

Survey examines immigrants' skills

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Partly because they're so busy looking for work, only 200 new Canadians have responded to a brain gain survey that is examining underutilization of immigrant job skills.

Survey organizers have extended the deadline for the project, which is taking place in Waterloo Region, Brantford and London, to May 23 in hopes of getting responses from 500 immigrants.

Rich Janzen, senior researcher with the Kitchener-based Centre for Research and Education in Human Services, said yesterday recent immigrants are difficult to reach because they are so busy trying to find work, housing and get settled in Canada.

And even though his centre provides interpreters, Janzen said language barriers contribute to the problem.

He said researchers are using agencies, churches and cultural groups to contact immigrants over the age of 18 who have been in Canada for less than five years.

IMMIGRANTS FACE BARRIERS

The centre is a non-profit organization that conducts research with community groups and academics.

The \$100,000 survey, financed by the federal government, will examine the impact that underutilization of skills has on immigrants and their families and is intended to show how communities are strengthened when they make better use of skilled immigrants.

The study will also look at job barriers experienced by foreign-trained immigrants and examine difficulties with professional regulatory bodies.

It will contrast labour market skills in southwestern Ontario with those offered by unemployed or underemployed foreign-trained people.

The latest Canadian census showed that between 1996 and 2001, 14,304 skilled immigrants came to the region and surrounding area, mostly from eastern Europe and Asia.

But even though Canadian immigration policy favours immigrants with higher education and skills, newcomers still encounter barriers to regulated professions and trades.

HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

Studies show:

the unemployment rate experienced by internationally-trained professions in Ontario is more than three times higher than other groups of people in the province.

60 per cent of professionals who took jobs unrelated to their training when they first arrived in Canada held the same job three years later.

less than a quarter of employed professionals work in the field they were trained for and 47 per cent do something irrelevant to that field.

Janzen said researchers, who want to raise awareness about the difference those job skills can make when fully used, plan to hold a community forum this fall to discuss survey results.

Immigrants interested in taking part in the survey can call the centre at 741-1318 or go to www.crehs.on.ca.

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