



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

**A FRAMEWORK FOR SUCCESS: PRACTICAL
RECOMMENDATIONS TO FURTHER SHORTEN
THE FOREIGN QUALIFICATION RECOGNITION
PROCESS**

**Report of the Standing Committee on
Human Resources, Skills and Social Development
and the Status of Persons with Disabilities**

**Ed Komarnicki, M.P.
Chair**

MARCH 2012

41st PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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**THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS
WITH DISABILITIES**

has the honour to present its

FOURTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the Committee has studied A Framework for Success: Practical Recommendations to Further Shorten the Foreign Qualification Recognition Process and has agreed to report the following:

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A FRAMEWORK FOR SUCCESS: PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO FURTHER SHORTEN THE FOREIGN QUALIFICATION RECOGNITION PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

On September 29, 2011, the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (hereafter, the Committee) adopted the following motion:

“That the Committee begin study of the foreign qualification recognition process in Canada to be titled, A Framework for Success: Practical Recommendations to Further Shorten the Foreign Qualification Recognition Process [...]”.

During the first session of the 41st Parliament, the Committee met eight times to consider the matter, hearing submissions from representatives of three federal departments that are directly affected by the issue, professional associations, professional regulatory authorities, organizations that help individuals have their foreign qualifications recognized, the business community, education, labour and the provincial governments.

The Committee would like to convey its gratitude to those who gave evidence during the meetings and the organizations that submitted briefs in connection with this study.

Internationally trained individuals (ITIs) include individuals born in Canada who studied abroad and are returning to Canada to work, as well as individuals born outside of Canada who did all or part of their studies in another country but are now living in Canada or interested in settling here.

Foreign qualification recognition (FQR) is defined as follows:¹

Foreign qualification recognition is the process of verifying that the knowledge, skills, work experience and education obtained in another country is [sic] comparable to the standards established for Canadian professionals and tradespersons.²

1 Some of the witnesses who appeared before the Committee used the term “foreign credential recognition” (FCR), which is also used by some federal programs. FCR is sometimes used to mean the recognition of certificates, diplomas and degrees only, and sometimes also includes the recognition of professional experience or other skills. To avoid confusion, FQR will be used throughout this report (except where witnesses are quoted or reference is made to the names of specific programs) and includes the recognition of foreign experience and other skills, such as proficiency in English or French.

2 Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Forum of Labour Market Ministers, [A Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications](#), p. 1, 2009.

Robert Walsh, Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel, believes that the only restriction on federal FQR initiatives is that they must not encroach on areas of provincial jurisdiction, such as education and labour. A representative of one federal department added that the federal government can act as a leader and facilitator, in cooperation with the provinces.

In 2006, roughly 15% of the Canadian labour force aged 25 to 54 (or 1.3 million Canadians) held a post-secondary diploma obtained abroad.³ Recent immigrants (landed in the last five years) are less successful in the labour market than immigrants who landed more than five years ago and individuals who were born in Canada. For example, in 2011, the unemployment rate for individuals who had landed in Canada in the preceding five years was 13.6%, compared with 7.4% for non-recent immigrants and 5.5% for individuals born in Canada.⁴ According to a report: “Difficulties in getting foreign credentials recognized, insufficient knowledge of official languages, and lack of Canadian work experience could explain some of the employment gap between recent immigrants and their Canadian-born counterparts”.⁵

FQR is crucial: a study carried out in 2001 (before some federal, provincial and territorial programs were implemented) found that the cost of non-recognition of qualifications acquired outside Canada was between \$4.1 billion and \$5.9 billion a year.⁶

Non-recognition of foreign qualifications is especially costly because there are labour shortages in some occupations, and the problem is expected to become worse because of the aging of the Canadian population, among other things.

CHAPTER I: FEDERAL PROGRAMS RELATED TO THE FOREIGN QUALIFICATIONS RECOGNITION PROCESS

1.1 The Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications

The development of a pan-Canadian framework for the assessment and recognition of foreign qualifications follows up on a commitment made by the Government of Canada in its 2008 Speech from the Throne indicating that the federal government would work with provinces and territories to make the recognition of foreign credentials a priority, to increase the uptake of settlement services for immigrants, as well as to encourage top international students to move to Canada.

3 Appendix A contains more statistics on fields and countries of studies and on foreign qualifications recognition.

4 Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, Cansim Table 282-0102.

5 The Canadian Chamber of Commerce, *Immigration: The Changing Face of Canada*, p. 7, February 2009.

6 Michael Bloom and Michael Grant, Brain Gain: The Economic Benefits of Recognizing Learning and Learning Credentials in Canada, Conference Board of Canada, September 2001.

Canada's Economic Action Plan (Budget 2009) included an investment of \$50 million over two years to make foreign qualifications recognition (FQR) processes more efficient. In January 2009, First Ministers agreed that accelerating FQR processes should be a priority. The federal government acted as a facilitator of the development of a pan-Canadian framework agreement that now defines the way forward with regard to FQR processes.

The Forum of Labour Market Ministers (FLMM), co-chaired by the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), was given the task to develop this framework agreement. On November 30, 2009, the new Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications⁷ (hereafter the Pan-Canadian Framework) was launched to facilitate the recognition of qualifications of internationally trained individuals (ITIs). All parties agreed that the Pan-Canadian Framework should rest on the principles of fairness, consistency, transparency and timeliness.

The recognition of qualifications for regulated professions is primarily a provincial/territorial responsibility delegated in legislation to regulatory authorities. These regulatory authorities set specific occupational standards to protect the public, consumers and the environment.

In addition to these regulatory bodies, other agencies are involved in FQR. They include government departments, post-secondary and vocational institutions, and immigrant settlement agencies, among others. The coordination of the activities of all these organizations is a difficult task. Some of the objectives of the Pan-Canadian Framework are to facilitate the coordination of these activities, avoid duplication, and support the establishment of coherent and effective FQR processes across Canada.

HRSDC is the lead federal department working collaboratively with provincial/territorial governments and other stakeholders to implement the standards established in the Pan-Canadian Framework. At the federal level, a Foreign Qualifications Recognition Working Group has been established to guide and support the implementation of the Pan-Canadian Framework. The Working Group is co-chaired by HRSDC and involves representatives from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and Health Canada.

The FLMM decided to give priority to certain specific regulated occupations for implementation of the Pan-Canadian Framework in the first three years. The FLMM chose an initial set of regulated occupations to target for timely assessment. ITIs who submit an application to be licensed or registered to work in one of the targeted occupations have to be advised within one year as to whether their qualifications will be recognized, whether further training or education will be needed or whether their skills and experience would be better suited to a different occupation. The one-year standard is an important step forward

⁷ Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Forum of Labour Market Ministers, A Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications, 2009.

as research shows that ITIs have a better chance of integrating the labour market in their own field of studies if the FQR process is completed earlier in the settlement process.

According to the Pan-Canadian Framework, the standard of timely assessment had to be implemented in the following eight occupations by December 31, 2010: architects; engineers; financial auditors and accountants; medical laboratory technologists; occupational therapists; pharmacists; physiotherapists and registered nurses. An official from HRSDC told the Committee that, "regulatory authorities for the first set of eight target occupations are currently meeting the pan-Canadian commitment to timely service."⁸

The second implementation phase of the Pan-Canadian Framework provided for the application of the timely assessment standard to the following six occupations by the end of December 2012: dentists; engineering technicians; licensed practical nurses; medical radiation technologists; physicians and teachers (from kindergarden to grade 12).

Employers are responsible for assessing and recognizing the qualifications of ITIs in non-regulated occupations. Those occupations are not the focus of the 2009 Pan-Canadian Framework. Nonetheless, there are FQR issues within this area. Those issues will be discussed briefly in the next chapter of this report.

1.2 Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

a) Foreign Credential Recognition Program

The Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) Program⁹ is a contribution program delivered by HRSDC. The program was launched in 2003 and began its operations in 2004-2005. The two objectives of the FCR Program are to develop and strengthen Canada's FCR capacity, and to improve labour market integration outcomes for ITIs. Today, one of the key priorities of the FCR Program is to implement the Pan-Canadian Framework that targets specific occupations and sectors.

Through contribution agreements with many different provincial/territorial regulatory bodies and stakeholders, the FCR Program provides funding to projects that aim to reduce barriers to the full labour market integration of ITIs. The Committee was told that since its beginning, the FCR Program has provided funding to 160 projects at a cost of more than \$90 million. The maximum amount payable through these contribution agreements is \$2 million for any fiscal year. Agreements cannot last more than five years but they may be renewed based on performance and results achieved.

8 Committee, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, Meeting No. 4, October 6, 2011, 1530 (Jean-François LaRue, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada).

9 The FCR Program (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Foreign Credential Recognition) is not to be confused with the Temporary Foreign Workers Program (TFWP) that "enables Canadian employers to hire foreign workers on a temporary basis to fill immediate skills and labour shortages when Canadians and permanent residents are not available." For more information on the TFWP, please visit HRSDC's website at http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/foreign_workers/pamphlet/ecr_pamphlet.shtml.

b) Other Programs

Mutual recognition agreements (MRA) are agreements under which Canadian and foreign professional regulatory authorities recognize certain qualifications obtained in each other's country as being equivalent. HRSDC supports the development of MRAs by providing funding to the Canadian Foundation of Economic Education to hold a workshop that will bring together Canadian regulators and professional associations to discuss the development and management of MRAs with other countries and identify best practices. Such workshop can persuade regulators of other occupations to pursue the development of MRAs and significantly shorten the FQR process for ITIs in these occupations. Some professional associations have already successfully negotiated MRAs with other countries.

HRSDC also manages the *Working in Canada* website that "provides comprehensive and detailed information on occupations, employment prospects, wages, lists of potential employers, training, economic outlooks, industries and communities."¹⁰ The website also supports the Pan-Canadian Framework by providing specialized information related to licensing and certification; tools available overseas to ITIs to get the FQR process started before they come to Canada; fees that they may have to pay; as well as to the timelines they may be facing if they choose to move to Canada to practice their profession.

1.3 Citizenship and Immigration Canada

a) Foreign Credentials Referral Office

In 2007, the Government of Canada established the Foreign Credentials Referral Office (FCRO) within Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). The FCRO provides ITIs with information, path-finding and referral services so that their credentials and skills be recognized as fast as possible, to be able to work in Canada in their occupation.¹¹

Like the FCR Program, the FCRO had been supporting the implementation of the Pan-Canadian Framework since 2009. It works with HRSDC and Health Canada, and plays a coordinating role for the provinces and territories, regulatory bodies, skills assessment organizations, industrial associations and employers in order to provide the best possible services both in Canada and abroad.

Mobile outreach sites, some of them established by Service Canada, are another source of information on the FQR process. The FCRO also works to improve dialogue and the sharing of best practices among its partners involved in FQR through the new web page called *International Qualifications Network*.¹²

10 Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Building Canada's Prosperity, Government of Canada Progress Report 2010 Foreign Credential Recognition, Foreign Credentials Recognition Office, 2011, p. 22.

11 Government of Canada, Foreign Credentials Referral Office.

12 Foreign Credentials Referral Office, International Qualifications Network.

The FCRO, in cooperation with other governments and key partners, has also provided funding in the form of contributions to several stakeholders. For example, the Canadian Nurses Association and the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers signed contribution agreements that enabled them to develop tools, services and strategies abroad, mentoring initiatives and promotional measures to help employers recruit ITIs.

The FCRO has provided funding for the Canadian Immigration Integration Project (CIIP),¹³ a free information program managed by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) and available to ITIs outside of Canada. The program includes a two-day orientation session designed to help ITIs understand what they need to work in Canada even before they immigrate. The orientation session is offered to federal skilled workers, provincial nominees, their spouses and dependents of working age. It includes personalized consultations and the development of action plans for settling in Canada. The CIIP has offices in Manila, Philippines; Guangzhou, China; New Delhi, India; and London, United Kingdom. Satellite services are available in Southeast Asia, northern Europe and the Persian Gulf. Between 2010 and 2013, the ACCC will receive an additional \$15 million from the FCRO to continue developing its services.

In partnership with HRSDC, the FCRO introduced the federal internship program for newcomers, which provides opportunities to gain Canadian work experience in the public service. In order to qualify, however, newcomers must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident and must win a competition. Approximately 11 federal departments are taking part in the program, and 20 departments, agencies and Crown corporations expressed interest in participating to the recruitment process of candidates for this program.

b) Other Program

CIC also teamed up with three immigrant assistance organizations in Ottawa, Toronto and Calgary to create a pilot mentoring program in the public service. Implemented in the fall of 2011, the program twins newcomers with government employees in the same occupation or trade. The advantage of the program is that it enables newcomers to expand their professional network, gain greater insight into the culture of the Canadian workplace, clarify their career goals, and improve job search strategies.

1.4 Health Canada

a) Internationally Educated Health Professionals Initiative

Health Canada's main program related to FQR is the Internationally Educated Health Professionals Initiative (IEHPI). Launched in 2005 with a budget of \$75 million over five years, the initiative was renewed in 2010 and now has permanent annual funding of \$18 million.

13 The CIIP is managed by the FCRO since October 2010. It was previously administered by HRSDC.

The IEHPI “is creating innovative programs and building on the progress that governments and stakeholders have already made to develop programs and supports, and is promoting a consistent approach to integrating internationally educated health professionals (IEHPs) into the Canadian health care workforce.”¹⁴

b) Other Programs

Health Canada assisted in developing the Pan-Canadian Framework, more specifically, in establishing the list of priority occupations: five of the eight occupations on the first list and four of the six on the second list are in the field of health (including physicians). Health Canada co-chairs the working group on physicians with Alberta.

The department co-chairs with HRSDC the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Advisory Committee on Health Delivery and Human Resources. The committee works to identify more clearly the impact of the Pan-Canadian Framework on provincial and territorial health departments and come up with solutions to common policy problems.

CHAPTER II: BEST PRACTICES, PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

2.1 Best Practices

Some programs, such as the FCR Program, have been in place since 2003. Some of the projects they have funded have produced results that we can look upon as best practices.

a) Bridging Programs

Skills upgrading programs (or bridging programs) are one of the measures funded by the FCR program to accelerate the FQR process. Bridging programs can also receive funding from provincial governments:

The internationally educated engineers qualification program at the University of Manitoba is designed to address these challenges. The objective is to provide an alternative process of equal validity and rigour to the confirmatory exams, but with a higher completion rate in a one- to two-year timeframe. In addition to confirming academic qualifications, additional objectives are to incorporate a labour market component that provides critical assistance in finding that first engineering job, and provide language development and cultural orientation for participants [...]

About 90% of the graduates have developed engineering careers, most often facilitated by the co-op work experience component of the program. Through a one- to two-year investment in the program, graduates move from low-paying jobs to engineering positions, resulting in a huge impact on the well-being of the participant and their family. Furthermore, the tax advantage to Manitoba and Canada is significant, with the

14 Health Canada, Internationally Educated Health Professionals Initiative.

government investment in funding the program paid back by participants in three or four years as they move from a low to a higher level of income and taxation.¹⁵

Jonathan Beddoes,
Faculty of Engineering, University of Manitoba

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the federal government continue to support bridging programs that put a particular emphasis on profession-specific language training, work experience, identification of skill gaps, and supports to fill those gaps. The Committee further recommends that bridging programs and program stakeholders engage in practices that use data sharing to improve the understanding of recruitment and retention patterns and workforce outcomes.

b) Pre-arrival Information and Professional Recognition

Several witnesses stated that measures should be taken to provide ITIs with better information before they land in Canada. The CIC representative described the results of the Canadian Immigrant Integration Program in the following terms:

[T]he Canadian Immigration Integration Project (CIIP) has now been launched in four countries. It actually also covers 25 other countries through satellite and itinerant services, so that's quite a bit. Through that it covers about 75% of the federal skilled worker program and about 44% of provincial nominees. So that's quite a chunk of skilled immigrants and their families who are getting this information. [...]

As of June 2011, nearly 19,000 internationally trained individuals had registered for CIIP services, and over 13,000 had completed the two-day information session. Preliminary results indicate a marked improvement in labour market outcomes of those who participated in the CIIP sessions overseas.¹⁶

Natasha Pateman,
Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that Citizenship and Immigration Canada expand the scope of the Canadian Immigrant Integration Project, in countries where it is currently offered, and consider offering it in other countries, if required.

15 Committee, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, Meeting No. 7, October 25, 2011, 1530.

16 Committee, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, Meeting No. 4, October 6, 2011, 1545.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the federal government continue to improve its Working in Canada website so as to ensure that internationally trained individuals have access to user-friendly quality information about foreign qualifications recognition before they make the decision to move to Canada.

A number of witnesses underscored the importance of starting the FQR process in the country of origin by issuing more certificates and licences to ITIs before they come to Canada so that they are a step ahead of the game when they land. Others stated that for some occupations, such as pharmacy, there are online self-assessment tools that enable individuals to take examinations outside of Canada and obtain immediate feedback. Still others suggested Canada should go farther and allow regulatory authorities to narrow the selection before ITIs land. Another suggestion was to incorporate a prequalification system into the immigration process.

Further, the CSMLS encourages the Government of Canada to consider credential evaluation or PLA as part of the immigration process, not something an immigrant tries to navigate once they arrive.¹⁷

Christine Nielsen,
Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science

In that regard, a number of witnesses cited Australia as an example because of its interesting pre-arrival FQR practices. For the most part, Australia approaches FQR the same way as Canada. Employers, regulatory bodies and institutions are the entities that recognize the qualifications of ITIs. What is particularly different, however, is that Australia carries out the FQR process before the worker arrives. FQR is closely linked to the immigration process. In short, ITIs who wish to work in Australia must have their foreign qualifications recognized by the appropriate regulatory body or authority before they enter the country so that they can show that their chances of integrating into the Australian labour market are good.

Obviously their immigration policies are a little different from Canada's, so we'll have to acknowledge that, but one of the interesting things they do is pre-assessments before someone is approved for immigration, which possibly helps them select people who have the best chance of being integrated quicker.

They also have had standing bridging programs, I believe since the 1960s, and they are in the federal model. [...]

So they do a little more selection pre-immigration. They don't really allow a person to self-declare their occupational code; they verify. They even do offshore competency assessments whereby somebody might do a clinical assessment offshore. They have authorized people in those jurisdictions to do these.

17 Committee, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, Meeting No. 5, October 18, 2011, 1635.

Now, this is from a handful of countries, not from all nations. But they know, just like Canada, what their source countries are, so they've been able to work towards this, and it seems to work for them in the health professions.¹⁸

Christine Nielsen,
Health Action Lobby

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that Citizenship and Immigration Canada consider approaching provincial and territorial regulatory authorities to discuss the possibility of prequalifying internationally trained individuals for certain occupations as part of the immigration process.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the federal government study the foreign qualifications recognition model used in Australia and advise Citizenship and Immigration Canada on any positive elements that could be applied to the Canadian system.

Several witnesses also described mutual recognition agreements as a best practice which ensures that ITIs are accredited quickly even before they land in Canada. Examples include the Washington Accord for engineers and the agreements with the Canadian Dental Association and the Certified General Accountants Association of Canada. This is a very promising area that HRSDC should continue supporting.

To facilitate licensure of dentistry outside of Canada, the Commission on Dental Accreditation has been asked to establish mutual recognition agreements with countries that have accreditation systems that can be compared to ours. Graduates of dental programs in countries where MOUs [memorandums of understanding] exist are eligible to sit the same certification examination as graduates from accredited programs in Canada. Currently, MOUs have been signed with the United States and Australia, and agreements are being negotiated with New Zealand and Ireland.

While MOUs work well, the number of countries with whom they can be signed is relatively small, and alternative approaches are required to assess the competency of the majority of international applicants....¹⁹

Benoit Soucy,
Canadian Dental Association

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that Human Resources and Skills Development Canada increase its efforts in support of the development of mutual recognition agreements.

18 Committee, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, Meeting No. 9, November 1, 2011, 1610.

19 Committee, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, Meeting No. 9, November 1, 2011, 1640.

c) Acquisition of Employment Experience in Canada

Many witnesses cited internship and mentoring programs as a best practice that provides work experience in Canada and is the first step in the integration of ITIs into the Canadian labour market.

Mentoring and placement opportunities are very important. In B.C. we've been working closely with both the local organizations as well as some sector councils. We work with ICTC, the Information Communication and Technology Council, to run some pilot projects in Vancouver to help to recruit foreign-trained professionals to get into some placement and mentoring services.²⁰

Thomas Tam,
S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the federal government act as a model employer with regard to internship opportunities for internationally trained individuals by maintaining such initiatives as Citizenship and Immigration Canada's Federal Internship for Newcomers Program and consider increasing the number of interns accepted into the program, if resources allow.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that Citizenship and Immigration Canada extend the public service mentoring pilot project beyond 2012 and report on the results.

2.2 Problems Raised and Proposed Solutions

a) Inclusion of New Occupations and Skilled Trades

The Pan-Canadian Framework is set to expire in 2012. Some witnesses strongly advocated for the extension of this very successful framework and for the inclusion of new occupations, including skilled trades.

[W]e must expand the work of the pan-Canadian framework to cover skills that are in demand by industry across Canada. The occupations that are covered today and that will be covered in the coming years are an excellent start. However, most of the professions covered today do not cover the skill sets required by industry [...].²¹

Mathew Wilson,
Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters

20 Committee, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, Meeting No. 7, October 25, 2011, 1650.

21 Committee, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, Meeting No. 6, October 20, 2011, 1545.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications be extended beyond 31 December 2012, to include more occupations, for example skilled trades.

A summative evaluation of the FCR Program was conducted in 2008.²² It found that the program was relevant and cost-effective. It also showed that the program was able to meet the outcomes set for the short term and that it was moving toward successfully implementing longer-term outcomes. Based on those findings, the Committee believes that the program should be continued.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that Human Resources and Skills Development Canada explore the possibility of extending the reach of this program to target more occupations facing current labour shortages or expected to face such shortages in the near future, including for example skilled trades.

The Committee is of the opinion that the Framework and FQR-related programs must be evaluated regularly. In view of the serious labour shortages that lie ahead, labour market information must be as accurate as possible so that the occupations and trades most in demand are targeted.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the authorities responsible for the Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications ensure that they have all the information needed to target occupations in which there will be a labour shortage and to evaluate foreign qualification recognition programs, and that they release that information to the public, for example in an annual report.

b) Organization of the Various Federal Programs

Some federal programs are aimed at regulatory authorities, while others target ITIs more directly. A number of witnesses stated that they would like the FQR process to be simplified so that all services can be made available in a single location.

22 Human Resources and Skills Development, Summative Evaluation of the Foreign Credential Recognition Program, Final Report, Strategic Policy and Research Branch, April 2010.

One witness suggested that “programming and policy development and coordination would benefit from assigning accountability and funds for foreign credential recognition to one lead department, agency or entity.”²³ Another witness also mentioned that although their association had not encountered any issues in dealing with two departments, one-stop shopping could definitely be a benefit to their activities.²⁴ Officials from the three main departments that appeared before the Committee indicated that each department has a very specific function to play that complements the role played by other departments. However, the Committee believes that ITIs who wish to settle in Canada need to be well informed and that a unique source on FQR process would improve its efficiency.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the federal government explore ways of streamlining and simplifying the administrative process used to recognize foreign qualifications. A single point of contact at the federal level could provide all the necessary information currently given by the Foreign Credentials Referral Office of Citizenship and Immigration Canada and by the Foreign Credential Recognition Program of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

c) Foreign Qualifications Recognition Programs Financing

Several witnesses spoke about the lack of funding for accreditation bodies that facilitate the FQR process.

The frustration today is that because we have these mechanisms in place, we are more acutely aware than ever of just how much extra work is needed. We have capacity that may improve the problem by 10%, but for every person who gets into a bridging program, six don't. For every person who gets a placement opportunity, 12 don't. So now it's a question of volume. It's been a success for us in the sense that the collaboration is there, but we're more acutely aware than ever of just how big a hill we're trying to climb.²⁵

Michael Brennan,
Canadian Physiotherapy Association

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- 23 College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta, *A Framework for Success: Practical Recommendations to Further Shorten the Foreign Qualification Recognition Process: Assessment and Recognition of Internationally Educated Nurses in Alberta*, Briefing Note Submitted to The Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA), November 2011, p. 6.
- 24 Committee, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, Meeting No. 6, October 20, 2011, 1715 (Carole Bouchard, National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities).
- 25 Committee, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, Meeting No. 9, November 1, 2011, 1555.

We have some very good programs in Manitoba. Everything is pilot. There's no money. They're not sustainable. There's no money for ongoing programming.²⁶

Ximena Munoz,
Office of the Manitoba Fairness Commissioner, Government of Manitoba

The Committee is of the opinion that the lack of FQR is a costly problem for the Canadian economy and that the amounts spent on the various FQR programs should not decrease in the years ahead, particularly if the programs are evaluated regularly and receive positive ratings.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that funding for the Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications and its related programs be maintained at least at the 2011–2012 level.

d) Financing of Studies of Internationally Trained Individuals

The Committee was told about the difficulty encountered by many ITIs who do not have the money or the credit to obtain student loans to pay for their tuition and other training costs associated with getting their foreign qualifications recognized in Canada.

Some witnesses also suggested that the federal government should look at providing financial assistance through the Canada Student Loans Program to students enrolled in programs that last less than 60 weeks, as is the case for many bridging programs offered at colleges and other post-secondary institutions across Canada.

The Canadian government does not provide Canadian students with grants to programs that are less than 60 weeks. A decision to change this could go a long way to help newcomers upgrade their skills and get their foreign credentials recognized by bridging the gap.²⁷

Serge Buy,
National Association of Career Colleges

The Committee was also told that it would be important that funding be made available not only for tuition fees for specific courses given at post-secondary institutions, but also for bridging programs that accelerate the FQR process and get ITIs integrated into the workforce much faster.

Budget 2011 announced that the government would develop a pilot project to offer financial assistance to ITIs who do not have the resources needed to get their foreign qualifications recognized: "The Foreign Credential Recognition Loans Pilot will develop

26 Committee, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, Meeting No. 10, November 3, 2011, 1700.

27 Committee, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, Meeting No. 8, October 27, 2011, 1545.

and test innovative projects that provide financial assistance to internationally trained professionals to lessen some of these financial burdens.”²⁸ This three-year project worth \$18 million overall was launched in February 2012.

Recommendation 14

Since many internationally trained individuals cannot obtain financial assistance to complete skills upgrading, bridging programs, or educational and professional certification examinations, the committee recommends that the federal government make permanent and expand the Foreign Credential Recognition Loans Pilot Program if results of this pilot are proven effective.

e) Interprovincial Labour Mobility and between Canada and the United States

The Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT) came into force in 1995 and aims to foster the free movement of goods, services, investment and workers within Canada. In January 2009, changes to chapter 7 of the AIT were made in order to reduce the obstacles faced by some workers in regulated occupations

The provinces can make exceptions to this general rule of mutual recognition among the provinces. The onus is on them to show that there are fundamental differences from province to province in the way an occupation works. In January 2012, there were 44 exceptions, an average of about four per province or territory.²⁹

Generally, ITIs and other Canadians can, with some exceptions, be accredited in all provinces as soon as they are accredited in one. For example, social workers who have a licence to practice in one province or territory can practice anywhere in Canada.³⁰ The AIT encourages professional accreditation bodies to adopt common standards for FQR so that workers can relocate quickly without having to take more exams in order to have their skills recognized. However, this process is not yet complete in all regulated occupations.

That is why we feel it is absolutely critical to develop a pan-Canadian competency framework, followed by standards, so that applications from foreigners with a social work degree will be assessed in the same fashion all across Canada. That will ensure, given the need for public protection, that whatever an immigrant's point of entry into the social work profession, he or she will possess the minimum professional skills corresponding to the requirements in place across the provinces.³¹

28 Canada News Centre, Government of Canada Taking Action to Support Newcomers, February 22, 2012.

29 A complete list of exceptions is available from the Internal Trade Secretariat, Labour Mobility Coordinating Group, Exceptions to Labour Mobility.

30 Committee, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, Meeting No. 8, October 27, 2011, 1530 (Claude Leblond, Canadian Council of Social Work Regulators).

31 *Ibid.*, 1550.

Claude Leblond,
Canadian Council of Social Work Regulators

Some witnesses stated that they would like worker mobility between Canada and the United States to be made easier, specifically through the Interprovincial Standards Red Seal Program, which is administered by the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship, an organization comprising directors of apprenticeship from each province and territory and two representatives of HRSDC.³² The program sets exams in 52 specialized trades. Individuals who pass the exam in their field have access to jobs in other provinces.

What we need in construction in FCR is the red seal exam to be administered overseas on an ongoing basis, including every other week in the United States.³³

Christopher Smilie,
Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO, Canadian Office

Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that the federal government's representatives on the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship encourage the provincial representatives to explore the possibility of holding some of the exams set under the Interprovincial Red Seal Standards Program in countries where that is possible, the United States in particular.

f) Problems Specific to Regulated Occupations from the Health Sector

Several witnesses told the Committee that there is a labour shortage in the field of health. ITIs are therefore a key source in meeting the demand for workers. Some regulatory bodies and professional orders have taken the initiative of implementing measures to improve FQR by developing evaluation tools that are accessible abroad, preparation guides, exams and online development courses that provide immediate feedback on skill level and recommended training. However, there is a great deal of work to be done to make FQR more effective.

Obtaining the recognition ITIs need to practice in Canada is a tedious process because the requirements of FQR in medical occupations are very stringent, due to the need to preserve the confidence of Canadians in the health care system. ITIs in the field of health encounter specific problems, such as workplace integration, the long process of obtaining a licence to practice, language proficiency, unfamiliarity with the Canadian health care system and lack of work experience.

Last July, HEAL [Health Action Lobby] met with officials at HRSDC to review issues, challenges, and solutions regarding internationally educated health professionals or

32 Interprovincial Standards Red Seal Program, Provincial and Territorial Contacts.

33 Committee, Evidence, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, Meeting No. 8, October 27, 2011, 1635.

IEHPs. The concerns that were addressed then continue to be concerns for IEHPs. These include upgrading in techniques and knowledge to meet Canadian practice requirements; preparing to pass licensure exams; obtaining relevant work experience; developing professional contacts or networks; becoming socialized into the Canadian workplace, culture, and context, which requires business information, collegial support, and the soft skills necessary to obtain and manage successful employment; developing or improving communication and language skills; and developing, managing, and meeting career goals.³⁴

Charles Shields,
Health Action Lobby

The Committee was told that for some medical occupations, it is especially hard to pass national exams. The time and availability needed to complete bridging programs, the cost and the commitment to the program are factors that have a bearing on an ITI's success.

Each year, approximately 1,000 physiotherapy candidates challenge the exam. Of those taking the exam, 60% are Canadian educated and 40% are educated internationally. Overall, 85% of the candidates pass. However, the pass rates vary significantly between Canadian and internationally educated candidates. In recent years Canadian-educated candidates have passed the clinical component of the exam, on average, 96% of the time — so almost all of them — compared to only two-thirds, 68% of the internationally educated candidates. The disparity is even greater for the written component of the exam, where on average 94% of Canadian-educated candidates passed compared to only 53% of the internationally educated. There is quite a big difference.³⁵

Katya Masnyk Duvalko,
Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators

The Committee was told that ITIs still have trouble getting information about FQR. Information about the process and the exams that have to be taken in order to obtain a licence to practise a medical occupation should be more comprehensive and easier to access. There is still excessive duplication.

Another thing I have found is that there needs to be accurate information regarding professional registration and integration into the Canadian workforce. They are very surprised that we have prerequisites to employment in their professions, and they find this added information very discouraging. They also find that the information is available in a very scattered number of resources and sources, through colleges, regulatory bodies, immigration officials, etc. That information really does need to be consolidated. The lack of a centralized national online information portal that helps these individuals access abroad really does create a significant informational barrier. They need to have this information so that they are able to expedite the licensure process.³⁶

Sandra Murphy,
School of Community and Health Studies, Centennial College

34 Committee, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, Meeting No. 9, November 1, 2011, 1540.

35 Committee, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, Meeting No. 6, October 20, 2011, 1650.

36 Committee, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, Meeting No. 9, November 1, 2011, 1545.

The Committee was also told that transition programs are very important because they enable ITIs to retrain and obtain practical experience in their occupation. However, space is limited; there is not enough to meet the demand.

We know from the research we have conducted that bridging programs are a great solution for the internationally educated. [...] We know that the most cost-effective process is to add bridging programs to already existing education programs rather than to create stand-alone programs, because they already have the faculty, curriculum, and equipment.³⁷

Christine Nielsen,
Health Action Lobby

While some forms of auto-evaluation can be offered abroad, the fact remains that some evaluations and even some courses have to be delivered post-arrival in Canada. Some countries lack the technology needed to take part in these programs offered abroad. In other cases, the assessment absolutely must be done in a Canadian context based on Canadian standards.

Again, for the physicians, the Medical Council of Canada's evaluating examination is available online at several hundred sites around the country. I believe the language proficiency testing is also available. The Physician Credentials Registry of Canada could be accessed from outside the country. All of those stipulations could be met. [...]

That would be extraordinarily difficult, because we're requiring the evaluation, experience, and acumen of Canadian-trained or Canadian-placed individuals. Some might want to be exported to those faraway sites like Australia or New Zealand to conduct such work, but it would be out of context and probably inadmissible.³⁸

Andrew Padmos,
Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada

The Committee heard that financial aid is a significant problem for ITIs in medical occupations. Particularly when they have to take courses through a bridging program that does not lead to a diploma, ITIs do not qualify for student aid. This is a major problem considering that many ITIs have family obligations: 80% of internationally trained professionals are married and 62% have children.³⁹

In a study undertaken for five health professions, including occupational therapy, it was found that the average internationally educated health professional requires three to five years to become certified and employed in their profession in Canada. During that time, they frequently work in survival jobs. A properly financed bridging program would cut this period down and would benefit a quicker integration of these valuable resources.⁴⁰

37 Ibid., 1540.

38 Ibid., 1700.

39 Ibid., 1545 (Sandra Murphy, School of Community and Health Studies, Centennial College).

40 Committee, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, Meeting No. 6, October 20, 2011, 1640.

Claudia von Zweck,
Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists

The Committee also heard that it would be beneficial to create a data sharing system that would provide a better understanding of recruitment methods and to pool data from recruiters, regulatory bodies, professional associations and employers in order to determine the education of candidates who pass the exams, which upgrading programs work and what barriers ITIs face.

The challenge right now is that we don't have a unique identifier to know if you've been recruited by an employer and if you've contacted the regulator. Those pieces of information aren't necessarily shared. The regulator would send them to us, but that piece isn't shared. We know who comes to see us, but we don't know how many don't come to see us. We have a hunch from the regulator. They're keeping some track.⁴¹

Pam Nordstrom,
School of Nursing, Mount Royal University

The Committee also heard that it is important to improve the exchange of information among occupations so that everyone is aware of the best practices of certain organizations and how those organizations managed to solve certification problems. HRSDC could facilitate this type of data exchange among occupations by contributing financially to more frequent meetings among these groups. The meetings could even be virtual and use existing technology to ensure more a continuous exchange of information at a lower cost.

Looking to the future, we would like to see increased coordination of projects across the country and increased information-sharing across professions. Much duplication still exists. The alliance staff and board feel that we're missing important opportunities to learn from others who have successfully addressed credentialing challenges in different ways than we have. Additional workshops, discussion fora, electronic information exchanges, and the like would help address remaining barriers.⁴²

Katya Masnyk Duvalko,
Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators

The Committee also heard that language skills are a major problem for ITIs. Some witnesses stated that language should be assessed before the worker comes to Canada and that retraining should be provided when the worker arrives.

There really does need to be pre-arrival language training that should be encouraged and perhaps required. In some professions, like nursing, as an example, internationally educated nurses must demonstrate specific levels in English fluency that relate specifically to meet the needs of the occupation in which they will be practising. Those requirements are very high.⁴³

41 Committee, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, Meeting No. 7, October 25, 2011, 1620.

42 Committee, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, Meeting No. 6, October 20, 2011, 1700.

43 Committee, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, Meeting No. 9, November 1, 2011, 1545.

The Committee also heard that it would be interesting to re-evaluate the medical tasks performed by health professionals in order to make maximum use of human resources in that field. Organizations have been created in three countries to conduct such evaluations: Health Workforce Australia, Health Workforce New Zealand and Centre for Workforce in England.⁴⁴

Recommendation 16

The Government of Canada acknowledges that human resources planning in health care is an area of provincial and territorial jurisdiction. The Committee recommends that Health Canada, with the approval and collaboration of the provincial and territorial governments, continue to support the database that tracks international medical graduates, with the aim of identifying and filling gaps in doctor availability across Canada.

Recommendation 17

The Committee supports the continued collection of data by the Canadian Institute for Health Information for health human resources management and recommends that Health Canada explore the possibility of helping create a national centre for the collection and analysis of data on human resources in the health sector should such an option prove to be fiscally prudent given the current period of fiscal restraint.

The Committee also heard that there is a need to simplify the FQR process and to have a clearer pathway to have credentials recognized.

My first recommendation is to have a simplified system of assessment. It should be realized that cases involving well-known qualifications should be treated in a simpler way. [...] Recognition bodies should take an active role in specifying the steps needed to be taken by IMGs through clear, coherent, objective, and unambiguous pathways, to enable them to get their qualifications recognized.

The current limited opportunities for foreign-trained doctors to obtain clinical experience through recognized externship, hands-on hospital experience, and continuing medical education programs for IMGs to complete any theoretical or clinical skills deficits have to be addressed. [...]

44 Ibid., 1715 (Ivy Lynn Bourgeault, Canadian Institutes of Health Research).

Increasing the residency training positions, or having well-defined practice assessment programs to avoid backlog, with the aid of clarity of direction from this one-stop centre would be most helpful⁴⁵.

Peter Idahosa,
Alberta International Medical Graduates Association

Recommendation 18

The Government of Canada acknowledges that the certification of international medical graduates (IMGs) is an area of provincial and territorial jurisdiction. The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada, with the approval and collaboration of the provinces and territories, endorse the standardization of the assessment and qualification process in place in provincial and territorial licensing colleges for IMGs across Canada.

Recommendation 19

The Government of Canada acknowledges that the certification of international medical graduates (IMGs) is an area of provincial and territorial jurisdiction. The Committee recommends that collaboration be pursued to set a clear pathway and to increase opportunities for IMGs to obtain residency training positions and have access to transition programs in an effort to successfully certify and integrate medical professionals into practice in Canada, without compromising access to training for Canadian-trained medical students.

g) Problems Specific to Other Regulated Occupations

The Committee heard from associations in sectors outside the health sector. Overall, the Committee heard about the challenges and successes encountered by these professional associations in their work to provide a pathway for ITIs to more easily and efficiently go through the FQR process. The objective is for these professionals to have their foreign qualifications fully recognized in a timely manner without in any way lowering Canadian standards of admission to their specific professions. ITIs in non-medical professions face many similar challenges to those in medical professions.

45 Committee, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, Meeting No. 7, October 25, 2011, 1535.

h) Problems Specific to Non-Regulated Occupations

According to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, non-regulated occupations account for roughly 85% of the total number of jobs in Canada.⁴⁶ Non-regulated occupations do not require a licence to practise from an accreditation body, which can simplify the process. However, employers do not get assurance from an accreditation body that skills acquired abroad are equivalent to skills acquired in Canadian educational institutions. For that reason, employers sometimes prefer applicants who were trained in Canada.

There are a number of programs and organizations that can help employers with this task. Some of the programs mentioned earlier in this report devote a portion of their operations raising awareness among employers or helping ITIs understand the Canadian labour market for both regulated and non-regulated occupations. HRSDC's FCR Program has provided support to sectoral councils made up of employers, unions and educational institutions that deal with human resources issues in specific sectors.

There are five qualifications assessment authorities mandated or recognized by the provinces or territories: International Credential Evaluation Service (British Columbia); International Qualifications Assessment Service (Alberta, Saskatchewan and the territories); Academic Credentials Assessment Service (Manitoba); World Education Services (Ontario); and Centre d'expertise sur les formations acquises hors du Québec.

These authorities assess foreign qualifications but do not grant credentials nor do they guarantee entry into an occupation. Generally, it is candidates who use the services of these authorities to establish a comparison between Canada's and another country's education systems. For example, the comparative assessment of studies completed outside of Quebec carried out by the Centre d'expertise sur les formations acquises hors du Québec indicates the equivalency, in the Quebec education system, of foreign studies, and provides a description of diplomas and transcripts. This assessment can be requested by an ITI who wishes to apply to for a job as a municipal, provincial or federal employee and can also be useful for jobs with other employers.⁴⁷

There are also many organizations dedicated to helping immigrants integrate, and representatives of some of those organizations appeared before the Committee to talk about the services they provide. The witnesses spoke of the importance of making employers aware of FQR.

Ultimately, it's employers who either recognize or reject the credentials of skilled immigrants. We and our immigrant employment council partners across the country have seen a strong and growing demand from employers for support in recruiting, assessing,

46 Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Submission by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities on the Foreign Qualification Recognition Process, November 15, 2011.

47 Québec, Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles, Obtaining an "Évaluation comparative des études effectuées hors Québec".

integrating, and promoting skilled immigrants, and we need a national strategy to respond to this demand. [...]

There is still a need to increase employer awareness of the value of immigrant skills, and of how including this talent pool can make Canada more productive and competitive in the global marketplace.⁴⁸

Joan Atlin,
Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council

Recommendation 20

The Committee recommends that the federal government conduct an awareness raising campaign targeted at employers, who are primarily responsible for the recognition of foreign qualifications in unregulated occupations. The campaign should focus on recognition of foreign qualifications and the advantages of hiring internationally trained individuals.

Finally, some witnesses spoke about the importance of better informing immigrants of employment opportunities outside urban centres, where many employers would be willing to recognize their skills.

What I mean here is to connect the immigrants to areas of more opportunities, especially in some smaller communities that are industry-based, like our project now at Fort St. John, which is the oil- and gas-based small town in northern B.C. We need more resources and support to encourage internationally trained professionals to go there and to help resolve the skill and labour shortage over there.⁴⁹

Thomas Tam,
S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

Recommendation 21

The Committee recommends that the federal government provide newcomers with more information on settling outside major urban centres to take advantage of employment opportunities, for example those in unregulated occupations.

CONCLUSION

Immigration has always played an important role in the development of Canadian society. That role is going to expand in the coming decades because of demographic factors. To ensure the sustainability of economic growth and fiscal soundness and to reduce labour shortages, it is essential that the qualifications of internationally trained individuals be recognized for their true worth.

48 Committee, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, Meeting No. 7, October 25, 2011, 1640.

49 *Ibid.*, 1650.

In the course of this study, many witnesses drew attention to the efficiency of the Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications and the quality of the programs currently in place, and recommended that those programs be preserved. They also talked about best practices concerning foreign qualifications recognition.

This is why the Committee recommends taking as a model practices that have already produced positive results: bridging programs, better information on the foreign qualification recognition process, increased recognition of professional qualifications prior to departure for Canada, and the acquisition of work experience in Canada through internships and mentoring.

All this will have to be done based on existing programs, which will have to be evaluated regularly and improved if possible, and by raising awareness among employers. The Committee also suggests simplifying the process used to recognize foreign qualifications, reducing waiting times and increasing access to funding for bridging programs.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the federal government continue to support bridging programs that put a particular emphasis on profession-specific language training, work experience, identification of skill gaps, and supports to fill those gaps. The Committee further recommends that bridging programs and program stakeholders engage in practices that use data sharing to improve the understanding of recruitment and retention patterns and workforce outcomes.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that Citizenship and Immigration Canada expand the scope of the Canadian Immigrant Integration Project, in countries where it is currently offered, and consider offering it in other countries, if required.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the federal government continue to improve its Working in Canada website so as to ensure that internationally trained individuals have access to user-friendly quality information about foreign qualifications recognition before they make the decision to move to Canada.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that Citizenship and Immigration Canada consider approaching provincial and territorial regulatory authorities to discuss the possibility of prequalifying internationally trained individuals for certain occupations as part of the immigration process.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the federal government study the foreign qualifications recognition model used in Australia and advise Citizenship and Immigration Canada on any positive elements that could be applied to the Canadian system.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that Human Resources and Skills Development Canada increase its efforts in support of the development of mutual recognition agreements.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the federal government act as a model employer with regard to internship opportunities for internationally trained individuals by maintaining such initiatives as Citizenship and Immigration Canada's Federal Internship for Newcomers Program and consider increasing the number of interns accepted into the program, if resources allow.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that Citizenship and Immigration Canada extend the public service mentoring pilot project beyond 2012 and report on the results.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications be extended beyond 31 December 2012, to include more occupations, for example skilled trades.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that Human Resources and Skills Development Canada explore the possibility of extending the reach of this program to target more occupations facing current labour shortages or expected to face such shortages in the near future, including for example skilled trades.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the authorities responsible for the Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications ensure that they have all the information needed to target occupations in which there will be a labour shortage and to evaluate foreign qualification recognition programs, and that they release that information to the public, for example in an annual report.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the federal government explore ways of streamlining and simplifying the administrative process used to recognize foreign qualifications. A single point of contact at the federal level could provide all the necessary information currently given by the Foreign Credentials Referral Office of Citizenship and

Immigration Canada and by the Foreign Credential Recognition Program of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that funding for the Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications and its related programs be maintained at least at the 2011–2012 level.

Recommendation 14

Since many internationally trained individuals cannot obtain financial assistance to complete skills upgrading, bridging programs, or educational and professional certification examinations, the committee recommends that the federal government make permanent and expand the Foreign Credential Recognition Loans Pilot Program if results of this pilot are proven effective.

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The Committee recommends that the federal government conduct an awareness raising campaign targeted at employers, who are primarily responsible for the recognition of foreign qualifications in unregulated occupations. The campaign should focus on recognition of foreign qualifications and the advantages of hiring internationally trained individuals.

Recommendation 21

The Committee recommends that the federal government provide newcomers with more information on settling outside major urban centres to take advantage of employment opportunities, for example those in unregulated occupations.

APPENDIX A: STATISTICS ON THE NUMBER OF INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED INDIVIDUALS AND FOREIGN QUALIFICATIONS RECOGNITION

a) Statistics on Internationally Trained Individuals

Table 1 shows the number of internationally trained individuals (ITIs) who obtained a post-secondary diploma, by country where it was obtained. In 2006, roughly 1.3 million Canadians between the ages of 25 and 54 obtained their highest post-secondary diploma abroad.⁵⁰ The vast majority (91%) were immigrants or non-permanent residents. There were also approximately 120,000 non-immigrants who obtained their highest post-secondary diploma abroad, a large proportion of them (70%) in the United States.

Among recent immigrants (immigrated between 2001 and 2006), the most common countries of study are China, India and Philippines. The proportion of ITIs who graduated in China is much higher among immigrants who arrived between 2001 and 2006 (15.3%) than among non-recent immigrants (7.3%), whereas the opposite is true for ITIs who graduated in the United States (4.8% among recent immigrants, 7.7% among non-recent immigrants) or the United Kingdom (3.6% among recent immigrants, 7.4% among non-recent immigrants).

50 At the time of publication of this report, data from the 2011 Census on countries of study and education level were not available.

Table 1 – Number of Internationally Trained Individuals by Immigrant Status and Country of Study, Ages 25 to 54, 2006

Country of study	Non-immigrants	Recent immigrants (2001 to 2006)	Non-recent immigrants (before 2001)	Non-permanent residents	Total
United States	84,545	20,640	50,850	12,015	168,055
India	255	51,475	65,615	4,030	121,375
Philippines	175	38,375	69,445	12,135	120,135
China	30	66,070	48,495	3,860	118,455
United Kingdom	16,780	15,530	49,005	6,360	87,670
Pakistan	130	20,290	20,800	1,365	42,585
France	3,220	12,350	16,080	4,800	36,455
Other	16,080	206,190	343,200	46,965	612,455
Total	121,215	430,925	663,495	91,530	1,307,165

Note: Non-immigrants are Canadian citizens born in Canada and may include a small number of individuals born abroad to Canadian parents. Non-permanent residents are individuals from another country who held a work permit or study permit or were claiming refugee status, as well as members of their family living with them in Canada.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Topic-based Tabulations, [Immigrant Status and Period of Immigration \(9\)](#), [Labour Force Activity \(8\)](#), [Highest Certificate, Diploma or Degree \(7\)](#), [Location of Study \(16\)](#), [Age Groups \(9\)](#) and [Sex \(3\)](#).

Table 2 shows the number and proportion of ITIs by field of study. Fields are ordered by decreasing order of the number of ITIs. Architecture, engineering and other technologies has the highest number of ITIs.

Overall, ITIs accounted for 15.2% of the Canadian labour force aged 25 to 54 who hold a post-secondary diploma. The proportion of men (15.4%) is more or less the same as the proportion of women (15.0%).

Table 2 – Number and Proportion of Internationally Trained Individuals by Field of Study and Sex, Ages 25 to 54, 2006

Field of study	Men		Women		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Architecture, engineering, and related technologies	257,565	15.1	61,205	34.6	318,770	16.9
Business, management and public administration	104,605	15.5	161,375	12.9	265,975	13.8
Health, parks, recreation and fitness	41,755	19.6	105,305	11.6	147,060	13.1
Social and behavioural sciences and law	46,830	15.5	83,895	13.9	130,725	14.4
Humanities	31,265	19.0	68,040	25.4	99,300	22.9
Education	17,120	13.6	63,070	15.1	80,195	14.8
Mathematics, computer and information sciences	46,900	17.2	33,295	19.0	80,190	17.9
Physical and life sciences and technologies	37,430	24.5	38,020	26.5	75,455	25.5
Visual and performing arts, and communications technologies	18,445	12.5	28,690	16.2	47,130	14.5
Personal, protective and transportation services	17,940	7.0	16,330	6.2	34,265	6.6
Agriculture, natural resources and conservation	17,310	13.0	10,690	15.5	28,005	13.9
Total	637,185	15.4	669,975	15.0	1,307,160	15.2

Note: The aggregate for the various fields is different from the overall total because "Other", which includes multidisciplinary programs, the number of which is very small, was not included.

Source: Authors' calculations based on Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Topic-based Tabulations, [Activity; highest certificate, diploma or degree; location of study; major field of study](#).

The proportion of ITIs is highest in physical and life sciences and technologies (25.5%) and humanities (22.9%) and lowest in personal, protective and transportation services (6.6%).

Finally, in architecture, engineering and related technologies, the proportion of workers who studied outside Canada is much higher among women (34.6%) than men (15.1%).

Table 3 shows the unemployment rate among ITIs from the same countries and in the same fields of study shown in tables 1 and 2. In 2006, the unemployment rate among individuals age 25 to 54 with a post-secondary degree or diploma was 4.7%. The rate was 7.1% among ITIs and 4.2% among individuals trained in Canada.

The unemployment rate among ITIs who studied in certain countries, such as Pakistan (10.2%) and China (9.4%), was higher than the average for all ITIs, whereas the opposite was true among ITIs who studied in the Philippines (4.0%), the United Kingdom (4.2%) and the United States (4.3%)

Finally, the unemployment rate among ITIs who studied in certain fields was roughly double the rate among individuals trained in Canada. Those fields are education, physical sciences, health and social sciences.

Table 3 – Unemployment Rate, by Country and Field of Study Where The Highest Post-Secondary Diploma Was Obtained, Ages 25 to 54, 2006

Country and Field of Study	Unemployment Rate	
Country of Study		
Pakistan	10.2	
China	9.4	
India	7.5	
France	6.6	
United States	4.3	
United Kingdom	4.2	
Philippines	4.0	
Other countries	8.4	
Field of Study	Outside Canada	In Canada
Social and behavioural sciences and law	8.6	4.2
Visual and performing arts, and communications	8.0	5.3
Mathematics, computer and information sciences	7.9	5.2
Humanities	7.8	4.6
Physical and life sciences and technologies	7.6	3.9
Business, management and public administration	7.4	4.1
Agriculture, natural resources and conservation	6.5	4.6
Education	6.3	2.5
Health, parks, recreation and fitness	6.2	3.2
Personal, protective and transportation services	6.1	5.7
Agriculture, natural resources and conservation	6.1	4.8
Total (all fields of study)	7.1	4.2
Total (Canada and outside Canada)	4.7	

Source: Authors' calculations based on Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, Topic-based Tabulations, [Activity: highest certificate, diploma or degree; location of study; major field of study](#).

b) Data on Foreign Qualifications Recognition

Between 2001 and 2005, Statistics Canada conducted the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada. Immigrants who came to Canada between October 2000 and September 2001 were interviewed six months, two years and four years after they landed. The survey included questions pertaining to the recognition of foreign credentials and experience. After four years, 28% and 12% of the immigrants respectively reported that their credentials had been fully or partially accepted, and 39% and 18% respectively reported that their foreign professional experience had been fully or partially recognized. In addition, 40% had not had their credentials assessed because they did not need to, did not think they would be recognized, or for some other reason.⁵¹

Table 4 shows the probability that an immigrant's credentials and experience were recognized four years after the immigrant landed based on a series of explanatory variables. These probabilities are based on a statistical analysis that takes all other explanatory variables into account. For example, the difference between the probability of a diploma obtained by a man or woman being recognized is statistically insignificant when other characteristics (age, region, etc.) are taken into account.

The following groups were particularly less likely to have their credentials recognized: individuals age 45 to 59, individuals in a class of immigrants other than skilled workers (especially refugees), individuals who did not speak English or French well and residents of Alberta, British Columbia or the territories.

On the other side of the coin, immigrants who lived in Canada before they landed (as temporary workers, for instance) or had a job waiting for them in Canada before they arrived were more likely to have had their credentials recognized. Immigrants who studied in the United States or the United Kingdom and immigrants with a university degree (as opposed to some college or other post-secondary education) were also more likely to have their credentials recognized (not shown in Table 4).

Women, older individuals, immigrants other than skilled workers, visible minorities, immigrants not fluent in English or French, and residents of Quebec were less likely to have their foreign experience recognized.

51 René Houle and Lahouria Yssaad, "Recognition of newcomers' foreign credentials and work experience", *Perspectives*, Vol. 11, No. 9, September 2010, Statistics Canada. This study uses data from 2001 to 2005 – before most federal FQR programs were put in place.

Table 4 – Probability (%) of an Immigrant’s Credentials and Experience Being Recognized Four Years after Landing, by Selected Characteristics, 2000-2005

Characteristics	Credentials	Work experience
Sex		
Men (reference)	36	56
Women	32	48**
Age at landing		
18 to 24	39	50
25 to 34 (reference)	32	48
35 to 44	28*	43*
45 to 59	21**	35**
Visible minority status		
No (reference)	28	52
Yes	31	42**
Immigrant category		
Skilled immigrant, principal applicant (reference)	39	56
Skilled immigrant, spouse and dependents	23**	39**
Family class	20**	37**
Refugee	12**	17**
Provincial nominees, business immigrants, other	18**	24**
Lived in Canada at least one year before landing		
No (reference)	29	44
Yes	43*	51
Job arranged prior to landing		
No (reference)	29	42
Yes	40**	87**
Self-assessed spoken language		
Very well (reference)	32	50
Well	32	46
Fairly well	21**	34**
Poorly, not at all	23**	41**
Region		
Ontario (reference)	32	47
Atlantic	59*	52
Quebec	28	32**
Prairies	48	39
Alberta	24**	54
British Columbia and territories	23**	49

Note: statistically significant from reference category, at a level of: *95%; ** 99%.

Source: René Houle and Lahouria Yssaad, ["Recognition of newcomers' foreign credentials and work experience"](#), *Perspectives*, Vol. 11, No. 9, September 2010, No. 75-001-X in Statistics Canada catalogue.

APPENDIX B: LIST OF WITNESSES

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p>Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada</p> <p>Natasha Pateman, Acting Director General Foreign Credentials Referral Office</p> <p>Brendan Walsh, Director Foreign Qualification Recognition, Foreign Credentials Referral Office</p>	2011/10/06	4
<p>Department of Health</p> <p>Sue Beardall, Manager Internationally Educated Health Professionals Initiative, Health Human Resources Policy Division</p> <p>Margo Craig Garrison, Director Health Human Resources Policy Division</p>		
<p>Department of Human Resources and Skills Development</p> <p>Jean-François LaRue, Director General Labour Market Integration, Skills and Employment Branch</p> <p>Jonathan Wells, Director Operations, Labour Market Integration, Skills and Employment Branch</p>		
<p>Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists</p> <p>Giulia Nastase, Manager Special Projects</p> <p>Charles A. Shields, Chief Executive Officer</p>	2011/10/18	5
<p>Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science</p> <p>Christine Nielsen, Executive Director</p>		
<p>House of Commons</p> <p>RobR. Walsh, Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel</p>		
<p>Royal Architectural Institute of Canada</p> <p>Jill McCaw, Coordinator Integration Project</p> <p>Jim McKee, Executive Director</p>		
<p>Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators</p> <p>Katya Masnyk Duvalko, Chief Executive Officer</p> <p>Claudia von Zweck, Executive Director</p>	2011/10/20	6

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p>Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants</p> <p>Jylan Khalil, Director Chartered Accountants Qualification</p> <p>Doretta Thompson, Principal Education and Communications</p>	2011/10/20	6
<p>Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters</p> <p>Mathew Wilson, Vice-President National Policy</p>		
<p>Certified General Accountants Association of Canada</p> <p>Carole Presseault, Vice-President Government and Regulatory Affairs</p>		
<p>National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities</p> <p>Carole Bouchard, Executive Director</p>		
<p>Alberta International Medical Graduates Association</p> <p>Peter Idahosa, President</p>	2011/10/25	7
<p>Mount Royal University</p> <p>Pam Nordstrom, Director School of Nursing</p>		
<p>S.U.C.C.E.S.S.</p> <p>Thomas Tam, Chief Executive Officer</p>		
<p>Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council</p> <p>Joan Atlin, Director of Programs</p>		
<p>University of Manitoba</p> <p>Jonathan Beddoes, Dean Faculty of Engineering</p>		
<p>Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO, Canadian Office</p> <p>Christopher Smillie, Senior Advisor Government Relations and Public Affairs</p>	2011/10/27	8
<p>Canadian Council of Social Work Regulators</p> <p>Claude Leblond, President</p>		
<p>Canadian Home Builders' Association</p> <p>Gary Friend, Past-President</p> <p>Jack Mantyla, National Co-ordinator Education and Training</p>		
<p>National Association of Career Colleges</p> <p>Serge Buy, Director Government Relations</p>		

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p>As individuals</p> <p>Ivy Lynn Bourgeault, Research Chair Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Health Human Resources Policy</p> <p>Anne Brasset-Latulippe, Research Coordinator Canadian Health Human Resources Network, University of Ottawa</p> <p>Canadian Dental Association</p> <p>Robert Lees, Representative Registration Manager, Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario</p> <p>Benoit Soucy, Director Clinical and Scientific Affairs</p> <p>Canadian Physiotherapy Association</p> <p>Michael Brennan, Chief Executive Officer</p> <p>Centennial College</p> <p>Sandra Murphy, Dean School of Community and Health Studies</p> <p>Health Action Lobby</p> <p>Christine Nielsen, Member Charles A. Shields, Member</p> <p>Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada</p> <p>Andrew Padmos, Chief Executive Officer Paul Tomascik, Senior Analyst Health Policy and Partner Relations</p>	2011/11/01	9
<p>College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta</p> <p>Cathy Giblin, Registrar and Director Registration Services</p> <p>Government of Manitoba</p> <p>Ximena Munoz, Commissioner Office of the Manitoba Fairness Commissioner, Department of Labour and Immigration</p> <p>Government of Ontario</p> <p>Suzanne Gordon, Manager Labour Market Integration Unit, Ontario Bridge Training Program, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration</p>	2011/11/03	10
<p>Department of Citizenship and Immigration</p> <p>Brendan Walsh, Director Foreign Qualification Recognition, Foreign Credentials Referral Office</p>	2011/11/15	11

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p>Department of Health</p> <p>Sue Beardall, Manager Internationally Educated Health Professionals Initiative, Health Human Resources Policy Division</p> <p>Margo Craig Garrison, Director Health Human Resources Policy Division</p> <p>Department of Human Resources and Skills Development</p> <p>Jean-François LaRue, Director General Labour Market Integration, Skills and Employment Branch</p> <p>Jonathan Wells, Director Operations, Labour Market Integration, Skills and Employment Branch</p>	2011/11/15	11

APPENDIX C: LIST OF BRIEFS

Organizations and individuals

Association of Canadian Community Colleges

Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists

Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists

Canadian Chamber of Commerce

Canadian Home Builders' Association

College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta

Consortium national de formation en santé

Engineers Canada

Federation of Medical Regulatory Authorities of Canada

House of Commons

Medical Council of Canada

National Association of Career Colleges

Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this Report.

A copy of the relevant Minutes of Proceedings ([Meetings Nos.4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11-22-26-28](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Ed Komarnicki, M.P.

Chair

DISSENTING OPINION OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

New Democrats would like to thank the many witnesses who appeared before the committee on the Foreign Qualifications study.

While we support the general direction and recommendations in this report, there are key points around funding and time frames that we felt needed to be highlighted.

Spending is about choices and choosing options that will improve and make the foreign qualification system more productive is an obvious one.

Using fiscal restraint as an excuse not to deal with problems in health human resources planning will result in perverse consequences like continuing high spending on wrong options.

It is clear to us that there needs to be more action from the federal government to rationalize the system, communicate with potential immigrants overseas and to provide the appropriate funding to help qualified immigrants get the necessary training or experience to be able to work in Canada.

New Democrats suggest these recommendations should be amended as follows:

Recommendation One

The Committee recommends that the federal government continue to financially support bridging programs that put a particular emphasis on profession specific language training, work experience, identification of skill gaps, and supports to fill those gaps. The Committee further recommends that bridging programs and program stakeholders engage in practices that use data sharing to improve the understanding of recruitment and retention patterns and workforce outcomes.

Recommendation Four

The Committee recommends that Citizenship and Immigration Canada approach provincial and territorial regulatory authorities to discuss the possibility of pre-qualifying internationally trained individuals for certain occupations as part of the immigration process.

Recommendation Seven

The Committee recommends that the federal government act as a model employer with regard to internship opportunities for internationally trained individuals by maintaining such initiatives as Citizenship and Immigration Canada's Federal Internship for Newcomers Program and increasing the number of interns accepted into the program.

Recommendation Thirteen

The Committee recommends that funding for the Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications and its related programs be maintained at least at the 2011-2012 level for the next five years.

Finally, given the importance of health human resources data and long-range planning, New Democrats support the continued collection of data by the Canadian Institute for Health Information so it can be used in the development of any national centre for the collection and analysis of data on human resources in the health sector.