively little or no emphasis on credentials. "For these employers, the issue was how to translate foreign experience into Canadian terms."[30] In tourism, relevant experience implies that the worker has the skills and competence to work in the Canadian workplace context, and they have the language competence that is necessary for the job.

4.2 Employers also complain that the current immigration points system puts too much weight on paper credentials and not enough on experience. [31] This highlights the potential role of PLAR. Where assessment services are available, they need to market better to employers. "These communications would stress (i) that it makes sense to hire foreign-trained workers, and (ii) that using provincial credentials assessment agencies also makes good business sense by broadening the pool of qualified candidates, while reducing the costs of recruitment interviews, probationary trial periods, and similar activities."[32]

4.3 An area of concern is the attitude and ability of employers' to assimilate new immigrants into the workplace. "Ethnic and racial stereotypes may affect perceptions of immigrant qualification, cultural differences and misunderstandings may affect efforts at cooperation, and the minority status of individual groups may affect the attention they receive in the political process."[33] Strong argument needs to be made and communicated on the value of the highly qualified immigrant workforce. Employers also require appropriate information, training tools and other means to support a multicultural workplace.

4.4 **Assessing employers' views and needs is important to the Council, as this knowledge will inform further strategies to engage employers, such as information, support, or implementation strategies.**

4.5 **The Council also needs to gain a solid understanding of the immigrant worker currently employed in the tourism sector, which would include detailed knowledge on the demographics of the sector, occupations in which immigrants are employed, education and skill levels of these workers, and more.**

5. The Link Between FCR and Studying in Canada

5.1 Canadian immigration regulators require that applicants wishing to come to Canada to study must have an offer of admission to a program. The applicant's qualifications are assessed before an offer for admission is granted. In Canada each university or college sets its own admission requirements and its own criteria for recognizing foreign academic qualifications. The procedures vary by institution. In a recent Canadian Alliance of Education and Training Organizations (CAETO) report, they state: "The assessment and recognition of foreign credentials for the purpose of academic study is firmly in the hands of the provider. Unfortunately, assessments of the same credentials by different institutions can frequently be inconsistent."[34]

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[29] Assessing and Recognizing Foreign Credentials in Canada – Employers' Views, p.7
[30] Ibid, p.9
[31] Ibid, p.4
[32] Ibid, p.4
[33] The Institutional Context of Immigration Policy and Foreign Credential Recognition in Canada, p.11
[34] Foreign Credential Recognition: An Overview of Practice in Canada, p.17

5.2 In the same report, CAETO stated that "colleges have much less experience and fewer resources to evaluate credentials from other countries. On the other hand, many have more experience than do most universities with Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), which involves the compilation of a dossier of the evidence of skills and competencies rather than the assessment of paper documentation only."[35]

5.3 The Association of Canadian Community Colleges recently reported (March 2004) on the types of programs and services that colleges and institutes are delivering[36] for immigrants, such as assessment services, language training, career and technical programs, workplace and community-based training, as well as advising and counselling services. This report highlighted the challenges and barriers faced by the colleges and institutes in providing these services. The report summarized the challenges and barriers as:
- "Effective delivery of language training;
- Application processes that are slow and costly;
- The high cost and resource requirements for delivering assessment services such as PLAR effectively;
- Intra-institutional awareness of the needs of immigrants and inter-cultural sensitivity;
- Adequate integration and support services for immigrants;
- Financial and funding limitations that restrict colleges and institutes in developing new programs and services for a specific target group, such as immigrants;
- Effective promotion of college and institute programs and services to the immigrant community; and,
- Positioning for federal, provincial and municipal funding programs."

5.4 A key conclusion stemming from ACCC's consultation is to collaborate with other partners working on the integration of immigrants, namely Sector Councils (and tourism was highlighted as one of the five suggested), as well as others.

5.5 **The Council has a role in PLAR as well as in facilitating activities among stakeholders. For these reasons, work is needed to better understand the role of FCR among post-secondary institutions.**

6. Temporary Foreign Worker Program

6.1 The Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) is one example of a federal program worth exploring. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) support a Temporary Foreign Worker Program that is intended to help address skill and labour shortages. HRSDC's website identifies several industry sectors that have specific processes for employers planning to hire foreign workers in Canada, which include (taken directly from the website): Academics, Seasonal Agriculture, Film and Entertainment, Information Technology, Live-in-Caregivers, Oil Sands Construction, and a pilot project for "occupations requiring at most a High-school Diploma or job-specific training".

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[35] Ibid, p.16
[36] Canadian Colleges and Institutes – Responding to Needs of Immigrants: Final Report, pp.i-ii

6.2 **These examples and models need to be examined and considered in the context of FCR for non-regulated professions, and in particular for the tourism sector.** For example, the last category listed above concerns occupations that generally require at most a high school diploma or a maximum of 2 years of job-specific training. Many of the occupations that concern CTHRC fit into this category. However the program is restrictive, such as limiting the worker to a maximum of a 12-month work period, and they must return to their home country for four months before applying for another work permit.

6.3 The requirements for an employer to qualify for this program are onerous. For example, they include a need to:
- Demonstrate comprehensive and on-going efforts to recruit Canadian youth, aboriginal people, recent immigrants and Canadians in areas of high unemployment;
- Show efforts to hire unemployed Canadians through HRSDC and provincial employment programs;
- Consult with the local union if the position is covered under a collective agreement;
- Sign an employer-employee contract outlining wages, duties, and conditions related to the transportation, accommodation, health and occupational safety of the foreign worker;
- Help the worker(s) find suitable, affordable accommodation;
- Pay full airfare for the foreign worker to and from their home country;
- Provide medical coverage until the worker is eligible for provincial health insurance coverage;

6.4 In turn, the worker must have a valid work permit, and before they can apply to CIC for a work permit, an employer must first offer a job and HRSDC will normally "provide a labour market opinion or confirmation of the job offer".

6.5 HRSDC also has a program geared at hiring skilled workers and supporting their permanent immigration. This program is described as "an effective way to fill a full-time position in your company and bring needed skills to Canada". The process involves completing HRDSC applications and submitting the case to Citizenship and Immigration Canada for consideration. Before a skilled worker can become a permanent resident, they must meet the requirements of the *Skilled Worker Class*, and have at least one year of work experience in a professional, managerial, or technical occupation. The specific process and details are complex, and it is clear that a typical immigrant would require assistance to understand the information and succeed in their quest.

6.6 **The Provincial Nominee Program is another option to explore.** Skilled workers may acquire permanent residency through a number of provincial nominee programs established between Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and provincial governments. Each province is unique in its information, process and requirements for this program. As stated on the CIC website: "Most provinces in Canada have an agreement with the Government of Canada that allows them to play a more direct role in selecting immigrants who wish to settle in that province. If you wish to immigrate to one of Canada's provinces as a Provincial Nominee, you must first apply to the province where you wish to settle. The province will consider your application based on their immigration needs and your genuine intention to settle there."

6.7 Employers or immigrants attempting to sort through these programs and to respond to the information needs are highly challenged and frustrated. The services provided to immigrants have

been examined by many, and a number of recommendations to improve the assessment and placement services have been made. One example that was raised by employers' is the need for immigration settlement services to supply more accurate information concerning relevant experience. "The [Immigration] Department must co-ordinate better with the accrediting agencies to pass information on certification processes to immigrants before they leave their home countries. An information website, accessible by immigrants before they leave for Canada, would work well."[37] Employers also said that "preparation and counseling of immigrants in their home country is a major concern, and there is an opportunity for collaboration between government and certifying agencies in this regard."[38]

6.8 **The Council sees the Temporary Foreign Workers Program as a <u>possible</u> opportunity** to link immigrants to the CTHRC's Ready to Work training program, and if the participants work out, to have them stay under the Provincial Nominee Program. This would involve working out a model with as many as three provinces, in conjunction with HRSDC.

7. Looking at Good Models and Drawing from Other Experience

Language Benchmarks

7.1 The CTHRC is currently working with the Canadian Centre for Language Benchmarks. Essentially, the project objectives are to
- To develop awareness within the Tourism Sector of how a better understanding of language standards in the workplace.
- To develop language benchmark profiles for the tourism sector, building on and complementing the national occupational standards established for this sector. The result is focused on describing and measuring the key language tasks required for immigrants and newcomers to competently perform work duties.
- To explore the use of the Canadian Language Benchmarks Placement Test as a possible measure of language proficiency or to identify the need for other assessment tools.
- To develop specialized language training materials relevant to this sector, in formats and mediums necessary for national accessibility

7.2 This CLB project is part of the assessment foundation of a healthy FCR model. **The Council will look at how it can build on the experience and knowledge gained from the current work**.

National Learning and Credit Transfer System

7.3 The CTHRC conducted a research project in 2004 to determine a common core curriculum for post-secondary programs in two tourism disciplines, and compared the learning outcomes in this common core to relevant occupational standards. The approach involved the review of curriculum and provincial curriculum criteria from across Canada. The objective was to determine how the Council would proceed with the development of a pan-Canadian *Credit Transfer System (CTS)*. The CTS is envisioned as a consistent, coherent assessment and recognition system that will be

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[37] Assessing and Recognizing Foreign Credentials in Canada – Employers' Views, p.19
[38] Ibid, p.11

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.

7.4 This preliminary work was promising, however, much more needs to be done. The education community has rallied behind this effort, and further planning is now underway.

Preliminary Study: Australia vs Canada

7.5 The Council conducted a preliminary study to compare the Australian tourism credentialling system with the CTHRC's standards and certification model. The main objectives were to determine the equities and inequities in the Australian process compared to the Canadian process, and to establish an assessment model that can be applied to other tourism occupations as well as to standards and certification programs in other countries.

7.3.2 The results from the study were promising, and illustrated that the CTHRC's competency-model holds up well in the international milieu, and as result can be shown to align (or illustrate equivalencies) with foreign credentials.

7.6 *The Council will need to build on this initial effort to better understand the means by which the assessment and recognition can be done. This will also involve the identifying of issues or barriers to overcome, and requirements of such a system.*

APEC TOSS Project

7.7 The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) has a 'Tourism Working Group' (TWG) that is seeking to develop a common strategy that will "support the creation of jobs and promote investment and development". This group commissioned a report on the *Tourism Occupational Skills Standards (TOSS) in the APEC Region*, which was published in 2001. The report contained a scan of the standards and recognition systems within the APEC member countries, although Canada was not researched as part of that scan. The recommendations of this report centre around the need to establish a common system based on industry-defined competencies and valid and reliable assessment systems. In essence, the suggested model described the current system in Canada, led by the CTHRC.

7.8 In November 2003, APEC endorsed a new proposal building on the TOSS report, which essentially is to begin *developing* the common system. Not surprising, the interest is to have Canada (specifically the CTHRC along with the Canadian Tourism Commission) play a key role. In mid-July, the representative of the lead country for this project stated in her e-mail, "…actually we really hope that Canada can be co-sponsor as our Minister suggested to have Canada as the resource of the project considering that Canada had common competency standards and accreditation and certification institution which means we can discuss, giving input and also sharing experience to this project".

7.9 The CTHRC does feel that it can meaningfully contribute towards this process, and sees great value in establishing *common ground* on both the recognition of standards, and the recognition of competencies or credentials. The goals of this project are at the heart of an

FCR system, and, the CTHRC could have a role that would influence a model from which Canada could benefit.

Examples in Other Countries

7.10 Other countries have grappled with the issue of foreign credential recognition. Indeed, in the post-secondary education setting, this subject has been around for a long time. One example worth noting is the work done by the European Union.

7.11 "In 1984 the European Commission created the NARIC Network (National Academic Recognition Information Centres) to provide authoritative advice and information concerning the academic regulation of diplomas and periods of study…"[39] They produced the Diploma Supplement detailing the information. The Diploma Supplement is the key document used within the network to summarize a learner's portfolio. This model appears to have a lot of merit, and will be important to better understand and learn about these issues.

7.12 Other areas to investigate and scrutinize include credit transfer systems, articulation frameworks, and assessment models. The *Foreign Credential Recognition: An Overview of Practice in Canada* report contains a list of noteworthy models to consider, which include references to Australia, the United States, Europe and Asia.

7.13 The Maytree Foundation is a Canadian charitable foundation based in Toronto, and established in 1982. Maytree has been very active in supporting the settlement of refugees and immigrants since 1987. Maytree has conducted a lot of research and participated in many settlement programs and other activities related to *recognition of foreign credentials.* **Any investigation of FCR issues should include a review of the investigations and analyses of these groups: literacy and language service providers, settlement agencies, and a host of other agencies that serve the needs of immigrants, facilitate assessment, or provide information services.**

7.14 **A scan of the research and good examples that have preceded this project will help establish a solid understanding of the issues, needs, and recommendations towards the building of a FCR system for non-regulated professions.**

<u>Summary</u>

FCR is an important initiative for the CTHRC. FCR is part of a *Credit Transfer System* that will facilitate learner and labour mobility, and therefore, is part of the systemic approach to:
* addressing the demand for skilled workers;
* establishing a relevant, consistent and coherent system to assess and recognize competencies and credentials;
* further engage employers, e.g. in better human resource management practices and in the development of a diverse workforce; and to
* identify complementary agencies that provide the necessary services that the Council is not equipped to address.

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[39] Foreign Credential Recognition: An Overview of Practice in Canada, p.20

The proposed research is an initial phase towards a model of measuring and recognizing foreign credentials. The main outcome of the research is to inform the next steps towards such a model.

The Council must start with investigating and understanding the "playing field" and implications of a foreign credential recognition system. The context of this review must extend beyond the tourism sector and consider a model that addresses non-regulated professions. The system will need to grapple with recognition of competencies (which implies Prior Learning and Assessment approaches) as well as formal credentials.

Areas for study will involve:
1. review of federal government departments' programs and initiatives that concern FCR;
2. legal interpretation and consultation on liability concerns, issues, requirements, obligations
3. bridging and mentoring programs; assessment services; placement services and the host of other *immigrant assistance* programs, including programs such as language training
4. identifying the service agencies that provide the *immigrant assistance* programs, and an understanding of the role that each of them may play, as well as partnership opportunities
5. a review of tried-and-proven practices, pilot projects and other models (for example, how the testing of competencies can be used as a surrogate for assessing experience);
6. a review of selected foreign 'systems', with a focus on the Caribbean and Australia (and possibly Mexico – time and resources permitting);
7. the relationship of an assessment and recognition system relative to existing national occupational standards, certification and training programs;
8. identification and review of regulated practices that affect tourism occupations in Canada, and the investigation on how these practices may impact a credential recognition model – can provide examples of regulated practices?
9. extensive consultation with the education community (public and private), with a focus on understanding articulation issues, needs and other priorities;
10. the use of new technologies to expedite foreign credential assessment and recognition;
11. extensive consultation with employers, for example to get a good understanding of the issues, needs, attitudes, priorities and concerns;
12. consideration of a strategy to engage employers;

Objectives

1. To conduct research that will inform the next steps towards a foreign credential recognition system geared at addressing non-regulated professions.
2. To suggest a model and system that will facilitate the recognition of foreign credentials for non-regulated professions; one that establishes greater collaboration among all stakeholders and improves accessibility and integration of qualified workers.
3. To engage stakeholders, i.e. to facilitate and co-oridinate dialogue on the issues, needs, concerns, and ideally begin to identify recommendations.

Activities

Research Projects

1. Federal Programs
   - Identify federal departments and programs associated with immigrants
     * A key interest in this work is to explore the Foreign Temporary Workers Program in concert with the Provincial Nominee Programs
   - Define roles of these departments, and relate possible opportunities
   - Consult with key individuals to explore possible opportunities; postulate on models and policy issues
   - Catalogue information hosted by these departments, and look for common messages, issues, concerns; identify areas for further clarification

   The information garnered from the review of these programs will help the Council identify and determine the best way to work with these agencies.

2. Legal Concerns
   - Seek legal opinion on the liability concerns and risk management issues

   Understanding the possible liabilities and obligations will help the Council determine if it's feasible to proceed with an FCR model, or if a model was to be established, then the research would inform the conditions that are necessary in order to reduce risk.

3. Service Providers and Programs
   - Identify and catalogue the host of service providers that serve immigrant populations, or related fields such as programs that prepare individuals for work

   There are many agencies whose mandate is to provide services that are complementary to the role of the CTHRC. The CTHRC has a lead responsibility of developing working relationships with these groups in an effort to provide effective, efficient service, and to prevent duplication of efforts.

4. Examples of Current Practices, Models, and Pilot Projects
   - Investigate and catalogue other models and practices
   - Identify good practices and common recommendations
   - Identify possible working relationships or formal partnerships
   - Investigate ways in which communications and information can best be facilitated among these agencies

   Learning from these examples will benefit the CTHRC. Ideas, lessons learned and examples of current models can inform an approach for non-regulated professions.

5. Selected Foreign Systems
   - Target three to five *foreign credential* systems and explore the terms and conditions of these systems; identify what is common and relevant

- Target three to five foreign *accreditation* models and explore the terms and conditions of these systems; identify what is common and relevant

The targeted accreditation systems are ones which the CTHRC has some background and interest in establishing joint recognition systems. Foreign credential models are dependent upon articulation systems.

6. Relationship to Existing Programs, and the Council's Efforts towards a National Credit Transfer System
   - Articulate the link of a foreign recognition system to the Council's standards, certification and training programs (including and not limited to the link to the Ready to Work program, the Canadian Academy of Travel and Tourism program, and the Tourism Essentials Program)
   - Consult with education community to explore the current practices, issues, and needs in serving immigrants, and the relationship of these services towards recognition of foreign credentials and the accreditation of programs
     * This consultation would build on the Council's earlier research project noted in section 7.2 above.
   - Define the implications or possible activities that would be necessary to act upon in the event that a system were to be established

At the root of an FCR system is a 'credit transfer model' – a mechanism by which credentials can be valued and traded. Therefore, it is necessary to build on earlier research to ensure that the eventual model will be suitable.

7. Relationship to Regulatory Practices Associated with Non-Related Tourism Professions
   - Identify and catalogue the programs and requirements for all current and near-future-projected practices, for example concerning service of alcohol, gun safety, or a gaming licence
   - Identify the implications and opportunities towards harmonizing the practices
   - Consult with the regulatory bodies to seek views on the issues, needs, attitudes, priorities and concerns

Regulated practices are an issue that needs to be well understood. The standards and practices are highly variable within Canada, let alone outside of Canada. At times the same practice may be a requirement in one place, and not another. The key point of this element of research is to better identify the issues.

8. Employer Views
   - Establish methodology and survey/data collection instruments
   - Consultation via focus group meetings, surveys, and telephone interviews

Employers' views will inform future involvement or commitment strategies. Eventually, the Council will need to look at ways to better assimilate and support a diverse workforce.

9. Use of Technology

- Explore electronic vehicles for disseminating information, and facilitating dialogue with all stakeholder groups
- Identify the electronic means that will best serve long-term objectives, e.g. the hosting of a system

Technology can be a key vehicle to managing information needs. The medium will enable just-in-time access to information, and be relatively economical to sustain. The project requires significant consultation with various stakeholder groups, and thus technology can help enable the dialogue among these groups.

<u>Engage Stakeholders</u>

Aside from the direct consultation that would result from the research projects listed above:

1. Stakeholder Consultation Forum
   - Host a two-day forum in Ottawa in the final month of the project, bringing together a broad representation of stakeholders, (e.g. employers, senior policy people, service providers) to review research findings and to solidify 'next steps'
2. Electronic Forum
   - Establish an e-forum via the CTHRC website to continually report on activities, and seek views and input from stakeholder groups

Proposed Start and Finish Dates

The project work would commence as soon as funds were made available.

The estimated period of time to conduct the listed activities is six to ten months depending upon the start-up date and seasonal factors which may affect the ability to convene or poll stakeholders. Summer months and the holiday period during December are examples of timeframes that will inhibit data collection.

Communications Plan

Communications will be conducted through various means, such as regular reporting to any constituency that was involved in the consultation/research process, as well as Board Members, and HRSDC. The proposal also suggests the establishment of an electronic (web-based) forum where project reports and information can be held and updated regularly. This same e-forum would also serve as one of the vehicles to seek input from the various stakeholders on the specific research subjects. The project results will be published and sent to members and stakeholders, and the highlights will be posted on the Council's website, and published in the Council's newsletters.