



CONSTRUCTION  
SECTOR COUNCIL



CONSEIL SECTORIEL  
DE LA CONSTRUCTION

Canada

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FOREIGN CREDENTIAL RECOGNITION CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

# strategy



2007

# Foreign Credential Recognition Construction Industry Strategy

The Construction Sector Council (CSC) is a national organization committed to the development of a highly skilled workforce – one that will support the current and future needs of the construction industry in Canada.

Created in April 2001, and financed by both government and industry, the CSC is a partnership between labour and business. The CSC is governed by a Board of Directors who represent a variety of interests within the construction industry. At the heart of the CSC's mandate is the need to address human resource issues through partnerships within the construction industry.

The Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship (CCDA) is an organization comprised of provincial and territorial directors of apprenticeship, and representatives from Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC). CCDA is responsible for the management of the Interprovincial Standards "Red Seal" Program. CCDA works with industry in the development of a skilled labour force, and in the facilitation of labour mobility in regulated trades throughout Canada.

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## **Spring 2007**

The workshop was facilitated, and report prepared by:  
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# Table of Contents



<b>Background</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The Issues and The Objective</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Strategy Requirements</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Six-Point Strategy</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Assessment and Recognition Tools</i>	<b>5</b>
<i>Information/Education/     Awareness Prior to Entry</i>	<b>7</b>
<i>Cultural Awareness - Industry and Individual</i>	<b>9</b>
<i>Training Tools</i>	<b>10</b>
<i>Communication</i>	<b>12</b>
<i>Clearinghouse and Coordination</i>	<b>13</b>
<b>Six-Point Strategy Action Plan 2007-2008</b>	<b>15</b>



## Background

The Construction Sector Council (CSC) and the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship (CCDA) jointly hosted a Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) Workshop for the construction industry to discuss issues related to recognizing credentials and experience of foreign trained workers. The workshop was funded by the Federal Government's Foreign Credential Recognition Program.

The workshop provided valuable input into the issues related to connecting foreign-trained workers with successful careers in the construction industry. The results of that workshop are documented in a report available on the CSC website ([www.csc-ca.org](http://www.csc-ca.org)) and are incorporated into this strategy.

The CSC and the CCDA can play a valuable role in bringing foreign credential recognition issues to the national stage and initiating effective solutions.



# The Issues and the Objective

## The Issues

As the construction industry grapples with an aging workforce and the resulting retirements that may occur, it is becoming increasingly concerned about the potential for skill shortages. According to the Construction Sector Council's recently released *Construction Looking Forward – 2006 – 2014*, many trades/occupations will be facing a tight labour market due to the aging workforce and the resulting retirements, and the continuing level of construction activity. It is critical that the industry maximize the available pool of labour.

The CSC's report on the *Assessment and Recognition of Foreign-Trained Worker Credentials in the Construction Industry* indicated that though the process of assessment and recognition of foreign-trained workers in the construction industry in Canada is the same as that used for Canadian-trained workers, its impact differs greatly.

The report went on to say that foreign-trained workers are often at a disadvantage because of language barriers, insufficient documentation, lack

of knowledge of Canadian health and safety regulations, building codes, and other workplace requirements. The process is not systematic. No books of international equivalencies are available to assist those in a position to assess the skills and experience of foreign-trained workers.

The report also points out that addressing these issues falls to the industry -- employers and labour -- in partnership with apprenticeship offices. Immigrant-serving agencies are also important collaborators in this work, as they are often in a position to separate official process from actual process.

## The Objective

The objective of this strategy is to facilitate the optimization of foreign-trained workers from arrival in the country to arrival at the construction workplace.



# Strategy Requirements

To accomplish the objective set out earlier requires a strategy that will:

- Contribute to the development of FCR tools and resources;
- Ensure construction information provided to immigrants helps to expedite entry to construction employment or training;
- Prepare the construction industry to welcome a diverse pool of skilled tradespeople; and
- Provide a venue for industry, government and immigrant agencies to work together to facilitate foreign credential recognition.

## Six-Point Strategy



# Assessment and Recognition Products



The credential and experience assessment and recognition process for foreign-trained tradespersons appears to be the same as that for Canadian trained workers. This could be seen as a positive feature e.g. everyone writes the same exams. However, the lack of particular attention to foreign-trained workers can be a definite problem.

In most cases, the determination of whether a foreign-trained worker has the necessary experience in a trade is a subjective process. Some argue for a standard approach, while others favour a hands-on, individual approach. Some labour organizations use tools, such as Evaluating Academic Readiness for Apprenticeship Training (EARAT) and the Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES) to verify literacy, numeracy and other essential skills.

The construction industry is in need of an effective means to assess the unique training, skills and experience of newcomers at the same level we assess Canadian workers. Whether it is one assessment tool or more than one is to be determined but what is clear is that it should be developed nationally to facilitate the mobility of the construction workforce.

## What will this look like?

The CSC and CCDA will work together to build a foundation for the effective assessment of foreign-trained workers. They will research existing methods and work with industry, governments, and immigrant agencies to develop an assessment and recognition process and tool(s) that will meet all stakeholder needs and will result in newcomers being moved into training and employment.

## How will we do this?

The CSC will partner with provincial and territorial apprenticeship authorities to undertake a research initiative to map the skills, training and certification processes of selected source countries against Canada for specific trades that are in demand.

The CSC and all key stakeholders will work together to develop an assessment and recognition tool(s) that will respond to the needs of the construction industry.



### **When we are successful, what will we see?**

- Consistent approach to the assessment and recognition of foreign-trained workers.
- FCR assessment tool(s) that meet the same standards used for Canadian workers.
- Industry better able to maximize the skills of newcomers to meet labour requirements in the short and long term.



# Information/Education/Awareness Prior to Entry

There is a need for detailed trades-specific information about immigrating to Canada and working in Canada's construction industry, which is a major issue for foreign-trained workers, both pre- and post-immigration. Applicants need specific information about which office to contact, which labour groups and other organizations assist their trade, training requirements, and how to obtain provisional trade certificates. Too often, immigrants are unable to obtain a provisional ticket because they came without papers to verify work experience. Migrating all of Canada's immigration information online has clearly demonstrated the need for consistent information. The best sites have downloadable forms, fee information, and documentation requirements. To effectively support newcomers to Canada whether they are temporary or permanent, we must ensure that they have access to all of the required information necessary to successfully enter the construction industry. Information must be comprehensive, current, and easy to find.

### What will this look like?

Through earlier research, many sources of information have been identified. The CSC and CCDA will work with these sources to ensure they have the most comprehensive and complete information

about construction and apprenticeship in Canada. This same information will also be located on the CSC corporate website.

### How will we do this?

The CSC and the CCDA will establish an ongoing relationship with the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) who currently maintains one of the major information sources for potential immigrants to Canada. We will ensure that the information on apprenticeship and construction is current and comprehensive and will help to fill any identified gaps. Linkages to the CICIC site will be added to the CSC, apprenticeship, and college sites.

The CSC and CCDA will jointly develop construction and apprenticeship specific fact sheets and other informational materials that can be made available to immigrant agencies to help them provide advice and counsel to their clients.

### When we are successful, what will we see?

- Consistent and comprehensive information on the construction industry and apprenticeship widely available to potential immigrants and newcomers to Canada.





- Immigrants arriving in Canada better equipped to enter training and/or employment in the construction industry.
- Immigrants arriving in Canada with a realistic understanding of the requirements of the construction industry.



# Cultural Awareness - Industry and Individual

Care is needed to ensure worksite acceptance and respect for foreign-trained workers. This requires mentoring and monitoring, as well as cultural diversity training for the existing workforce.

Many immigrant agencies are offering innovative programs to help immigrants enter a trade. They require good information about trades, the requirements and the issues, to counsel and support immigrant tradespeople effectively. To sustain their work, they also need the support of the construction industry, apprenticeship offices, employers, labour groups and colleges. With firsthand experience, they are an invaluable resource to the construction industry.

## What will this look like?

The CSC will work with industry partners to identify best practices in the area of cultural awareness and to identify opportunities to make this type of information/training available to the industry and potential newcomers. The CSC will promote the importance of cultural awareness within the construction industry through its regular interactions and through the creation of specific messaging. In addition, the CSC will

provide potential newcomers with accurate information on the realities of working in the Canadian construction workplace culture.

## How will we do this?

The CSC will investigate best practices in cultural awareness offerings within the construction industry and will make information on these programs available through its website.

The CSC will explore with employer, labour, and the Construction Owners Association of Alberta the possibility of developing a national respect in the workplace package for employers and newcomers to Canada

The CSC will develop a communication vehicle for diversity/cultural awareness messaging.

## When we are successful, what will we see?

- A more welcoming and culturally sensitive construction industry.
- Better informed newcomers on the realities of working in Canada.
- An understanding of the Canadian construction culture amongst newcomers to Canada who are looking to work in construction.





## Strategy

# Training Tools

Employers, labour groups, and apprenticeship offices see language as an issue in terms of training, testing, job safety, and effective deployment of skills on the job site. Immigrant agencies see language as a major barrier to certification as written exams are difficult for those with poor language skills, particularly the multiple-choice format used for trades.

In most provinces, publicly-funded language training is supported only up to Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) level 3. The trades require LINC levels 7–9, which include technical language and workplace communications skills. In general, this is based on the assumption that an immigrant first goes for language training, then to upgrading and finally to work. Not all foreign-trained workers follow this route. Too many foreign-trained workers in areas with skills shortages go directly to work, rather than taking training to upgrade their skills and obtain the credentials needed to work anywhere in Canada.

Technology advances have increased workplace literacy and numeracy demands, which necessitate upgrading programs even for foreign-trained workers with good language skills.

Safety training for newcomers is critical in the construction industry. Many newcomers arrive from countries that do

not have the same safety culture as Canada and must receive safety training/orientation before setting foot on a jobsite.

With the employment of newcomers being paramount both for the individual and the industry, expeditious and effective means of providing this training must be developed to facilitate safe and productive employment.

### **What will this look like?**

The CSC will work with the CCDA and government to explore, identify and develop mechanisms to provide needed training for newcomers to facilitate their safe and productive employment in the construction industry. Best practices will be identified and built on to avoid duplication of effort.

The CSC will seek partnership opportunities with the community colleges, Citizenship and Immigration Canada's (CIC) Enhanced Language Training Program, Canadian Centre for Language Benchmarks, Apprenticeship and others to create the training infrastructure required to provide the workforce required by the construction industry.

### **How will we do this?**

The CSC will partner to develop a common framework for the assessment of language skills required by the construction industry.

The CSC will consider alternate training delivery methods to expedite safety training.

### **When we are successful, what will we see?**

- A common framework for the assessment of language levels.
- Complementary safety training easily accessible through e-learning.



## Strategy

# Communication

Communication is key to the successful integration of newcomers into the construction industry. There is a vast array of players involved in facilitating the employment of newcomers in the construction industry including governments, immigrant agencies, employers, labour groups, training providers, and the newcomer. To ensure a smooth transition from entry in Canada to employment, communication is needed to:

- keep immigrant agencies informed about the construction industry, and its needs;
- facilitate ongoing dialogue with industry, governments, immigrant agencies;
- ensure consistent messaging;
- validate directions; and
- provide input on product development.

### What will this look like?

The CSC is well positioned to communicate to the key stakeholders and to provide ongoing venues for discussions related to foreign credential recognition. Foreign credential recognition will remain a priority in the CSC workplan for the

foreseeable future and all initiatives undertaken will have involvement from the key stakeholders and will be communicated to the construction and immigrant community on an ongoing basis.

### How will we do this?

The CSC will communicate via its existing communication vehicles including the Dimensions Newsletter and the CSC website [www.csc-ca.org](http://www.csc-ca.org).

The CSC will enhance its website to include a foreign credential recognition portal where all related information and activities will be housed.

The CSC will work in partnership on all initiatives and will communicate through those partners to the broader interest groups.

### When we are successful, what will we see?

- Ongoing communication vehicles in use.
- All key stakeholders well informed and involved in facilitating the optimization of foreign trained workers from arrival in the country to arrival at the construction workplace.

# Clearinghouse and Coordination

There is development and delivery work being done by key apprenticeship stakeholders, including provincial and territorial governments, and industries like construction. However, those working in the construction industry and immigrant services are not always fully aware of research, resources, tools, programs and services that have been developed and are being implemented. The result is duplication of effort, inefficient use of resources, gaps in information and service, and a largely untapped source of labour at a time when qualified construction tradespeople are at a premium.

## Clearinghouse

### What will this look like?

The CSC will provide a clearinghouse function for foreign credential recognition information on services and programs relevant to the construction industry. Through this function the CSC will:

- Make available the results of its in-house research projects;
- Share best practices resulting from projects undertaken through the CSC and through other key stakeholder groups;
- Make information, tools and resources easily accessible for the

use of the industry and other relevant stakeholder groups; and

- Partner with groups who wish to share the results of their work with the industry.

### How will we do this?

The CSC will develop a segment on its website devoted to foreign credential recognition. This will be a “one stop” point of access for information on services and programs, and links related to foreign credential recognition.

### When we are successful, what will we see?

- Increasing numbers of visitors to the website downloading information on foreign credential recognition.
- Greater awareness of services and programs e.g., Immigrant Skilled Trades Employment Program (ISTEP).
- Greater sharing of materials and tools that have already been developed.
- Greater economies of scale achieved from developmental work.





## Coordination

### What will this look like?

The CSC and CCDA are ideally positioned to play a coordinating role regarding foreign credential recognition for the construction industry. Through this component of the strategy, we will facilitate the pooling of resources, thereby enabling the industry to achieve economies of scale and a more efficient use of resources. The CSC and CCDA will link organizations wishing to do work in foreign credential recognition to the construction industry and will look for partnership opportunities to research and develop tools and resources in response to industry identified needs.

### How will we do this?

The CSC and CCDA will establish a National Foreign Credential Recognition Coordinating Committee with a mandate to provide guidance to the CSC and CCDA on matters related to foreign credential recognition.

The CSC and CCDA will each encourage partnerships with organizations that are seeking to do work that have broad applicability to the construction industry.

The CSC and CCDA will each initiate projects that result in tools that can be broadly used by the construction industry (e.g. assessment tools).

### When we are successful, what will we see?

- Greater industry involvement in the development of the field of foreign credential recognition for construction.
- Projects undertaken that have broad applicability across the industry.
- New tools that facilitate the successful employment of foreign-trained workers in the construction industry.



## Six-Point Strategy Action Plan 2007-2008

Strategy Component	Activity	Outputs/Outcomes	Target Timing	Lead Responsibility
Assessment and Recognition Tools	Specific Mapping Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding of training and certification in primary source countries for selected trades in demand</li> <li>Basis for assessing foreign trained worker credentials</li> <li>Exploration of opportunities for reciprocity</li> </ul>	Winter 2007	CSC
	Research existing assessment and recognition tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding of existing assessment and recognition tools</li> </ul>	Summer 2007	CSC and CCDA
Information/Education/Awareness Prior to Entry	Augment information on CICIC website and provide links to key construction websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comprehensive information on apprenticeship and construction available through existing information channels</li> <li>Linkages to information sources</li> </ul>	Fall 2007	CSC and CCDA
	Produce construction and apprenticeship fact sheets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fact sheets</li> <li>More accurate information available to immigrant agencies</li> </ul>	Winter 2007	CSC and CCDA
	Explore opportunities to provide information in the source country with ACCC through their three offshore offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Venue for providing information prior to entry to Canada</li> </ul>	Summer 2007	CSC
	Develop a national assessment and recognition tool(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National assessment and recognition tool that reflects existing best practices</li> <li>Accurate assessments for foreign training and experience</li> </ul>	Winter 2008	CSC and CCDA
	Language benchmarking for trades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National language benchmarks</li> <li>Consistent basis for assessing language levels</li> </ul>	Spring 2008	CSC
Cultural Awareness - Industry and Individual	Cultural Awareness Training Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A cultural awareness program for employers and newcomers</li> <li>A more welcoming workplace</li> </ul>	Spring 2008	CSC
	Explore the possibility of working with COAA to provide a national Respect in the Workplace package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respect in the Workplace available nationally</li> <li>Construction employers implementing Respect in the Workplace on jobsites</li> </ul>	Summer 2008	CSC and COAA
	The CSC will build diversity training into a national mentor program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diversity training module incorporated into national mentor training program</li> </ul>	Fall 2008	CSC and CCDA
Training Tools	Construction safety training program for newcomers to Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Construction safety training accessible in all parts of the country</li> <li>Increased training capacity</li> <li>Safety training for temporary and permanent immigrants expedited</li> </ul>	Summer 2008	CSC and Safety Associations
	Construction terminology Glossary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quick reference for newcomers to help acquaint them with construction terminology</li> </ul>	Spring 2008	CSC
Communication	Use existing communication vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing communication with FCR stakeholders</li> </ul>	Ongoing	CSC and CCDA
	Develop communication vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Articles for industry and immigrant publications</li> </ul>	Spring 2007	CSC
	Host a follow up FCR Workshop to share progress and map future direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Second national stakeholder workshop</li> <li>Future direction</li> </ul>	Fall 2008	CSC and CCDA
Clearinghouse and Coordination	FCR Portal on CSC Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dedicated FCR portal</li> <li>Information, resources, tools available online</li> </ul>	Spring 2007	CSC
	National FCR Coordinating Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinating Committee</li> <li>Focal point for stakeholder input to FCR initiatives</li> </ul>	Spring 2007	CSC
	Capitalize on existing initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pilot results are rolled out nationally (e.g. ISTEP)</li> <li>Tools and resources developed through provincial or trade specific initiatives are shared broadly and expanded where appropriate</li> </ul>	ongoing	CSC
	Educate/inform key stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and disseminate information to employers and recruiters on the labour need based on CSC LMI, and immigration processes and issues</li> <li>Provide information on construction industry skilled trades labour requirements based on CSC LMI to Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC)</li> </ul>	ongoing	CSC