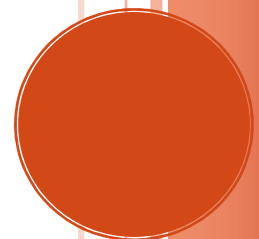


REGULATED PROFESSIONS: CONTINUING TO BUILD A FAIR ALBERTA

Final Report

August 2010



REGULATED PROFESSIONS: CONTINUING TO BUILD A FAIR ALBERTA

Final Report

According to 2006 Statistics Canada Census data on regulated professions, 24% of internationally trained immigrants were working in their field, compared to 62% of their Canadian-born counterparts. On June 18 2010, Immigrant Sector Council of Calgary and Immigrant Services Calgary invited five panelists and a Keynote Speaker, The Honourable Jean Augustine, to provide us with their perspectives on what is being done—or should be done—to address these issues within their respective fields. Nearly 100 representatives of business, government, settlement agencies, educational institutions, and internationally educated immigrants attended to hear our panelists. Moderated by Alicia Backman-Beharry, the audience was invited to engage our speakers in further discussion. What resulted was an inspired dialogue that concluded with an important reminder: no one is aiming to lower professional standards; we are aiming to eliminate unnecessary barriers.

Thank you to all those who participated in making this event a success, including volunteers, staff and Board Members of Immigrant Services Calgary and Immigrant Sector Council of Calgary. The following individuals were responsible for planning this event:

Enayat Aminzadah – *Director, Operations and Resource Development, Immigrant Services Calgary*

Isabelle Martin – *Coordinator, Resource Development & Special Events, Immigrant Services Calgary*

Elena Oursou – *Senior Manager, Immigrant Sector Council of Calgary*

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KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

The Honourable Jean Augustine, Fairness Commissioner of Ontario

Ms. Augustine spoke to our audience about the development and role of the Office of the Fairness Commission. Independent of government, it is the first office of its type in Canada. The Office does not assess credentials nor advocate for individuals, but rather its mandate is focused on facilitating systemic change. While the Office was not welcomed by all parties when it originally began operating, businesses, regulatory bodies, and law societies now understand the benefits it brings. The Office has assisted several regulatory bodies improve their accreditation process by streamlining their processes, eliminating unnecessary components, and increasing communication between internationally trained/educated professionals, and encouraging clear reasons for denying applicants. They are currently developing a strategy to assess registration practices, and planning for building an Ontario College of Trades that will require 21 trades to have fair registration. In sum, the Office works under the belief that everyone deserves a fair chance.

PANEL PRESENTATIONS

Kathleen Morrow - Director, Foreign Qualifications Recognition Unit, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Kathleen discussed the Alberta Government's commitment to foreign qualification recognition, formalized through the Foreign Qualification Recognition Plan in November 2008, and the launch of the Foreign Qualifications Recognition Unit. The goal is that immigrants will be able to fully utilize their skills in Alberta, and focuses on three strategic areas: Specialized Information, Assessment Standards and Resources, and Bridging the Gap. To date, the Unit has completed occupational fact sheets for thirty professional bodies that provide a step-by-step overview of the accreditation process, international education guides that compare the educational qualifications of Canada to other countries, and supports twenty-seven projects that are working to streamline and improve their internal assessment processes. The Unit requires regulatory bodies to report on the number of foreign applicants that are accepted versus denied, and information as to why they were denied. The intention is to begin identifying patterns that will inform future action and investment. The FQR is working diligently towards systemic change and improvement in foreign qualification recognition. An Annual Report detailing the Unit's activities and progress will be made available on the Alberta Government's website in September.

Dr. Imrana Riaz – Treasurer, Alberta International Medical Graduates Association

AIMGA, made-up of 625 international medical graduates, supports its members and aims to eliminate the unnecessary barriers to licensing by influencing policy. Educated in Pakistan, Imrana has successfully navigated the system and is now licensed to practice. Imrana's presentation focused on what Alberta needs to do to increase fairness. Bridging programs, she noted, are extremely important for fast-tracking the accreditation process for internationally trained professionals. Imrana believes the barriers to accreditation are systemic. As the competitive nature of the global market intensifies, Alberta's economy must focus on systems-level solutions.

Al Schuld – Deputy Registrar, APEGGA

Al Schuld spoke about APEGGA's process for incorporating fairness and accountability into their accreditation process. Al emphasized that the self-regulatory status of APEGGA is not taken for granted, and APEGGA seeks to take opportunities to demonstrate their fair practices or to learn from their experiences. APEGGA is perceived as being discriminatory, but Al insists they have accountability to their profession and it is extremely important to uphold those standards. Al emphasized the importance of transparency and building fairness into the regulatory system. APEGGA boasts 57,000 members, while 6000 new persons apply each year. One third of the applicants are Alberta graduates, one third are graduates of other Canadian provinces, and one third are graduates of programs around the world.

Dianne Fehr – Chair, Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council (CRIEC)

Dianne spoke about two key topics – collaboration and employer engagement. She emphasized the need for key players to pull together on their efforts to provide services to clients. Dianne explained how CRIEC is implementing these principles by working with immigrant agencies who provide mentoring programs and business partners. CRIEC's Mentoring Collaborative aims to increase the number of mentoring matches made in Calgary.

Sophia Langlois – Senior Partner, Audit, KPMG

KPMG, a global network of firms providing Audit, Tax, and Advisory Services, is working to support immigrants by providing a welcome program that matches an internal mentor to new hires, establishing an international club to celebrate differences, and through their Diversity Initiative, which aims to create a workplace that is inclusive of everyone. Sophia believes Alberta needs to increase fairness by embracing diversity and celebrating successes, language programs, transparency of the accreditation processes, re-examining the barriers and costs of exams, and embracing the work of the Ontario Fairness Commission and the Alberta Foreign Qualification Recognition Unit. Sophia concluded by making the compelling point that immigrants should come to Canada not only for their children, but for themselves.

AUDIENCE DISCUSSION

FOLLOWING THE PANEL PRESENTATIONS, AUDIENCE MEMBERS WERE INVITED TO ASK THE PANELISTS QUESTIONS. BELOW IS A SUMMARY OF WHAT TRANSPIRED:

Q. [Directed to Imrana, AIMGA] Which exams would you eliminate for Medical Graduates?

A. [Imrana, AIMGA] Eliminate the qualifying exam or evaluating exam to fast-track and make the process more efficient. The evaluating exam is only for foreign graduates but it is very similar to the qualifying – the requirement to write both is inefficient.

Q. [Directed to Al, APEGGA] The perception is that foreign works are laid off first. Is this true?

A. [Al, APEGGA] Alberta experienced a high demand for qualified workers because they were unable to cope with major projects. A large number of the Temporary Foreign Workers that were employed are getting experience which will help them get accredited. It is just a perception that they are being laid off first.

Q. Should we have something similar to Ontario’s Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act?

A. [Sophia, KPMG] All provinces can create their own legislation with respect to regulated professions. The national professional bodies simply just set exam dates. A Fairness Commission to coordinate the regulation of professions across provinces would be helpful.

“A multi-faceted approach will lead to solutions”

- Kathleen Morrow, KPMG

Q. What we have is a self-regulating system. How can you be fair when you are the judge in your own case? We need something independent to serve justice. Yes, we have regulations, but what about the fact that they can’t get Canadian experience because the employer wants Canadian experience? This cannot be solved by self-regulating bodies.

A. [Ms. Augustine, Office of the Fairness Commission] The issue of fairness and transparency was legitimately made known by the general public. One body had two fee structures based on where you were educated. Once this was made transparent it was eliminated. The Fairness Commission brought this role to the table – creating transparency. Openness of the process made a good difference – even regulators have acknowledged they had not reviewed their practices. There is something to be said for legislated process.

[Kathleen, FQR Unit] Legislation is just one tool. Under legislation, regulatory bodies are already obliged to report to government. So there is legislation to support Alberta’s FQR plan. There is also an element of cooperation and good will. The Plan has established cooperation and information exchange across the system. It is a principles-based approach. Approach is to look at systems, but this cannot be done uniformly, so we aim to look at each regulatory body. A multi-faceted approach will lead to solutions.

Q. [Directed to Kathleen] How confident are you that the reporting the government asks the self-regulating organizations to do is actually giving the government the accurate and detailed information it needs in order to build streamlined bridging programs?

A. [Kathleen, FQR Unit] The FQR Unit is a leader in Canada with respect to finding out what the barriers are. This should show up in reports because the number of foreign-educated applicants that do not receive a license has to be reported on. These numbers will start a dialogue between the FQR Unit and the regulatory body to see what can be done (eg. create a bridging program). This is the intent of the reporting requirement.

Q. [Moderator] The issue of timing has frequently come up. That is, the time it takes to report, reflect, make a decision, etc. Who can they go to, what can they do?

“We will not lower the standards of the profession, we will lower the barriers”

- The Honourable Jean Augustine

A. [Dianne, CRIEC] It is a resource issue that needs to be addressed. My agency, Immigrant Access Fund, has not come up with ways to tell our loan applicants and recipients where to go for help with interviews, resumes, etc. We all need to know about the good work other agencies are doing. There is a huge issue of communication – we need to come up with ways to communicate to immigrants. The cost to write exams is also a huge burden. This really needs to be addressed by

regulatory bodies. The frequency of exams also needs to change – if they have to wait 6 months to 1 yr. that is a whole lot of time in their life that is wasted.

Q. There is tension between making accreditation easier for internationally trained immigrants and the protection of the public. Competencies such as understanding evidence-based scientific processes, language fluency, etc. – we are wrestling with rights/ responsibilities and our obligation to protect the practice.

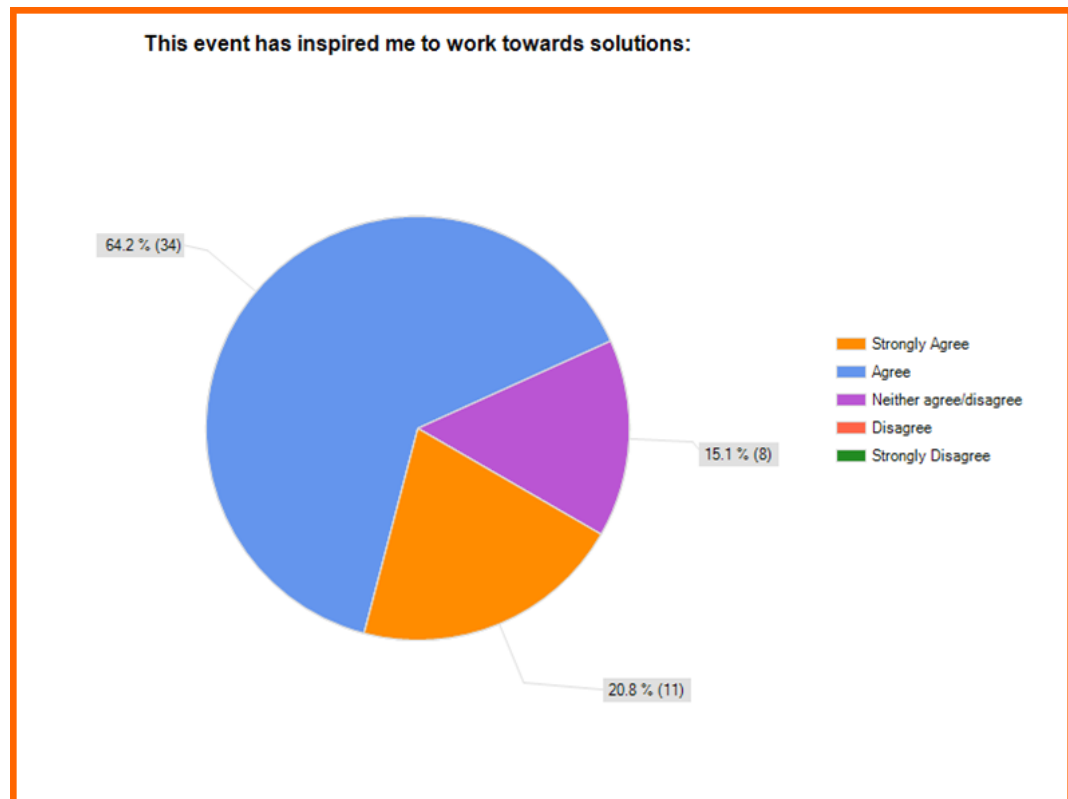
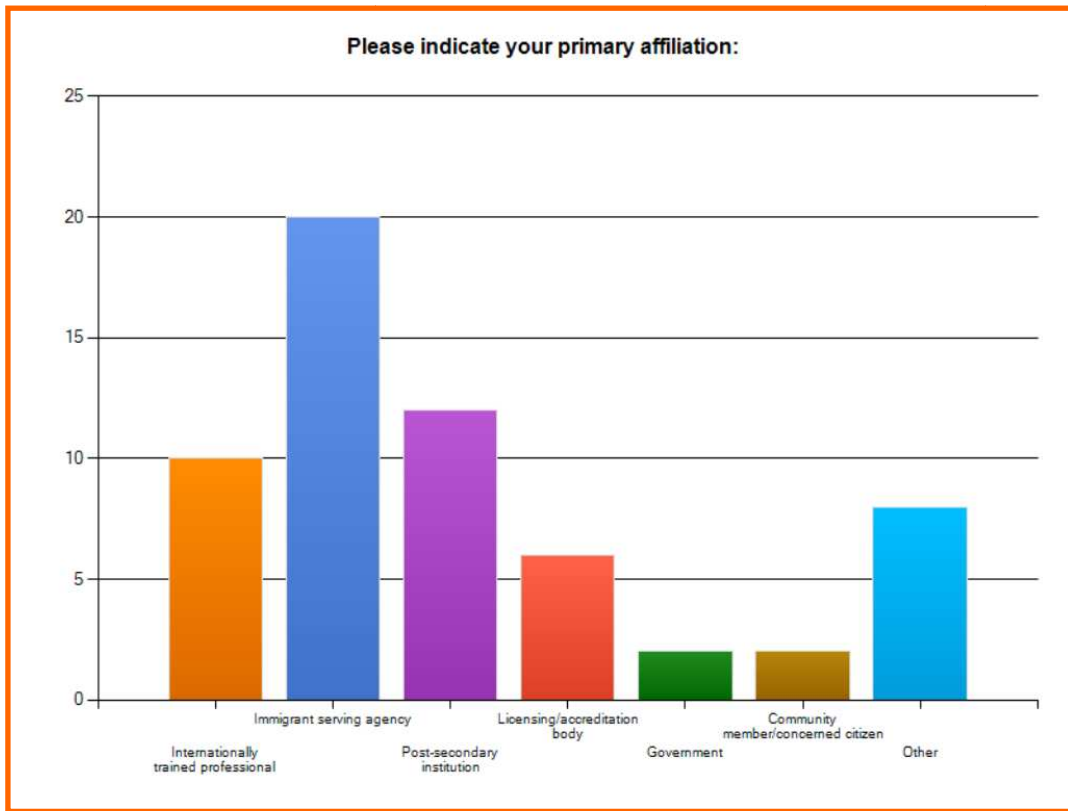
A. [No Answer]

Q. It is evident that we are in an adversarial situation. Regulatory bodies are protecting their profession. Legislation is punitive – setting one up against the other. Is there a better way? Legislation does not change for immigrants. Where is the point of view from immigrants?

A. [Kathleen, FQR Unit] The FQR Unit is trying to understand whether or not it is standards or a barrier that shouldn't be there. It is a difficult issue and there is a struggle – we need a mechanism to measure standards and we have a ways to go. The FQR Plan states that the role of government is to maintain occupational standards and analyze what steps are arbitrary steps.

[Jean, Fairness Commission] The Fairness Commission works in cooperation with regulatory bodies. There are many things that would not happen if we did not have a law. We are not talking about immigrants as weak and needing help. They are coming from educational institutions that sometimes have even higher standards. We will not lower the standards of the profession, we will lower the barriers!

KEY SURVEY RESULTS



RECOMMENDATIONS

WE ASKED AUDIENCE MEMBERS TO PROVIDE RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW WE CAN CONTINUE TO BUILD A FAIR ALBERTA FOR INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED PROFESSIONALS. BELOW ARE YOUR IDEAS.

Calgary Businesses

- We need to be more giving and accepting - there still will be and needs to be some "barriers" from a business perspective
- Provide resources for small/ medium business to recruit, hire, retain and promote diversity in the workplace
- Need more involvement of the business sector
- Actively appeal board to address individual cases - maybe there is already and it wasn't addressed today
- Give recognition to internationally trained professionals and give them their proper positions
- Be willing to open the door to give internationally trained job applicants a chance to show their skills
- Begin the mentoring movement
- Understand the cultural diversity of the work force and provide an opportunity for them to share their experiences
- Recognize non-Canadian experience
- Be more open to foreign workers - learn more about supports available to foreign trained workers, consider entry point for IEPs - similar to work that is done for new grads
- Provide more bridging programs
- Advocate on behalf of immigrants, create innovative ways to utilize the skills of immigrants
- Open up employment opportunities to qualified professionals, add a % target annually for hiring
- Ensure they are doing their best to hire immigrants in higher numbers. Analyze their hiring habits, set targets for hiring so the numbers increase. Remember their business is serving immigrants too so hiring immigrants will make it easier to serve all
- Perhaps inform & involve staffing firms to help advocate for international trained professionals - they represent hundreds of employers and place thousands of people

Calgary Community Organizations

- Collaborate and increase access to community resources
- Collaboration needs to be enhanced and a single source of information centre needs to be developed to help immigrants understand that while there are barriers they can be overcome and they are worth overcoming
- Collaborate and work together towards a common goal
- Work together/collaboratively to provide less confusion and duplication of similar services - unless there is a need then necessary funds should be given to do the job in our community
- Continue to engage employers and encourage collaboration among themselves
- Provide workshops with employers on fair practices
- There isn't enough space or services to fill the needs of the new immigrant population - there needs to be continuous help in ESL
- Look at means of supporting one another in collaborating services and referring to one another
- Help case-by-case for professionals like engineers
- Lobby government - gather data on the extent of issue
- Provide information sessions to communicate the services they offer - continue to advocate for immigrants
- Collaboration and communicate to those affected in a timely manner

Alberta Professional Licensing Bodies

- Consider several perspectives of experience as a component of accreditation - create a tool to validate professional experience outside Canada
- Transparency/accountability and counsel clients who are applying for licensure and personally explain & justify standards - give advice/direction
- Hospitals are always short of doctors and nurses. However, many doctors with international education and work experience are still kept outside and not getting access. It is time to establish the regulation for medical specialists and to shorten process, in order to benefit the government, specialists and the tax payers
- Generally doing what is needed so immigrants can work - need to do whatever is needed
- Really examine what is required and why
- Push the provincial government to provide newcomers with greater assistance in their integration process and re-examine their regulatory criteria
- Be more open and fair as well as ensure relevance with their practices
- Streamline processes and assess prior learnings as well
- Provide assessment and re-assessment
- Include potential members of your organizations
- Look at allowing for a public body – self-regulating bodies are not effective
- Evaluate licensing requirements & processes to ensure fair & transparent processes - establish mentorship for all out of province applicants
- Keep up the great work
- Set goals to establish an equitable assessment program
- Have more communication with the frontline staff and immigrants going through the accreditation and licensing process
- Drastically reduce restrictions as these are costly to users, and subsidize costs for exams
- Reduce assessment and reassessment

Government of Alberta

- Review appeals process for immigrants with regard to their licensing experience
- Need to continue to break down barriers between provinces and other countries
- Establish targets with timelines and consequences
- Provide an accurate picture to those applying for residence from abroad of what it will take for them to validate their professional titles and the costs and time involved in Alberta
- Establish a fairness commission similar to Ontario
- Form a regulatory commission for the regulatory bodies
- Continue to coordinate and support activities related to engaging regulatory bodies, employers, post secondary institutions and the stakeholders
- Great work in collaboration - continue excellent work
- Timing is everything
- Move funding for licensure
- Provide feedback to professional organizations to assist them in making the process fair, transparent and timely while recognizing need to maintain standards to ensure safety of AB public
- Protect the Canadian standards
- Monitor the performance of some of the agencies and community employment services in Medicine Hat
- Take the lead - establish policies - provide funding to support initiatives
- Engage in more dialogue and work directly with regulatory bodies and community
- Follow Ontario's lead & legislate. No one believes accrediting bodies in Alberta will always act
- Form & recognize powers of an independent body comprised of internationally trained professionals or users of services to review performance of regulatory bodies. Give legislations some “teeth”. Address noncompliance and look at impact of restrictions on mental health of professionals/ families and its costs

GET INVOLVED!

BELOW IS A LIST OF BODIES THAT PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO GET INVOLVED IN MAKING CHANGE.

AIMGA

Consists of doctors trained or educated in countries other than Canada. It also includes individuals and organizations interested in the various challenges facing International Medical Graduates in Alberta.

Suite 107, 1409 Edmonton Trail NE
 Calgary, AB T2G 3K8
 Phone: 403-520-7730 Toll-free: 1-877-520-7730
 Email: aimga@shaw.ca Web: www.aimga.ca

CRIEC

CRIEC builds pathways between Calgary employers and skilled immigrants that encourage hiring and works with Calgary's immigrant-serving agencies on programs and solutions that will lead to the full employment of Calgary's immigrants.

200-1202 Centre Street S
 Calgary, AB T2G 5A5
 Phone: 403.410.1861
 Email: dianne@iafcanada.org Web: criec.ca

Foreign Qualification Recognition Unit, Government of Alberta

The Government of Alberta has released *A Foreign Qualification Recognition Plan for Alberta*. Developed through stakeholder consultation and several government ministries, the plan incorporates and recognizes the critical role of employers, educational institutions, professional regulatory organizations and immigrant-serving agencies in the labour market integration of immigrants. Find out more about your role in recognizing foreign qualifications.

Web: www.employment.alberta.ca/Immigration/6427.html

International Qualifications Assessment, Government of Alberta

IQAS can help professional regulatory organizations, employers and educational institutions understand foreign credentials and how they compare to provincial or national standards. IQAS can help your organization make well informed, researched decisions when assessing the credentials of internationally-trained and educated individuals. Find out more about IQAS, review their International Education Guides, and sign-up for their workshops.

Web: <http://employment.alberta.ca/Immigration/4512.html>

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

ALICIA BACKMAN-BEHARRY – BOARD MEMBER, IMMIGRANT SERVICES CALGARY

Ms. Backman-Beharry practices law primarily in the areas of immigration and civil litigation in Calgary and has appeared before various Courts and Tribunals. While practicing law, she has also taught courses at Bow Valley College and volunteered with other professional and charitable organizations. Alicia was first elected to the Board of Immigrant Services Calgary in 2004, and has served as an Officer for the last two years. Alicia Backman-Beharry moderated the panel event on June 18, 2010.

The Honourable Jean Augustine, Fairness Commissioner of Ontario

The Honourable Jean Augustine was appointed as the first fairness commissioner for the province of Ontario in March 2007. Ms. Augustine was the first African-Canadian woman to be elected to the House of Commons. She was elected in the riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore in 1993 and sat in Parliament until 2006. During this time, she served as parliamentary secretary to the prime minister, secretary of state and minister of state for multiculturalism and the status of women, sat on several standing committees, and was a deputy Speaker. Ms. Augustine has been honoured by many organizations for her leadership and community involvement and was awarded an honorary Doctor of Law degree by the University of Toronto.

Kathleen Morrow - Director, Foreign Qualifications Recognition Unit, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Kathleen Morrow is Director of the Foreign Qualifications Recognition (FQR) Unit within Alberta Employment and Immigration. Kathleen has worked in the area of international credential recognition for over 15 years. Kathleen had a leadership role in the development of the Foreign Qualifications Recognition Plan for Alberta and has collaborated extensively with post-secondary institutions, professional licensing bodies and employers across Canada on issues related to foreign qualification recognition.

Dr. Imrana Riaz – Treasurer, Alberta Inter'l Medical Graduates Association (AIMGA)

Imrana Riaz graduated from Fatima Jinnah Medical College in Lahore, Pakistan in 1996. She migrated with her family 10 years ago and began working on the lowest rung with Petro Canada, eventually progressing to become manager of multiple sites. When seats for international medical graduates were increased in Alberta, she seriously started on the road to licensure. Recently, Imrana passed the necessary exams and is now licensed to practice. Dr. Imrana sits on the executive committee of AIMGA as Treasurer and devotes countless hours to furthering the acceptance of international medical graduates in Alberta's mainstream medical community.

Al Schuld – Deputy Registrar, APEGGA

Al Schuld received his B.Sc. in Electrical Engineering from the University of Alberta in 1966 and completed his MBA in 1985. Immediately following graduation, he served in the Canadian Armed Forces for 3 years and spent 5 years as a Process Engineer with the DuPont Corporation in Kingston, Ontario. He was initially registered as a professional engineer in 1968. In 1974, he relocated to Alberta and worked in Chemicals and Manufacturing management and in a sales field prior to joining the staff of APEGGA. Al joined the APEGGA staff in Edmonton as Associate Director, Registration in August of 1982. He is now APEGGA's Deputy Registrar and is responsible for the key regulatory functions of the Association including registration, discipline, enforcement and practice standards.

Dianne Fehr – Chair, Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council (CRIEC)

Dianne Fehr has been the Chair of the Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council since March 2009. A multi-stakeholder collaborative, CRIEC works toward seamless and transparent processes that empower skilled immigrants to work in their field by building pathways between Calgary employers and skilled immigrants, and working with Calgary’s immigrant-serving agencies on programs and solutions. Dianne is also the Executive Director of the Immigrant Access Fund, a charitable organization that provides micro-loans to immigrants living in Alberta who need help with the costs of obtaining the accreditation/training they need to work in their field.

Sophia Langlois – Partner, Audit, KPMG

Sophia Langlois is a Partner in the Audit Practice at KPMG LLP in Calgary and has served as the lead Human Resources Partner for the audit practice in the Calgary office. Sophia was also Director of Human Resources for Western Canada and National Recruiting and was instrumental in redesigning KPMG’s Global mobility programme which promotes working in Calgary to over 120,000 people worldwide. She has helped recruit and retain many excellent secondees, and provides guidance through the International Club in the Calgary office. The first of its kind in KPMG, this club provides secondees with a network of fellow peers to share experiences, difficulties and observations. Its success is illustrated by the fact that it is now being replicated as best practice throughout Canada.
