

BURNABY WORKPLACE AMBASSADORS PROGRAM

In 2012 Burnaby hosted a remarkable program aimed at identifying and addressing some of the problems that immigrants to Canada face in the employment marketplace: the **Burnaby Workplace Ambassadors Program**. The project followed from research and experience with the prior Breaking Down the Barriers program showing that both employers and new immigrants lack a clear understanding of all that's required to support immigrant workforce integration. Employers often have no easy way of assessing experience and credentials acquired in another country, and hold reservations or uncertainty when meeting new immigrants trying to enter the job market. Immigrants sometimes not only lack the networking and communication skills necessary to break into the Canadian workforce but fail to fully recognize how crucial these are.

The program sought to dig straight into problems like these with a unique "ambassadors" approach using both jobseekers and employers as active participants. Thirty five internationally trained professionals (ITPs) new to Burnaby received focussed training and supporting resources on communication and networking, and then were introduced to a professional within their field and a 45 minute meeting was set up. This professional would then introduce the ITP to two more professionals – and so on. The purpose of the meetings was twofold; first, participants exchanged information about their shared occupational field and second, they discussed some of the existing barriers to immigrant workforce integration. The intent of the project was not employment but awareness raising - some of the immigrant ambassadors met with as many as 10 local professionals and most received at least five meetings. At project end, more than 240 employers had been engaged in discussions about immigrant workforce integration, many reviewed and discussed their own recruiting and hiring practices and shared the experience with their colleagues.

Here, in their own words, a few representatives of both types of ambassadors recount their experiences with the program. They are organized into six professional sectors important to Burnaby's economy. As a result of the Burnaby Workplace Ambassador Program, the ball is definitely rolling. The challenge now is to push it as fast and far as possible.

SECTOR OVERVIEW - CONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT

Once a boom and bust sector, B.C.'s construction industry has been strictly boom for the past decade, doubling its workforce to almost 10 percent of employed British Columbians and becoming the top goods-producing sector in the province. Nor is there any sign of a lull. While the pace of residential construction should ease, major industrial projects appear poised to pick up the slack.



KEY OCCUPATIONS IN THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

Construction employs people in a wide range of occupations involving different types of skills. Seven out of 10 people who work in this industry are tradespeople, contractors, and others who have special skills related to construction.

- Architects
- Management
- Urban Planners
- Engineers
- Constructor Estimators
- Building Inspectors
- Bricklayers
- Carpenters
- Concrete finishers
- Construction estimators
- Electricians and Mechanics
- Heavy Duty Mechanics
- Plasterers, Wall and Ceiling Installers (Lathers) & Finishers
- Painters and decorators
- Plumbers
- Residential home builders and renovators
- Roofers and shinglers
- Tilesetters
- Trades helpers and labourers

In 2012 the British Columbia Construction Association estimated that along with the approximately 35,000 foremen and senior managers scheduled to retire in the next four to seven years, an additional 45,000 people will be needed to complete major projects that are either planned or already in the works. Seven out of 10 workers in the industry are trades people or equipment operators, and about 90 percent are male. Wages are higher than the provincial average.

Find a listing of projected employment needs by field here (<http://www.csc-ca.org/en/products/british-columbia-2012-highlights-and-powerpoint-presentation>).

THE AMBASSADORS

ITP Ambassador - Hylkije Golopreni

I am from Kosovo, and I came to Canada three years ago. I studied architecture in Kosovo and did a masters degree in Planning and Regional Development in Sweden. I've been looking for a job here for a year and a half.

I've taken other training in Canada, but the Workplace Ambassador project was the most useful, because you need to meet with employers and they helped us do that. As an internationally trained worker it's very important that you link your international experience with the situation here. I've volunteered here, and taken classes, but this helped me bring all those things together, and connected me to employers. I talked to people in the City of Burnaby, the City of Port Moody and the City of Vancouver. I've redone my portfolio and my CV, and my portfolio looks much better.

Canada is the perfect place to live and work if you are educated, if you have the background and speak the language. But it's not enough to have a good CV and the right background if you are not a good job searcher. My profession is competitive here, but I am very well educated, and my European experience could be helpful. I'm confident I will find work.

Employer Ambassador – Dave Gill, Process Manager, Fransen Engineering

After I was put in touch with a participant, we got together for about 45 minutes. He had an engineering background, so our conversation was fairly general — about Canada and the company. I put him in touch with other people here who are in his area of expertise. After a couple of months there was an opening that fit his qualifications; he applied for it and was accepted, but he has since left the company.

We already hire lots of recent immigrants. If the communication skills are there and the technical knowledge is there, we'll take them on.

But the project worked fine from our point of view. We were even able to make a hire from it. It's important that the matches be appropriate. If a participant were in a different area I wouldn't be able to answer his questions or point him toward the right people.



MS. HYLKIJE GOLOPRENI

BEST PRACTICES OF WORKPLACE INTEGRATION - EMPLOYERS IN THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

RECRUITMENT

- Guide Development: A Construction Employer’s Roadmap, which is developed by Construction Sector Council, provides employers with information on the role of employment agencies and immigration consultants and provides an overview of Canada’s immigration programs and the different paths open to permanent residents, temporary residents and workers outside of Canada.

ORIENTATION/RETENTION

- English for Construction Trades Program: offers English training specific to trades people understand the terminology required to master the technical aspects of their job.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY - BEING A GOOD COMMUNITY CITIZEN

- STEP Program: The Skilled Trades Employment Program (STEP) was originally launched by the British Columbia Construction Association to assist foreign trained skilled workers obtain employment in the Construction Industry where there was a lack of available workers.



CONSTRUCTION SECTOR IN BURNABY

As befits a fast-growing city with a population increase of more than 10% between 2006 and 2011, Burnaby has a well-developed construction sector with a higher proportion of construction employment than the Metro Vancouver as a whole¹. The City of Burnaby continues to emphasize high-quality design and construction in new urban development to ensure the overall quality of the community².

¹Source: <http://www.burnaby.ca/Assets/doing+business/burnaby+business+profile/economic+strategy/EDS+-+Trend+Analysis+-+Burnaby+EDS+Update.pdf>

²Source: <http://www.burnaby.ca/Assets/multiple+locations/EDS+-+Burnaby+EDS+2020.pdf>, page 8

NOTABLE CONSTRUCTION EMPLOYERS IN BURNABY

COMPANY	WEBSITE
Axiom Builder Inc. 4555 Kingsway, Burnaby	http://www.axiombuilders.ca/
Wales McLelland Construction 5489 Byne Rd., Burnaby	http://www.walesmcllland.com/careers
Beedie Group 3030 Gilmore Diversion, Burnaby	http://www.beediegroup.ca/careers
Bosa Development Corp. 1901 Rosser Ave, Burnaby	http://www.bosadevpm.ca/
Dominion Masonry Ltd. 7880 Venture St. Burnaby	http://www.dominionmasonry.com/contact.html
Marine Roofing Ltd. 4909 Byrne Road, Burnaby	http://www.marinerroofing.com/employment.asp
Casa Madera Hardwood Floors Inc. 3744 Hastings Street, Burnaby	http://www.casamaderafloors.com/
Harbourview Electric Ltd. 1 - 5707 Sidley Street, Burnaby	http://www.harbourviewelectric.com/Employment.html
Minhas Holding Inc. No office address released	http://www.minhasholdingsinc.ca/about.html
T.Q. Construction Ltd. 106 - 8988 Fraserton Court, Burnaby	http://www.tqconstruction.ca/about-us

USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES

EMPLOYMENT SERVICE FOR IMMIGRANTS IN BURNABY

SKILLS CONNECT FOR IMMIGRANTS PROGRAM

- **Back in Motion**
<http://www.skillsconnect.ca/>
- **Douglas College**
<http://www.douglas.bc.ca/training-community-education/skills-connect.html>
- **Training Innovations**
<http://www.skillsconnectbc.com/>

OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES AND PROFILES

- **WelcomeBC's Occupational Guides for Immigrants**
http://www.welcomebc.ca/wbc/immigration/work/occupational_guides.page#Technology
- **Skilled Immigrants InfoCentre – Vancouver Public Library**
<http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca/>
- **WorkBC Career Profile**
<http://www.workbc.ca/Careers/Career-Profiles/Pages/Career-Profiles.aspx>

REGULATORY BODIES AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

- **Architectural Institute of British Columbia**
www.aibc.ca
- **BC Industry Training Authority**
<http://www.itabc.ca/site3.aspx>
- **Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of BC**
<http://www.apeg.bc.ca/>
- **British Columbia Technology Industry Association**
<http://www.bctia.org/>
- **BC Construction Employers Building Relationships**
<http://www.clra-bc.com/humanresources.html>
- **BC Construction Association**
www.bccasn.com/
- **Foreign Skilled Workers in BC**
<http://www.fswbc.com>