

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 - CLEAN TECHNOLOGY SECTOR

The development of clean technologies is a priority for all levels of government in Canada, at the federal, provincial, territorial and regional levels. Canada has the third-largest clean energy capacity in the world.

The province of British Columbia is a global leader in some facets of clean technology, including hydro-electricity and hydrogen fuel cells. Meanwhile, the technology field in general was the second fastest creator of new jobs in the private sector over the past decade. At the same time, according to a recent KMPG study, B.C.'s clean technology sector remains comparatively underdeveloped, amounting to only 0.16% of global output, suggesting both room and need for faster growth.



KEY OCCUPATIONS IN THE CLEAN TECHNOLOGY SECTOR

- Biochemists and Biophysicists
- Biomedical Engineers
- Biological Technicians
- Biological Science Teachers, Postsecondary
- Civil Engineers
- Electrician
- Environmental Scientists and Specialists
- Geoscientists
- Natural Sciences Managers

Note: Most employees in this sector perform interdisciplinary work and are typically employed in multiple occupational categories.

Some 200 companies were engaged in clean technology in 2009, in fields such as energy generation, energy transmission and storage, energy use in transportation, energy efficiency and resource management. They employed 7,200 people, and paid wages well above the provincial average. The province offers several advantages, including a competitive business environment, some 700 green-technology training programs and numerous institutions supporting research and development.

For all its promise, Canada's clean technology sector has not had the benefit of a public policy environment that is entirely hospitable to its development. Still, it is virtually certain that the sector will continue to grow, especially as the risks associated with global warming and other environmental problems become clearer. Meanwhile, strides are also being made in transition technologies such as more efficient natural gas extraction and transmission. And a wider definition of the clean technology sector encompasses several related fields, including environmental health and safety, waste management, site management, water quality and environmental education, awareness and policy making. Needs vary by industry but in general the employment outlook is considered good, with skills shortages in some areas.

THE AMBASSADORS

ITP Ambassador - Hedayat Paknejad

I came from Iran 20 in early 2011. I have eight years of work experience as a structural engineer and I've taught courses at a university. I'm a professional engineer in Iran, but I need one year of work experience to become a P.Eng here. Two weeks ago I got a job with Fortis, so I'm on track. The Ambassador Project was helpful because I had some very good information interviews with people in my field. I learned something about the rules here, and I also took some courses based on their advice. My first informational interview was set up through the program but after that they were mostly referrals. Altogether I had, I think, eight interviews.

The project helped me gain some insight into what employers are looking for. For example, I think for my job it was important to them that I have entered the process to become registered as a professional engineer. Also, I realized I had to change some of the questions I was asking the employers. I believe I gained a very good sense of the industry.

Employer Ambassador – Christine VanDerwill, Client Relations Manager, ClimateSmart

ClimateSmart is a social enterprise that helps local businesses with their carbon footprint. I'm primarily on the business development side, so I lead the business outreach and engagements team as well as working with clients like the City of Burnaby and individual businesses. I was intrigued because the participant was from Guatemala, and we've spent some time in Central America. Unfortunately, ClimateSmart is very small and we didn't have a fit for her here, but I was able to refer her on to some people in my network. I'm from the U.S. myself, and Vancouver is definitely a who-you-know kind of place. The business climate can be insular, so personal connections are important. Her resume looks really good, and she's on LinkedIn, which I think is good. One of the things that struck us is that her education and experience lend her to a government job, and I think it's hard to get a government job here if you're not a citizen. I would definitely be willing to send out her resume and help her get more introductions.



MR. HEDAYAT PAKNEJAD

BEST PRACTICES OF WORKPLACE INTEGRATION - EMPLOYERS IN THE CLEAN TECHNOLOGY SECTOR

In 2012, forty employers across Canada were recognized for their initiatives around recent immigrants as part of the Best Employers for New Canadians list by Mediacorp Canada. Promising practices of best employers in Clean Technology sectors are summarized and listed below.

Source: <http://www.canadastop100.com/immigrants/>

RECRUITMENT

- In partnership community agency, provides internship and / or unpaid work placement that may lead to permanent employment. (BC Hydro, CH2M, SaskPower and Energy Resources Conservation Board)
- Encourages managers to hire skilled newcomers at junior-level positions and provide them with a defined career advancement plan, which includes timelines for performance and development reviews (BC Hydro)

ORIENTATION

- Offers subsidies for ESL classes at post-secondary institutions and sponsors membership efforts of internationally trained professionals to regulatory bodies (Energy Resources Conservation Board, CH2M, and BC Hydro)
- Recognizes provisional membership to regulatory bodies and supports new Canadian employees through the membership process (BC Hydro)

RETENTION

- Established a workforce and diversity committee to promote inclusion and equality for employees from all walks of life (CH2M)
- Maintains an in-house multicultural society as well as a cultural buddy program in support of employees from all walks of life (BC Hydro)
- Offers “English for Occupational Purposes” language training, which employees may participate in during company (BC Hydro)

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY - BEING A GOOD COMMUNITY CITIZEN

- Sponsors community agency which helps job-seekers with foreign credentials access employment resources (CH2M, Manitoba Hydro and Energy Resources Conservation Board)
- Encourages employees to participate mentoring program and / or volunteer time to help newcomers (CH2M)
- Participated in the development of the British Columbia Human Resources Management Association’s online resource, “Immigrant Talent Integration Toolkit” (BC Hydro)



CLEAN TECHNOLOGY SECTOR IN BURNABY

“Growing green” is a fundamental theme in Burnaby’s Economic Development Strategy. The city is already home to leading companies in power technology, alternative/renewable energy (including bio fuels), green-related businesses in environmental services, providers of alternative transportation and designers and manufacturers of environmental equipment. Burnaby has been working towards attracting businesses whose philosophies, business practices and employees are environmentally oriented. Businesses that provide products and services that could be considered part of the green economy, such as green building technology or alternative fuels are a specific focus. The City of Burnaby’s Economic Development Strategy 2020 identified the Clean Technology industry as one of the seed industries in Burnaby.

NOTABLE CLEAN TECHNOLOGY EMPLOYERS IN BURNABY

COMPANY	WEBSITE
Azure Dynamics 3900 North Fraser Way, Burnaby	http://www.azuredynamics.com/careers/default.htm
Aquasmart Technologies Inc. 3122 Beta Ave, Burnaby	http://www.aquasmart.com/
Ballard Power Systems 9000 Glenlyon Pky, Burnaby	http://www.ballard.com/about-ballard/careers/
Associated Engineering 300-4940 Canada Way, Burnaby	http://www.ae.ca/careers.html
BC Hydro 6911 Southpoint Drive, Burnaby	http://www.bchydro.com/careers/
CANTEST 4606 Canada Way, Burnaby	http://www.cantest.com/cms/page1011.cfm
Covanta Energy Corporation 5150 Riverbend Drive, Burnaby	http://www.covantaenergy.com/careers.aspx
CH2M Hill Canada 4720 Kingsway, Burnaby	http://www.careers.ch2m.com/worldwide/en/
Day4 Energy Inc. 8168 Glenwood Drive, Burnaby	http://www.day4energy.com/about-us/careers/
Envirowest Consultants Inc. 130 - 3700 North Fraser Way, Burnaby	http://www.envirowest.ca/
International Water-Guard Industries Inc. Suite 2-3771 North Fraser Way, Burnaby	http://www.water.aero/careers.html
IPEC Consultants Ltd. 2889 Norland Ave, Burnaby	http://www.ipec.ca/contact.html
M&R Environmental Ltd. 4623 Byrne Road, Burnaby	http://www.mrenviro.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=67&Itemid=60
Polar Battery Vancouver Ltd. 1258 Boundary Road, Burnaby	http://www.polarbattery.com/
Teckion 8602 Commerce Crt, Burnaby	http://www.tekion.com/
Xantrex Technology Inc. 3700 Gilmore Way, Burnaby	http://www.xantrex.com/about-xantrex/jobs.aspx
XEBEC Inc. 6988 Merritt Ave, Burnaby	http://www.xebecinc.com/about-careers.php

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

- **Clean Energy Association of BC**
<http://www.cleanenergybc.org/>
- **ECO Canada**
<http://www.eco.ca/>
- **Applied Science Technologists & Technicians of BC**
<http://www.asttbc.org/>
- **Association of Professional Biologists of British Columbia**
<https://professionalbiology.com/>
- **Association of Professional Engineers & Geoscientists of British Columbia**
<http://www.apeg.bc.ca/>
- **British Columbia Environmental Industry Association (BCEIA)**
<http://www.bceia.com/>
- **Trade and Invest British Columbia**
<http://www.britishcolumbia.ca/Pages/Home.aspx>