

Forum of Labour Market Ministers (FLMM)

BACKGROUND

Labour Mobility in Canada

The issue

Every year approximately 200,000 Canadians relocate to a different province or territory and look for work.

Some of these people—particularly those who work in regulated occupations—may find their occupational qualifications are not accepted in their new jurisdiction. This occurs because licensing requirements vary across the country, and individuals sometimes find they cannot easily transfer their qualifications from one jurisdiction to another.

Even those with qualifications that are recognized may face delays or extra costs in being licensed or certified. These delays, extra costs and lack of qualification recognition have the effect of restricting labour mobility.

Now, workers in over three-quarters of 51 occupations that are regulated in more than one jurisdiction in Canada can expect to have their qualifications recognized more readily across the country. This represents almost 97% of workers in these 51 occupations.

Some history

The *Agreement on Internal Trade* (AIT), which came into effect in 1995, makes it easier for people, goods and services to move across Canada. Chapter 7 of the AIT—the Labour Mobility Chapter—says that any worker qualified for an occupation in one province or territory should be granted access to employment opportunities in that occupation in any other province or territory.

This is particularly significant to the approximately 15 to 20 percent of workers in Canada who work in regulated occupation or trades. It means qualifications of workers from one part of the country are to be recognized and accommodated in other parts of Canada, and differences in occupational standards are to be reconciled as much as possible. The goal is to see people licensed and registered based primarily on their competency to do the job.

In February 1999, all federal, provincial and territorial governments, except Quebec, signed *A Framework to Improve the Social Union for Canadians*. This committed signatory governments to ensure full compliance with all labour mobility provisions of the AIT by July 1, 2001. While the Quebec government is not bound by this deadline, it intends to honour its obligations under the AIT and is confident that regulatory bodies under its jurisdiction will achieve compliance on a voluntary basis within a reasonable period of time. Governments and regulatory bodies in other jurisdictions have been working to meet the July 1 deadline.

Understanding Labour Mobility

Occupations

Most of the 51 regulated occupations are governed by self-regulating, non-governmental bodies. In these instances, an organization or institution has been delegated authority by a provincial/territorial government to regulate the occupation on its behalf. For example, architects are governed in every province by a regulatory body that has been delegated authority through legislation.

Not all regulated occupations are overseen by regulatory bodies. Certain occupations, such as teachers, are regulated directly by governments in most provinces and territories. It is therefore up to these governments to ensure that restrictions such as residency requirements as a condition of employment or certification are eliminated, and that workers instead are certified and licensed based primarily on their ability to do the job.

Governments have focussed on 51 occupations in Canada that are regulated in two or more jurisdictions. People working in regulated occupations include, as examples, doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers and architects.

There are approximately 400 occupational regulatory bodies in Canada, and they must comply with the Labour

Mobility Chapter of the AIT. For the most part, labour mobility is improved as regulators in each jurisdiction reconcile differences in occupational standards and agree to mutually recognize the qualifications of each other's members.

Trades

Sixty-five trades are also regulated in several jurisdictions and require certification in those provinces/territories. Examples of trades that require certification/licensing in most jurisdictions include electricians, plumbers and automotive service technicians.

Workers in 44 of these regulated trades can have their qualifications recognized across the country by completing an apprenticeship and passing an inter-provincial (Red Seal) examination. Those who receive the Red Seal endorsement will be provided ready access, without further assessment or evaluation, to employment opportunities in all jurisdictions that participate in the Red Seal program for that trade. Tradespersons who have not completed an apprenticeship but have proven competency through years of practice may also challenge the examination and receive the Red Seal endorsement.

In trades that require certification in only a few jurisdictions, and which are not covered by the Red Seal, governments are working to ensure more consistent examination and apprenticeship requirements across Canada and to reconcile differences in occupational standards. Governments are also implementing ways to complement the Red Seal program through recognition of provincial/territorial qualifications, with the overall goal of enhancing the mobility of tradespersons.