

# **Foreign-trained Tradespeople in Toronto: What About the Other Half of “Access to Professions and Trades”?**

**March 2000**

Report of the  
“Issues and Service Interventions for Foreign-trained Tradespeople in Toronto”  
Project of  
**Skills for Change**  
&  
**The Toronto Working Group on Internationally-Trained Tradespeople**

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- *A.C.C.E.S*
- *COSTI-HUMBER CENTRE FOR FOREIGN-TRAINED PROFESSIONALS AND TRADESPEOPLE*
- *CULTURELINK*
- *IRANIAN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION*
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# I: INTRODUCTION

## *The Project*

The “Issues and Services for Foreign-trained Tradespeople in Toronto” project is a research initiative undertaken by Skills for Change, with support from the Levi Strauss Foundation and the City of Toronto’s Access and Equity Grants Program. Skills for Change approached other community organizations in the Toronto area that had knowledge and recent experience working with foreign-trained tradespeople and formed a working group to share their experiences.

## *Project Activities*

- Interviewing stakeholders relevant to trades training and employment in Toronto
- Conducting interviews with foreign-trained tradespeople who had received service from one of the working group organizations
- Reviewing program records and files of services delivered to foreign-trained tradespeople
- Developing a service-delivery model which would address the need for an integrated delivery approach to assist foreign-trained tradespeople in Toronto
- Conducting a series of information sessions for foreign-trained tradespeople and for staff of agencies serving newcomers
- Producing a report outlining the key issues and possible service initiatives to address them

This report attempts to outline the scope of the problem faced by foreign-trained tradespeople and some possible solutions. It focuses on ways in which the community sector, with the help of government, unions, training institutions and employers, could take steps to ensure that the valuable skills and experience of these newcomers are not lost to our economy and society.

# II. ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS AND TRADES

## *Spotlight on Foreign-Trained Professionals*

Since the publication of the *Access! Task Force Report* in 1989, there has been considerable activity around the issue of Access for the Foreign-trained. Most of that activity, however, has been focused on foreign-trained **professionals**, who have been actively asserting their skills and experience. They have been demanding improved opportunities to demonstrate their ability to meet Canadian standards and to be of value to Canadian employers. In 1999, two major Canadian newspapers, the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail*, ran series of articles highlighting the terrible waste of skills and potential; “*Immigrants face underemployment in Toronto...Doctors, lawyers, and engineers end up delivering pizza, driving cabs or telemarketing in tough job market*” read a May 24<sup>th</sup> headline in the *Globe and Mail*.

The situation of underemployed professionals has been recognized by a growing number of service providers who have developed significant programs and strategies designed to increase access to licensing and appropriate employment opportunities for engineers, accountants and other foreign-trained professionals. Groups like the *Coalition for Access to Professional Engineering, (CAPE)* and the *Association of International Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario* have been able to garner some support from private foundations to develop and push for solutions to systemic barriers. The Access to Professions and Trades Unit in the Government of Ontario has also continued its activities to address the issues. Some Occupational Regulatory Bodies have devoted resources to addressing systemic barriers in the licensing systems.

### ***Little Focus on Foreign-Trained Tradespeople***

While discussions on the access issue usually link trades and professions in the same breath, the situation of foreign-trained tradespeople has largely been neglected. What of the thousands of skilled foreign-trained trades-people who come to Canada each year? While we are beginning to recognize the waste of human capital resources when a foreign-trained doctor or teacher is washing dishes or driving a cab, we have yet to apply the same understanding to the foreign-trained auto-mechanic, millwright, cook, hairstylist, autobody repairer or electrician who is underemployed.

### ***Equal Loss to the Economy***

Many of these individuals too bring years of experience and skill acquired in another country and face substantial barriers to finding employment here that will make use of their skills. There has been very little research into their situation and the equally serious loss to the Canadian economy created through their lack of appropriate employment. Within the community-based sector there are very few services available to assist people with trades skills and experience to access the information or upgrading they need to be able to find appropriate employment and contribute their skills and experience to the Canadian economy. While it has proven difficult to put precise dollar costs on underemployment, wasted training, and social and health impacts on immigrant families and on Canadian society, immigrant service agencies see the costs on a daily basis. This project is an attempt to put the issues of foreign-trained tradespeople back on the agenda.

## **III: FOREIGN-TRAINED TRADESPEOPLE IN ONTARIO**

### ***How many foreign-trained trades-people are settling in Ontario?***

It is difficult to get an accurate picture of the number of foreign-trained tradespeople coming into the province. The Access to Professions and Trades (APT) Unit of the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities has compiled statistics based on the self-reported “intended occupation” on the landing documents of immigrants to Ontario between 1994 and 1997. They were able to document only 8,700 trades people.

These numbers appear low for a number of reasons. They represent only those immigrants who had indicated they intended to work in one of the 19 trades requiring a license in Ontario. (Compulsory, regulated trades) The number does not reflect people who intended to work in any of the 42 Voluntary trades (such as carpenter, cook, auto-body repairer) or in any of the unregulated trades which often require combinations of skills sets from a number of trade areas.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the APT unit notes a number of other likely factors explaining the small numbers that are documented based on landing papers. These factors include the fact that spouses and dependents do not have to indicate occupation, and that the information is based strictly on self-reporting. The daily experience of settlement and employment service agencies around the city (and the province) supports the sense that these numbers seriously under-represent the presence of individuals possessing viable trades skills, experiences and aptitudes among immigrant and refugee newcomers to Ontario.

### ***What is the Definition of a tradesperson?***

Part of the problem lies in the differences in the way “trades” are defined in Ontario and elsewhere. Just as the terms engineer, doctor, or accountant mean different things and imply different skills and training in different countries, so do the terms applied to trades and trades training. Trades are hands-on occupations where training methods and licensing requirements vary considerably from country to country. In some countries, trades training is primarily through informal apprenticeship, with little academic training. In other countries, tradespeople go through highly formal academic and practical training through technical school systems.

### ***Influence of The North South Divide***

In countries where training in the trades is largely informal, or formal training an option only for those with higher economic status, employment is also likely to have been in a range of settings. Multinational corporations operate all over the world and therefore branches with advanced technological and infrastructure capacity also exists globally. However inherent in the north/south divide is the reality that, in many of the countries producing large numbers of today’s immigrants, there are more businesses operating with under-resourced and less sophisticated machine and technological infrastructures than found in Canada. They succeed because of the resourcefulness and ingenuity of their workers rather than the capability of diagnostic equipment and precision tools. Skilled and experienced people with highly-developed abilities and aptitudes for spatial-perception, logic, trouble shooting and problem solving (qualities essential for succeeding as a tradesperson) may have little formal documentation of their experience or training. They are less likely to have the formal vocabulary of tools and procedures that we assess here as denoting knowledge of the field.

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<sup>1</sup> There were 12 regulated trades represented in the 8,700. The top four regulated trades were 3,730 cooks and bakers, 1,207 industrial millwrights, 957 automotive technicians and 918 hairstylists and barbers.

### *Multi Skilled Immigrant Tradespeople*

There are many people arriving in Toronto with significant skills that would apply to the Voluntary and/or non-regulated trades (which are not counted in the APT figures) or that would apply to a range of trades as we define them in Ontario. For example, a diesel mechanic who had worked in the shipping industry would not find an identical trade title in the list of Ontario Trades. However, this individual would have skills that could apply to a range of Ontario trades such as truck and coach mechanic, train mechanic, small engine mechanic, or marine engine mechanic.

### *The Apprenticeship System as a Youth Model*

While a newcomer with a trades background may not fit easily into an Ontario trade definition, it is incorrect to automatically equate a foreign trained tradesperson with an apprentice who is beginning their training/experience. Apprenticeship is a youth model intended to train individuals with little or no prior skill, knowledge or experience. It is a valuable system, one into which newcomer youth need to be integrated, but it does not suit the needs of our clients whose average age is between 35 and 45 and who possess years of work experience in trade fields. While encouraging newcomers from other occupations to consider trades apprenticeship programs as a career option is **another** important issue for discussion, we are referring here to foreign-trained tradespeople who already have training, experience and aptitudes in their fields, often many years of both.

## **IV. THE PROFILE OF FOREIGN-TRAINED TRADESPEOPLE ACCESSING COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES**

Our analysis of the barriers facing foreign-trained tradespeople comes from the information collected from our interviews with tradespeople themselves, with community agencies that work with them, union workers, representatives of the Ministry of Education and Training and others. Our follow-up study was conducted on a small scale. We interviewed 29 people: 10 tradespeople who had obtained temporary licenses with the help of Culturelink; and 19 who had gone through a course offered by the Association of Journeypersons from the Former Soviet Union. However, we were able to supplement our information using standard follow-up information from the three other organizations who have previously run programs for foreign trained tradespeople: 21 people served by the Centre for Foreign-trained Professionals and Tradespeople; 50 former clients of the Iranian Community Association and an overall report from a Skills for Change program which served over 50 people.

As we used a variety of types of data collection, based on records available to us, our data and analysis are not scientific. Our impressions are, nonetheless, based on information gathered from the experiences of approximately 150 foreign-trained tradespeople who have been helped by 5 different community agencies. Our sample includes: automotive

service technicians; electricians; plumbers; construction workers and hairstylists.

### ***Sample Individual Profiles***

The following are a few profiles of individuals. Their composite provides a snapshot of the foreign-trained tradespeople we have encountered and worked with:

**George** is a builder from Trinidad, where he ran his own construction company. He is in his late 40s. He is skilled in carpentry, masonry, electrical, plumbing, and drywall, but doesn't qualify for a license in Ontario under any one specific trade. He has had little formal education. He is attempting to run small business here, struggling from job to job.

**Aman** brings 10 years of experience as a mechanic in Afghanistan, where he worked primarily servicing diesel engines of late model military vehicles. He is overqualified as an apprentice mechanic, but underqualified for a license. He has an intermediate level of conversational English but lacks technical English specific to his trade. He is currently on social assistance.

**Stephan** is a Diesel Mechanic from Romania. He is in his early 50's and has 20 years experience as a merchant sailor working on large diesel engines. He has a family to support and a low intermediate level of English.

**Sumiko** is a Cook from Japan with 5 years experience. However, her cooking experience is too narrow to qualify for a cook's license here. She has a low-intermediate level of English and is currently working as a waitress.

**Suban** is an auto body worker from Sri Lanka. He apprenticed on the job as a youth, but has had no formal education or training and a low literacy level. He's in his early 30's. He has over 10 years of experience, mostly informal working conditions. He is determined to continue to work in his field.

## **V. BARRIERS AND OBSTACLES**

- **Locating and accessing timely and straightforward information**

Many of the tradespeople we interviewed expressed a difficulty in accessing information about how to return to their trade or to apply their skills to a trade field here. Our experience in presenting information sessions to newcomers and counsellors in the course of the project also confirmed that settlement workers, employment counsellors and social services workers tend to have little knowledge or understanding of the trades occupations, role of unions, employment procedures or the system for trades certification.

- **English language needs**

The majority of the clients we interviewed indicated that language was a barrier for them. They indicated that both trade-specific terminology used in the Canadian context and general workplace English communications skill were issues.

*“J.” Is an automotive technician from Sudan with 12 years experience who obtained a temporary license<sup>2</sup>. The license allowed him to get several interviews, but he wasn’t offered a position. He attributes this to his low-level English skills.*

*“A”. Obtained a temporary license in auto-body repair in March 1999. With the temporary license, he was able to get a 4-month volunteer placement. However, he was not offered a job because the employer said his level of English was not adequate for the work. He is currently studying ESL, but is becoming increasingly discouraged. He has more than 17 years of experience in auto-body repair and feels it is not being valued.*

- **Lack of familiarity with equipment/materials used locally**

In many trades the materials and equipment used in Canada are different and more varied than those a tradesperson may be accustomed to. For instance, in many countries, housing construction is done primarily with concrete block and plaster, while products like drywall may be unfamiliar. Particular tools or equipment may also be unfamiliar.

*Ali obtained a temporary license as an industrial electrician. He was able to get a job with the temporary license, but had difficulties on the job because he was unfamiliar with the equipment. He was also unsuccessful at passing the exam.*

- **Lack of study materials and support to prepare for licensing exams**

Many of the clients interviewed had been helped by a community agency to obtain a temporary license. However, the experience of those clients was one of almost universal failure if the license was not accompanied by specific terminology and exam preparation courses.

*“F”. Obtained a temporary license as a plumber. He attempted the exam and failed. He was surprised and frustrated at finding himself unable to pass the exam, with 11 years experience in his field in Bosnia. “I could not understand the questions or the choices for the answers.”<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Temporary licenses are granted to applicants who present a statutory declaration indicating that they have the required types and hours of experience for a given trade. They can work with a temporary license. The license is valid for 90 days, during which time the candidate must take the written certification exam. A person may make three attempts at the exam within a one-year period.

<sup>3</sup> Trades certification exams are written academic exams in a multiple-choice format. There is no hands-on portion. Test-takers are allowed to bring an interpreter as long as the interpreter is not familiar with the trade, making them of minimal assistance in terms of technical terminology.

*“C.” Obtained a temporary license as a hairstylist. She has purchased textbooks to prepare for the exam, but is finding the level of English and much of the terminology too difficult and doubts that she will pass. “Some kind of course to prepare for the exam would be very useful.”*

*“R.” Obtained a temporary license in 1998. While he was able to find a job with his temporary license, some of the machinery in use here was unfamiliar to him, which created difficulties for him. Two months later he took the certification exam but did not pass it. He found the wording of the questions confusing and didn’t know some of the Canadian-based terminology.”*

## **VI. SERVICE PROVIDER EXPERIENCES**

### ***Temporary Licensing***

The Ministry of Education has a provision which allows newcomers to the province, whether from another province or country, to obtain a temporary 90-day license by providing a statutory declaration indicating that they have the skills and experience required for a given trade. The temporary license-holder must take the certification exam within the 90 days, and may attempt it up to three times, following a 90-day interval.

Several community organizations have had programs to assist foreign-trained trades people in obtaining a temporary license. Currently, **Culturelink** is the only Toronto agency still involved in this work. In cooperation with the **Toronto Workers Health and Safety Legal Clinic**, **Culturelink** has been offering basic counselling and assistance to foreign-trained tradespeople in preparing a statutory declaration to obtain a temporary trades license. They have been providing this service without any funding support.

The experience of the clients served by **Culturelink** and other community agencies clearly shows the limitations of temporary licensing as a tool for assisting foreign-trained tradespeople into their fields. During 1998/99, Culturelink assisted 37 people in obtaining temporary licenses as automotive service technicians, electricians, plumbers and hairstylists. The clients had an average of 13 years of experience in their trade prior to immigrating to Canada. Of the 10 clients we were able to locate to interview, only 3 tried the certification exam. Only 1 had passed and was working in his/her trade at the time of the interview.

This experience mirrors an earlier experience with temporary licensing by Skills for Change where 64 foreign-trained tradespeople in obtaining temporary licenses. Of those Skills for Change was able to track, none passed the licensing exam. The COSTI - Humber College Centre for Foreign-trained Professionals and Trades people provided individual or group counselling for 21 trades people in 1998/99. Out of the 21 auto mechanics, electricians and plumbers who used their service, only 2 obtained temporary licenses and passed the exams.

Clearly, obtaining a temporary license alone, with no other interventions, has not led the newcomers who sought help with these community agencies to re-establish themselves in their trades. It is important to recognize that this provision is probably a useful stepping-stone to foreign-trained tradespeople from English-speaking countries where trades training works on a similar model of hands-on and academic mix in a formal apprenticeship system. However, given the current immigration source countries, this does not represent the majority of foreign-trained tradespeople coming into the city.

Poor performance on the licensing exams for these clients appears to be the result of a number of factors. Written English ability and familiarity with Canadian-English trade specific terminology are two important factors. Lack of familiarity with particular machines and technologies commonly used here is another. The written, multiple choice format and theoretical orientation of the exam itself is problematic for many candidates whose training and work have been primarily hands on. There is almost no opportunity in the current system to take a practical rather than a theoretical written exam. In the few trades where this option exists, the cost is prohibitive.

### ***Comprehensive Programs***

There are several examples of organizations that have been able to offer more comprehensive programs for foreign-trained tradespeople. The success of the tradespeople in returning to their trades appears to be much higher with this more comprehensive assistance.

**The Iranian Community Association** offered six-month pre-licensing programs for hairstylists and electricians during 1994-97. The program included general and trade specific language training, preparation of documentation for temporary licensing, exam preparation, resume preparation and job search. Out of clients they were able to trace, 28 (56%) had passed licensing exams and were working in their trades. While this still shows that many foreign-trained trades people are falling through the cracks, the record is considerably better when clients are given a wider range of supports.

The recent experience of the **Association of Journeypersons from the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Former Soviet Union** shows a similar trend. The Association was formed by a group of electrical and mechanical engineers from the Former Soviet Union who evaluated their job possibilities here and found that a trades license in a related field was an option. They began to provide a training program (on a fee for service, non-profit basis) to assist newcomers in moving towards licenses and employment as Industrial, Construction or Maintenance Electricians, and Industrial Mechanics (millwrights). Their program consisted of orientation to the trade in Ontario, exam preparation, a technical and tool library, resume and interview preparation and job search assistance. The program was offered in English and Russian.

In our follow-up study, we were able to interview 19 clients of the Association's program. All were electricians, with an average of 12 years experience each in their trade before coming to Canada. Of the 19, 16 took the exam and all 16 passed. Fifteen are working in

their trades. As of March 1999, the Association had served about 200 clients and estimated that approximately 50 % of them had passed certification exams by that point. Their success in obtaining licenses and work in their fields is likely a mixture of demand in their fields, and the comprehensive (and bilingual) assistance they received in both preparing for exams and obtaining work.

Here are some of the comments the Association's clients made in our interviews with them:

*"A." Found the program very helpful in terms of trade information covering terminology, equipment in use here, safety rules and regulations and the additional help he got in resume-writing and job search. As well, he stressed the moral support he had received.*

*"C." Came to Canada in 1998 with 8 years experience as an electrician. He reported that through the program he learned about the electrical trade in Canada, as well as how to make his resume and job search more effective. He received current information about which companies were hiring at the time. He did well in the certification exam. "Without the Association's help," he said, "I would have found the exam very hard to pass since I was not familiar with the terminology." He's been employed in his field for over a year and is very satisfied with his situation.*

*"L." had been in Canada six months when he found the program. When he learned he'd have to pass a licensing exam, he was quite worried because his English was not advanced. He felt that while he could easily pass a practical exam, a theoretical written exam would be a problem. "I'm very happy to have discovered the Association. With their help, I passed the exam, got my license, and got a job as an electrician."*

## **VII. IDENTIFYING THE GAPS**

### ***Temporary license vs. comprehensive supports***

A clear pattern emerged both from our interviews and from the statistics of the community agency programs. Clients who received only basic information counseling or assistance in obtaining the legal declarations necessary to obtain a temporary license had little success in passing licensing exams and getting work in their field. Clearly, people who did not receive any systematic support in preparing for exams, improving their knowledge of Canadian trade-specific terminology, general workplace terminology, and machinery and technology commonly used here are having great difficulties re-integrating into their trade. This represents a loss of valuable skills and resources, and a great expense to Canadian society when people end up in poorly paying jobs or on social assistance because they cannot get work in their field.

Our analysis indicates that newcomers who went through an integrated program of orientation to their trade, occupational terminology and exam preparation, job search support and other supports did much better in entering trades employment here. The

positive experience of newcomers who received comprehensive support through programs like the one formerly offered by the Iranian Community Association or the Association of Journey Persons from the Former Soviet Union is clear from the “snapshot” statistics above.

### ***“Bridging” into the Ontario system***

While these more comprehensive programs dealt effectively with issues of language and exam preparation, they still lacked other elements that would improve the likelihood of successful integration for clients. There is a need for programs that include skills and/or knowledge “bridging” elements that would allow a mid-career foreign-trained tradesperson to do short-term upgrading to fill specific gaps in their training, experience or knowledge of local materials/equipment and practices. Similar ideas are beginning to arise in discussions about competency assessments for licensing for foreign-trained professionals. Increasingly, professions are being pushed to look at a competencies-based model like the one used in trades to assess candidates. Such a model lends itself easily to the design of upgrading programs designed on an individual basis to fill specific gaps.

### ***Lack of targeted services***

Unfortunately, while community agencies like the groups involved in the trades project Working Group have attempted to run integrated programs in the past, there are no publicly-funded programs specifically designed for trades-people currently available in Toronto. Most tradespeople require some level of orientation to their trade in the Canadian context; however, few have the resources to undertake private courses. Like foreign-trained professionals, they are forced to take “survival jobs” to support themselves and their families, and have little time or resources to devote to returning to their trade.

## **VIII. ELEMENTS OF AN INTEGRATED MODEL FOR SERVICES**

### ***Investing up front: A Savings to Canadian Social Structures***

In a paper presented to the *1995 National Apprenticeship Conference*, Sharif Kamali, former *Access to Apprenticeship Coordinator at the Iranian Community Association*, illustrated the very substantial savings to the Public possible by investing in programs such as the one the Iranian Association had been running. As well, he compared the costs of short-term upgrading/bridging programs for the foreign-trained versus full-scale apprenticeships. Indications are that a minimal public investment in providing supports to foreign-trained tradespeople early on in would go a long way to ensuring that they are able to effectively integrate into the Canadian economy and not cost the system in terms of income supports in the future.

The elements of an integrated package of services to assist foreign-trained tradespeople to

pass the qualification exams and integrate into the workforce have been identified based on existing or previously successful programs and by the needs identified by former clients. Overall, the orientation/upgrading, exam preparation and employment preparation program we propose is similar to the Sector Terminology, Information, and Counselling (STIC) programs currently offered by Skills for Change and several other community agencies for foreign-trained professionals. However, in addition to the elements of most STIC programs, the model we are presenting also includes a heavy emphasis on preparation for examinations and on skills and knowledge bridging to fill specific gaps. In order for a project of this nature to be successful, the support of a variety of players in trades education, licensing, and the trades' labour market would be key.

### ***Need for Trades Stakeholder Participation in Module and Training Material Development***

It is essential to involve individuals with in-depth, experiential knowledge of specific trade skills and regulations in the development of the modules discussed below and the written materials required to deliver the suggested training and interventions. Knowledge too of employer requirements, and the realities of industry, shops floor and construction site politics and job conditions must be infused into the development of all of the components of the service model outlined in the following section. The gap between theory and reality can be vast in trades employment and it is essential that foreign-trained tradespeople, who are entering a new society and culture, have access to a full, comprehensive picture of the trades' labour market.

## **IX. THE SERVICE MODEL:**

### ***A Menu of Service Modules***

The program would be available in modules that would allow a tradesperson to focus on only the areas of skill and knowledge upgrading, and employment preparation/job search skills that s/he required. Some modules would be general to all trades, while others would be trade or sector specific.

- ***Assessment***

The key to the service model is a thorough assessment of a tradesperson's status in terms of skills and gaps. This would include assessment of written and spoken English level, identification of specific skill or knowledge gaps based on the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training's skill inventories, trade-specific Canadian English terminology and exam-taking skills, among others. A plan would be developed for each client based on his/her assessment. A trades-person who requires Basic English upgrading prior to entering a trades employment preparation program would be referred to appropriate ESL instruction to attain a sufficient level of English to function in the program.

▪ ***General Orientation***

A general Workplace Orientation aimed at acclimatizing the foreign-trained trades-person to the norms of the Canadian workplace, employment standards, the role of labour unions, basic health and safety etc.

▪ ***Trade/Sector Specific Orientation***

This orientation would outline the functioning of the workplace, and the labour market for a specific trade or sector of trades i.e.: service, construction, automotive, and industrial.

▪ ***Language upgrading***

Language upgrading would involve both:  
General Work search and Workplace English communications skills  
Sector-specific terminology and language.

▪ ***Skills/knowledge Bridging***

Skills and knowledge bridging would involve a very specific evaluation and assessment of skill and knowledge gaps in order to design an individualized bridging program. This would involve partnerships with employers, unions and educational institutions to establish short-term training and experience modules that would allow a foreign-trained trades-person to fill specific gaps without having to go through a full-scale apprenticeship. Temporary licensing would be obtained where appropriate to undertake bridging placements.

▪ ***Exam preparation.***

As identified above, the academically-based, written, multiple-choice exam is a major barrier for many foreign-trained trades-people. Unlike foreign-trained professionals who are generally familiar with a written exam format, the Ontario exam poses a major challenge to many tradespeople whose training has been primarily hands-on. Exam preparation would therefore need to address not only language/terminology, but also exam-taking skills.

▪ ***Job Search***

Job search training and support for foreign-trained tradespeople would include some or all of the following elements:

- Resumes, interview skills, sector specific job search techniques
- Employer outreach – employer, union contacts by sector
- Job Shadowing/volunteer placements – to build confidence, familiarity, obtain local reference
- Networking/support groups – for exam prep and job search, by sector

- Self- Employment/ Small Business Information

- ***Follow-up***

Follow up with participants to track results, provide additional assistance and provide program feedback and assessment

## **X. CONCLUSION**

When Skills for Change decided to allocate funding towards the issue of Foreign-trained tradespeople it was with the purpose of rekindling discussions on their issues. The sense was that any limited focus that might have been directed towards the trades after the release of the *Access! Task Force Report* had virtually disappeared. The question regarding what work was still being conducted around the trades was asked repeatedly in the first conversations about the foreign-trained tradespeople. It was therefore decided that the initial task of the research should be to conduct a review of the current status of programming and services for foreign-trained tradespeople.

Skills for Change had delivered apprenticeship focused programs through OTAB's Access to Apprenticeship initiative in the mid 1990's, however the current organizational knowledge of the trades was stale. Skills for Change chose to conduct the research study in a collaborative fashion calling on the more current knowledge of the few organizations in Toronto that had delivered service more recently or were still delivering limited services to Foreign-trained tradespeople .

Over the spring and early summer of 1999 the objectives of the working group were defined. They were simple and threefold:

- To confirm the existence of any on-going services for foreign-trained tradespeople
- To identify barriers faced by them
- To develop a report that would generate discussions to put the issue of foreign-trained tradespeople back onto the agenda of networks and stakeholders involved in the issue of skilled, foreign-trained immigrants and refugees coming to Toronto.

We are confident the report has met the first two objectives. We hope that as the paper is offered to the wider community sector and other parties interested and involved in working with the Foreign-trained tradespeople, it will meet the third and most important objective: the regeneration of focus and discussion. Attached to this report is a list of individuals within the member organizations involved in the creation of this report that can be contacted for follow-up comment, input and discussion purposes.

### ***A Proposal to Create A Third Tier in the Apprenticeship System***

We will conclude our report with a concrete proposal to the community of interests we hope will re-emerge from our work.

The apprenticeship system, in spite of its current limitations for foreign-trained trades people, would appear to offer many components that could be modified to create a solution. A third tier, a level between apprentice and journeyperson, incorporating key elements of the training and licensing systems in place, could be developed that would suit the needs of older, skilled and experienced foreign-trained newcomers.

We hope that ensuing discussions take this suggestion as a starting point. We have the opportunity to replenish our skills capacity in Ontario in a much shorter time than it will take to bring large numbers of young people up to journeyperson level. The opportunity lies with the thousands of immigrants and refugees coming to Ontario annually. With limited investment in training, Foreign-trained trades people could quickly become the future's journeypersons. They would maximize their potential economic contribution to Ontario, revitalize our skilled trades training capacities and overall enhance our provincial economic production.

# AN INTEGRATED SERVICE MODEL FOR FOREIGN-TRAINED TRADESPEOPLE

