



Policy Roundtable Mobilizing Professions and Trades

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New Study Finds that Bridge Training Programs Have Limited Success in Helping Immigrants Get Jobs

Toronto – PROMPT released its 5th research paper, “A Review of Bridge Training Programs for Immigrants with Professional Backgrounds in Ontario – Exploratory Findings” today. Since 2003, the Government of Ontario has spent in excess of \$43 million on funding bridge training programs for skilled immigrants in order to help them get into jobs commensurate with their skills. Initial findings suggest that they are having very limited success, particularly with regards to “bridge to work” programs.

This study, the first of its kind, reviewed a wide range of bridging programs in different professions including engineering, social work, nursing and teaching through qualitative and quantitative methods, against the parameters of equity. Nikhat Rasheed, PROMPT coordinator said, “Our initial findings show that “bridge to work” programs seem to have failed because employers were supposed to be engaged in providing work experience to participants, but this did not always happen.”

A combination of methodologies was used to determine recommendations. Based on an equity framework developed by PROMPT, both policies and bridge training programs were critiqued. Neither policies nor programs passed the equity test with flying colours. In fact, the study recommends that bridging itself needs to be re-conceptualized and re-worked.

“We need to create “real bridging” where there is knowledge transfer between immigrants and the host population. These people bring world class skills and experience – some of them could teach us a thing or two. Let’s do proper analyses of knowledge gaps, wherever they exist, and let’s bridge them both ways. Our institutions need to globalize desperately,” continued Rasheed.

Some key recommendations of the paper include:

- Institutions that fund, design, implement or evaluate bridge training programs must be able to demonstrate that the policies and program frameworks incorporate accountability mechanisms, are transparent and sophisticated data specific to each program is publicly accessible.
- Resources must be devoted to bridging knowledge gaps on all sides. Thus, more resources should be devoted to employer and institutional bridging.
- Employer engagement and commitment should be made mandatory as part of “bridge to work” programs, and regulatory body engagement and commitment should be made mandatory as part of “bridge to licence” programs.

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Background

PROMPT’s vision is to ensure equitable employment outcomes for immigrants with professional and trades backgrounds such that they can attain their full potential and be partners in nation building.

Professions represented on the roundtable include: Healthcare (Doctors, Nurses, Physiotherapists and Veterinarians), Applied Sciences (Engineers, Technologists and Technicians, Architects and Urban Planners) and Social Sciences (Teachers and Social Workers).

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