

7.0 Information Availability, and Language and Culture

The issues examined by this sub-committee are crucial to the successful integration of IEGs yet fall outside the parameters of regulatory body responsibility. However, one of the elements that sets FC2I apart from other, similar initiatives, is the holistic approach that was taken to solving IEG integration problems.

At the beginning of Phase II, there were two separate sub-committees: *Information Availability*, and *Language, Culture and Interpersonal Skills*. The goal for the former was to enhance the quality and accessibility of targeted information, while the latter's goal was to determine how the profession could aid IEGs in obtaining the language and cross-cultural skills, and understanding of the dynamics of the Canadian workplace, required for gainful employment in the Canadian engineering environment.

These sub-committees became a combined committee in February 2004 as it was logical to combine process (information) and content (language and culture). While there were not any significant debates during their work, their issues were complex and interconnected.

7.1 ISSUES

As was noted in the Phase I report, IEGs receive information through multiple points of contact but that information is often incomplete or misleading, it may not be easily understandable or clear, and they don't always get it before they immigrate, when it would be very useful.

In addition, through consultation with settlement agencies, it was determined that information is currently being provided to IEGs through:

- Citizenship and Immigration Canada
- informal networks – family and friends
- regulatory bodies (although many IEGs do not know about CCPE or the regulatory bodies so do not access them)
- existing websites (run by settlement groups,

immigration consultants, educational institutions, various governments etc).

Consultation with settlement agencies was a crucial element of these committees' work. A roundtable meeting in November 2003 with a group of settlement agencies was key to the committee members' understanding of how best to communicate with IEGs, and the language and cultural issues IEGs face once they come to Canada. It was also helpful in continuing to build a relationship between the engineering profession and the agencies that work most closely with IEGs.

Many IEGs, while asking for changes to the licensing process, said that if they simply knew what they were getting into – had accurate and clear information – it would improve their experience tremendously.

The Language, Culture and Interpersonal Skills sub-committee began their process by recognizing the strong links from their issue to those of each of the other sub-committees. In particular, the issues being tackled by the Employment sub-committee were largely issues of cultural integration and language proficiency. How best to navigate employment in Canada, for example, is a cultural issue and must be communicated to IEGs.

It was in the context of consultations with settlement agencies that the importance of labour market information and mentoring became apparent. While these were not in the area of responsibility for these sub-committees, their findings were shared with other sub-committees. The consultations with the settlement agencies also highlighted the importance of an effective relationship between these agencies and the regulatory bodies. IEGs turn to settlement agencies for assistance with every aspect of integration and thus are a main source of information. In that role, it's crucial that they are able to communicate accurately about the licensing process, or at the least, are able to direct the IEG to the regulatory body for assistance.

The focus groups that have been referenced earlier in this document also tested several information

and culture proposals. The results of the focus groups are outlined in Section 9.0 of this report and the full report is in Appendix G.

7.2 CONCLUSIONS

Based on these discussions, the Language, Culture and Interpersonal Skills sub-committee drew the following conclusions:

- Many of the negative experiences described by IEGs are due to their feeling misinformed – many have said that if they had had a clear view of what to expect once in Canada, they either would have handled integration differently, or chosen not to come. The provision of clear information pre-application is seen as an issue of fairness, so IEGs can make fully informed decisions. Further, the settlement community believes that the more information an immigrant has prior to arrival in Canada, the smoother the integration process will be.
- Many IEGs report sourcing information, pre-immigration, from the web. A single web portal would make sourcing the information easier for IEGs and allow for more accurate content. It would also build the profession's profile and bring its messages to a wider audience.
- Settlement agencies are closely involved with IEGs at every stage of their integration process, and are often their main source of information. Yet, they are chronically under-funded and under-staffed. Establishing effective relationships between the regulatory bodies and the agencies could allow for continued information sharing despite staff turnover or particular programs being discontinued.

- Some IEGs have described frustration in trying to navigate the licensing process, and in understanding how all the elements link together. Providing a clear source of information at the regulatory body level – a person to speak to, number to call or office to visit – could assist with their understanding of the process.

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the result of the process just described, the Information, Language and Culture sub-committee made the following recommendations to the CCPE Board of Directors:

- Provide accurate and consistent information about the engineering profession, licensing process, employment situation and IEG support agencies, prior to and after arrival in Canada.
- Provide a single source of engineering information on the Internet for IEGs; do this through the Going to Canada portal which would link to regulatory bodies' sites.
- Determine and implement effective relationships between immigrant serving agencies and regulatory bodies to enhance communication and information exchange.
- Make information available at the regulatory body to IEGs in a simple, timely, personal, easy-to-access manner.
- Create a "Working in Canada" seminar for IEGs.
- Promote the concept that cross-cultural training be taken by licensing body volunteers and staff, CCPE, IEGs, and employers.