

No quick fix for new Canadians in job market



Staff photo by Fred Loek

Services Canada Ontario Region Marie Gravel was the keynote speaker at breakfast hosted by the Peel Halton Dufferin Training Board at the Living Arts Centre today. The theme of the presentation was *Getting Back to Prosperity*

By: Julia Le

March 25, 2009 03:57 PM - Dozens of employers gathered this morning at the Living Arts Centre to discuss ways to integrate new Canadians into the work force. Some 85 guests participated in the forum, *Getting Back to Prosperity, Overcoming the Labour Shortages of Tomorrow*, hosted by the Peel-Halton-Dufferin Training Board.

Shalini de Cunha, executive director of the training board, said The Conference Board of Canada estimates that by 2013, immigrants will account for 100 per cent of labour force growth. She said now is the time to look at how companies can develop plans to integrate internationally trained individuals.

Addressing employers, Marie Gravel, Service Canada Ontario Region's director of research and analysis, said there's no quick fix for the challenges that lie ahead. "We're all worried about shortage," she said. "You're worried about the bottom line, you're worried about tomorrow, but I think we need to step back and look a little further." Gravel said that a large number of labour jobs soon to be vacant due to retirements can be filled by a growing group of new Canadians coming to the GTA, looking for work. Furthermore, Gravel noted, there needs to be a plan in which older workers transfer their knowledge to younger people who'll replace them.

Anthony Gussin, director of innovation consulting and venture technology at Mississauga-based Nytric Limited, said people should be judged on their appropriate skill sets, paper qualifications and "true abilities." If we continue to be hung up on "Canadian experience," he says, and we overlook the work experience that new Canadians bring from their homeland, Canada will never be a successful nation.

Xerox Canada recruiting manager Jenny Johnston said her team has a hiring procedure that includes, among other things, an effort to value the work experience of all applicants, not only those with experience in Canada. Still, she added, bias can, unintentionally, rear its head. To get around that, she says, "The answer is focusing on transferrable skills and focusing on competencies."
jle@mississauga.net