

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Top employers lead initiative to hire more skilled immigrants**

*Twenty local employers join Ottawa's new 'Employer Council of Champions'*

**OTTAWA, April 12th, 2007** – This morning, the Hire Immigrants Ottawa project celebrated the launch of the 'Employer Council of Champions', a group of local employers that have committed to making a difference in the integration of skilled immigrants in Ottawa. This new initiative highlights the important role employers have in addressing the underutilization of immigrants' talents in Ottawa's labour market.

"More than a quarter of skilled immigrants are working in jobs that don't match their skill levels. Meanwhile, employers are facing shortages in skilled labour. This mismatch will have drastic economic consequences if we don't act now," said Hicham Adra, senior executive with CGI, and one of the Employer Council of Champions' co-chairs.

Each member of the Employer Council of Champions will champion this issue within their organization and across their networks. Members represent large employers and small and medium sized enterprises from both the public and private sectors. Rosemarie Leclair, President of Hydro Ottawa and the Employer Council of Champions' other co-chair, explained that "many employers aren't fully aware of the potential value of the skilled immigrant talent pool. We need to find ways to provide better access to this relatively untapped, available workforce."

The 25 members of the Employer Council of Champions are: Algonquin College, Alterna, Bell, B. Surani Drugs Ltd. (Shopper's Drug Mart), Calian, Carleton University, CGI, City of Ottawa, GEM Health Care Services Inc., Hydro Ottawa, La Cité Collégiale, MBNA, MDS Nordion, NexInnovations Inc., Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, Ottawa Hospital, Public Service Alliance of Canada, Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada, Scotiabank, and University of Ottawa. Sitting as advisors on the Council are OCRI TalentWorks, Ottawa Chamber of Commerce, LASI WorldSkills Inc., le Regroupement des gens d'affaires de la Capitale nationale (RGA) and United Way/Centraide Ottawa.

The Employer Council of Champions will hold its first meeting in May 2007, where they will identify common challenges and begin developing strategies that improve access to, and integration of, skilled immigrants. Each member will also appoint a delegate to sit on one of Hire Immigrants Ottawa's four sector-specific working groups, in the public service, IT/knowledge, finance/accounting and health sectors. Within these groups, employers will connect directly with immigrant agencies and community stakeholders to develop sector-specific solutions.

Employers can also benefit from the new [hireimmigrantsottawa.ca](http://hireimmigrantsottawa.ca) website, which provides free access to local area employment service links, a self-assessment tool to help evaluate hiring

practices, and a wide variety of strategies, case studies and tips on how to improve the integration of skilled immigrants.

“Our domestically-born workforce isn’t expanding fast enough to keep up with economic growth - 100% of the net new growth in our labour market will soon be coming exclusively from immigrants,” explained Bashir Surani, Chair of the Steering Committee for the Internationally Trained Workers Partnership, Hire Immigrants Ottawa’s parent organization. “These employers have joined the Employer Council of Champions because they recognize that their future prosperity depends on how successfully they can integrate skilled immigrants into their workforces, starting today”.

Mayor O’Brien spoke to the audience this morning about this city’s focus on integrating immigrants into the labour market, stating that “finding solutions to integrating immigrants will help maintain and grow Ottawa’s status as a globally competitive and prosperous urban centre, and will build our appeal as a destination for internationally trained workers”.

Today’s launch comes on the heels of the Community and Protective Services Committee of City Council’s approval of a citywide strategy for integrating immigrants into the labour market, a strategy that will build on the work already accomplished by Hire Immigrants Ottawa and its parent organization, the Internationally Trained Workers Partnership.

#### **About Hire Immigrants Ottawa**

Hire Immigrants Ottawa is funded by the Government of Ontario, and is the first project of the Internationally Trained Workers Partnership (ITWP). ITWP is a partnership of community organizations that has been working on issues related immigrant integration in Ottawa since 2002. ITWP partners include United Way/Centraide Ottawa, City of Ottawa, Ottawa Chamber of Commerce, le Regroupement des gens d’affaires de la Capitale nationale (RGA), LASI WorldSkills, and OCRI TalentWorks. To learn more about ITWP, please visit [www.itwp.ca](http://www.itwp.ca).

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