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A special thank you is extended to the two Dominican Nationals -- Jose Antonio Rojas Peralta and Rigoberto Castanos, who worked tirelessly as project officers in the Dominican Republic assisting us in filling our objectives pertaining to Canada’s Temporary Foreign Worker Program.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NOTE: This report is written within the context and timeframe as events took place. It does take into account the economic downturn that has since occurred.

This project came about as a result of the findings of a labour needs survey conducted on the hospitality sector in the 1000 Islands Region in the fall of 2007.

The survey conducted on 45 hotel/restaurant operations in the area, revealed that a significant number of employers felt they were facing severe labour shortages having a negative impact on business growth, income and current human resources. Over 160 positions were reported by these employers as being difficult to fill. The majority of employers expected the labour shortages to increase. Employers indicated they had exhausted conventional hiring methods such as job bank postings, web-site postings, participation in job fairs, newspaper advertising etc.

As part of the survey employers were asked if they were aware of and interested in the federal government’s Temporary Foreign Worker Program. Over 90% of respondents indicated they were interested in learning more about this program.

Based on the interest expressed by the employers and the challenges they were facing, the 1000 Islands Region Workforce Development Board decided to undertake a pro-active three-phase pilot project to test the feasibility of using the Temporary Foreign Worker Program in addressing the workforce shortages of the hospitality industry. The goal was to fill targeted labour shortages in this industry with foreign workers by May 2009.

Phase One: Partnership Development & Employer Workshop (November – December 2007)
This phase involved hosting a one-day workshop for employers to discuss all the aspects of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and to select participants for the pilot project and to investigate the opportunities of linking employers with foreign nationals from the Dominican Republic. As a result of Phase One, 14 employers were interested in participating in this pilot project and continuing to Phase Two.

Phase Two: Foreign Worker Recruitment & Selection (December 2007 – March 2008)
This phase involved following the guidelines of the Temporary Foreign Worker program for both employers in Canada and foreign nationals in the Dominican Republic. There was an extensive amount of work performed in this phase which was unexpected and became more and more apparent as the project unfolded. Staff worked with employers to assist them in completing and submitting their application for a Labour Market Opinion to Service Canada for permission to hire a foreign worker. This step requires that employers have completed an extensive search for Canadians and permanent residents to fill their vacancies. Over 60 Labour Market Opinions were requested for jobs such as cooks, waiter/waitresses, food counter attendants and room cleaners.

At the same time activities were being undertaken in the Dominican Republic with consultants hired there and Board staff to solicit interest from foreign nationals to work in Canada. These activities included hosting workshops, reviewing job applications, holding interviews and screening candidates for local employers. Over 400 Dominican nationals attended 2 workshops information workshops. Over 350 job applications were reviewed, sorted and ranked in preparation for approval of the Labour Market Opinions.
It was disappointing for employers when Service Canada only approved 12 of the 60 job requests and only for the skilled cook positions. This represented the needs of 8 employers. Service Canada did not approve any positions in the lower skill levels as being approved for the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia. However, the project continued to move forward. In March 2008, over 60 foreign applications for cook were pre-screened. Reference checks were conducted and interviews were held with 32 applicants with 12 successful candidates being selected for the approved cook positions.

**Phase Three : Visa Process (April – August 2008)**

This was the last phase of the project and involved compiling the necessary documentation for visa applications of the 12 foreign workers and arranging meetings with immigration officials. This was a very time consuming, daunting and costly exercise for the foreign nationals. It would have been almost impossible for them to have the understanding of the application process without the support of the staff and consultants. There were critical time delays as a result of bureaucratic processes relating to embassy procedures. This resulted in unexpected delays of foreign workers receiving visa approval in time to meet the seasonal demand of some of the employers needing them in May. Decisions on visa approvals were not received until July and August. This further resulted in 4 employers choosing to cancel their participation in this project and 6 opportunities were lost. When these employers were asked how they would manage without these workers, they indicated that they personally (owners) would have to continue to work 12-16 hours a day, would have to incur paying overtime to staff and/or cut back in the number of hours the business would be open. In effect, their hardship would continue.

The visa process continued for the remaining six foreign nationals. Of these six applications, five (5) received their visas and one (1) did not (English not good enough). Four foreign workers came to this area (July, August, September) to work as cooks (one person changed his mind). Two of the four workers have since completed their contracts and returned to the Dominican Republic. The other two received visa extensions and will continue to work as cooks in Gananoque until December 2009.

A final workshop was held with over 350 Dominican nationals in July 2008 to present the results of this project.

**Was The Pilot A Success? - Challenges & Recommendations**

The pilot was to test the feasibility of using the Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) Program to address the labour shortages of hospitality sector employers in the 1000 Islands Region. From the perspective of the four employers who received the foreign workers and the foreign workers themselves it was successful. However, filling only 4 of the initial 60 positions requested by employers through this program and the amount of resources both financial and human to do so certainly questions its feasibility.

The TFW did work, albeit with limited success, however many challenges were encountered throughout the process as outlined below:

1. **Lack of Program Awareness and Understanding**
   
   If employers are to use the program effectively, they need to be trained in all aspects of it and have a full understanding of procedures, time frames and their responsibilities.

   **Recommendation(s)**
   
   Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) should deliver regular workshops on the TFW Program and other related programs affecting employers.
2. **Lack of Responsiveness of Program**  
   It takes between 4-6 months to complete this process from the beginning when the employer advertises for a position to the point when a foreign worker receives his visa. This is too long of a process.

   **Recommendation(s)**  
   If the TFW Program is to meet the needs of employers, particularly for seasonal employers, the process needs to be streamlined to reduce the time lags.

3. **Language Requirements of Visa Application for Foreign Workers**  
   All documentation, including application forms and supporting information is to be completed in English or French. Many supporting documentation such as curriculums, letters of references, employment letters, education/training certificates and property ownership etc. need to be translated. This creates a significant financial cost to applicants from developing countries. If English or French is not the native tongue of applicants, proper completion, also becomes difficult. Application guides to assist a foreign worker are also in English or French, although some organizations, have taken the initiative to provide translated documents in other languages.

   **Recommendation(s)**  
   Although it is recognized that foreign workers to Canada will usually require proficiency in either English or French, it would be very beneficial if the application forms and supporting documentation could be submitted to the visa office in their native tongue. Also, guides, web-sites etc. should be translated into other languages. This would provide a better understanding of the application process and expectations and would substantially reduce translation costs of the foreign worker. The TFW Program is intended to be accessed by employers and workers without the need for third party assistance. This would certainly be beneficial to both parties.

4. **Visa Application Lengthy & Detailed Process**  
   It is understandable that the visa office needs to undertake necessary measures and procedures to ensure a proper selection process. However, there should not be unnecessary bureaucratic actions taking place that slow down the process. The Dominican Foreign nationals had no less than 4 trips to the embassy to complete the process and this was when they had everything in order and did not require further documentation. Physical visits were required for each of the following: to submit their application; to attend an interview; to find out the decision; if successful to undertake a medical; and to obtain the visa if successful.

   There also appeared to be no urgency on behalf of the Visa office in expediting the process to meet the need of the Canadian employers. It did not seem to matter when the employer said he needed the foreign worker.

   Also, the Canadian Embassy in the Dominican Republic does not have the authority to issue visas. It is the responsibility of the Embassy in Haiti. This added significant time delays to the process.
Recommendation(s)
The Canadian Visa Office (at least in this case), needs to streamline its operation to reduce unnecessary in-person visits by the applicant. Secured electronic and/or telephone correspondence could have reduced at least 2 visits.

The Dominican officials need to continue to lobby the Canadian government for authority to issue visas to expedite the process.

The process in reviewing applications should take into consideration the timelines of employers – especially seasonal employers.

5. Strength In Numbers
Many of the hospitality employers in this area are small employers (under 50 employees). They are not organized in the sense of sharing employment concerns and issues or to develop initiatives and activities that could help to resolve them. The 1000 Islands Region Workforce Development Board assists in this endeavour through its community planning process but this sector needs to continue to unite to effect change in policy and procedures pertaining to the TFW Program if the program is to meet their needs.

Recommendation(s)
If shortages continue to plague the hospitality sector in this area, they need to organize themselves similar to what has occurred in Alberta. This sector in Alberta was successful in numerous initiatives helping employers in this industry better understand the program and obtain workers at all skill levels through the TFW program.

BACKGROUND
Like many other developed countries, Canada is being faced with the economic and social challenges arising from an aging population and a sharp slowdown in labour force growth. These hugely important demographic trends promise to change both the human resource practices and the marketing strategies of many businesses. It is anticipated that the current array of labour shortages is only the beginning of what lies ahead. Similar trends are also prevalent in the area covered by the 1000 Islands Region Workforce Development Board specifically in the counties of Frontenac and Leeds and Grenville, with both areas experiencing an older median ages than Canada and Ontario.

During consultation meetings held in the fall of 2007, employers and other community stakeholders expressed concerns about the extreme difficulty finding workers to fill job vacancies in the hospitality sector.

The 1000 Islands Region Workforce Development Board was concerned with the numerous job vacancies being reported for hospitality workers throughout newspapers, job banks, employment service agencies and by word of mouth.

A preliminary analysis of current hospitality job vacancies in the National Job Bank revealed that in the Kingston-Prescott corridor there were 109 jobs listed which included occupations such as cooks, servers, dishwasher, bartenders, bakers and front desk clerks. Across Ontario, for similar occupations, there were listings for 404 cooks, 178 servers, 62 bakers, 47 host/hostess and 33 front desk clerks. Considering that only
approximately 20% of actual vacancies are ever advertised this would indicate that at this given time, there would be 500+ hospitality vacancies in the Kingston-Prescott corridor and 4500+ in Ontario (with just the selected few occupations reviewed).

It is also important to note that these figures represent a conservative estimation of shortages at the low season of this industry.

Based on this preliminary analysis, the Board decided to undertake a sample survey of the industry to attempt to quantify and measure the impact of the shortages and to determine whether in the short term, the Foreign Worker Program may be of interest to employers.

The results of this survey prompted the 1000 Islands Region Workforce Development Board to undertake the “Hospitality Sector  - Temporary Foreign Worker Pilot Project”

OBJECTIVES

To undertake a pro-active three-phase pilot project to test the feasibility of using the Temporary Foreign Worker Program in addressing the workforce shortages of the hospitality industry. The goal was to fill targeted labour shortages in this industry with foreign workers by May 2009.

TIMELINES

Phase Two - Foreign Worker Recruitment & Selection - December 2007 – March 2008
Phase Three – Visa Process - April 2008 – August 2009

KEY PARTNERS INVOLVED

The 1000 Islands Region Workforce Development Board was the lead in this project. Over 45 employers participated in Phase One of the pilot. 14 employers were involved in Phase Two and 6 employers were involved in Phase Three of the pilot. Over 400 Dominican nationals also participated in this pilot project.

Other partners included: Service Canada, Citizenship & Immigration Canada, Ontario Health Insurance, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, Canada Revenue Agency, Employment Standards, Canadian Embassies in Dominican Republic and Haiti, Dominican Republic Ministry of Labour, Dominican Ambassador to Canada and other Dominican officials.

PROJECT RESULTS & HIGHLIGHTS

Appendix ‘A’ outlines the activities and results of each Phase of this pilot project.
BUDGET

Consultant Fees: $14,624
Office Costs: $ 5,568
Travel: $ 7,870
$28,062

PROJECT SUMMARY

In summary, the Temporary Foreign Worker program is one option for employers to pursue to assist in filling labour shortages but because of the lengthy process and limited occupations being approved did not effectively address their needs. Without implementing the recommendations outlined below, the program is not currently a feasible solution for employers in the hospitality industry.

Recommendation 1:
Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) should deliver regular workshops on the TFW Program and other related programs affecting employers.

Recommendation 2:
If the TFW Program is to meet the needs of employers, particularly for seasonal employers, the process needs to be streamlined to reduce the time lags.

Recommendation 3:
Although it is recognized that foreign workers to Canada will usually require proficiency in either English or French, it would be very beneficial if the application forms and supporting documentation could be submitted to the visa office in their native tongue. Also, guides, web-sites etc. should be translated into other languages. This would provide a better understanding of the application process and expectations and would substantially reduce translation costs of the foreign worker. The TFW Program is intended to be accessed by employers and workers without the need for third party assistance. This would certainly be beneficial to both parties.

Recommendation 4:
The Canadian Visa Office (at least in this case), needs to streamline its operation to reduce unnecessary in-person visits by the applicant. Secured electronic and/or telephone correspondence could have reduced at least 2 visits.

The Dominican officials need to continue to lobby the Canadian government for authority to issue visas to expedite the process.

Process in reviewing applications should take into consideration the timelines of employers – especially seasonal employers.
**Recommendation 5**

If the shortages continue to plague the hospitality sector in this area, they need to organize themselves similar to what has occurred in Alberta. This sector in Alberta was successful in numerous initiatives helping employers in this industry better understand the program and obtain workers at all skill levels through the TFW program.
National Projected Shortages

- 1.7 million people currently employed in Canada’s hospitality sector
- Anticipate sector will need another 300,000 by 2015 to maintain its competitive and global edge
- National labour shortage expected to reach 1 million by 2020
Ontario Projected Shortages

- Small firms in Ontario who rely on young workers are already facing labour challenges.
  - Most affected sector is the Accommodation and food services at 55% of industry.
- Ontario – over the next 10 years, food services will require an additional 200,000 employees as rising disposable income and an aging population lead to greater household spending on food service.

Local Hospitality Perspective

- Medium and Low Skill Sales and Services Occupations are the top 2 Jobs in our area.
  (number of people employed) - represents 22.3% of employed labour force.
- Accommodation, Food & Beverage represent 8.6% or 9,042 jobs in this area.
- Aging workforce in this area is greater than Ontario and Canada - Youth migrating out.
Local Hospitality Perspective (con’t)

- Random survey of 45 local hotel/restaurant operations
- 85% experiencing chronic labour shortages and advised they had done extensive recruiting
- Over 160 position shortages reported from this small sample size
- Labour shortages impacting business in loss of growth and revenue

Local Hospitality Perspective (con’t)

- Significant interest in participating in the Temporary Foreign Worker Pilot spearheaded by the 1000 Islands Region Workforce Development Board
- Local Board also working on other initiatives to increase the participation of under-utilized labour
PHASE ONE RESULTS:
Partnership Development & Employer Workshop (November – December 2007)

- Hospitality Employer Survey Completed
- Met with officials from Dominican Republic
  - Meetings held with: Mark Henton, Canadian Embassy in Santo Domingo
  - Dr. Virgilio Baldera – Deputy Minister of Labour
  - Doris Maria Hernandez – Counsellor, Educational Affairs, Dominican Embassy in Canada
  - Jose Pantaleon Maria Arias, SubSecretario de Estado de Interior y Policia

PHASE ONE RESULTS: CON’T
Partnership Development & Employer Workshop (November – December 2007)

- Obtained political buy-in from the Dominican Republic – willing to provide letters of support for project
- Dominican Embassy to set-up meetings with Haitian Immigration Officials
PHASE ONE RESULTS: CON’T

Partnership Development & Employer Workshop (November – December 2007)

- Temporary Foreign Worker Recruitment workshop held – December 10, 2007 - 45+ attendees (employers 20+, MP & MPP reps, government officials) -- panel of government representatives explained employer responsibilities for foreign workers
- 14 Employers representing 29 businesses and requests for 80+ jobs are interested in participating in pilot with Board and continuing to Phase Two

- Obtained political buy-in from the Dominican Republic – willing to provide letters of support for project
- Dominican Embassy to set-up meetings with Haitian Immigration Officials
PHASE ONE RESULTS: CON’T
Partnership Development & Employer Workshop (November – December 2007)

- Participating Employers:
  - Brockville: Brockberry Café (3), Buds on The Bay (3), Calamity Jane’s (3), Tim Horton’s – Mallorytown (5)
  - Gananoque: Best Western (3), Gananoque Inn (9), Colonial Resort (9), Ganroc (2), Hill Island Lodge (5)
  - Kingston: Tim Horton’s – 16 businesses – (30), Minos (6), Swiss Chalet (2), Diamond Hotels (4), A&W (3)

PHASE TWO RESULTS:
Recruitment & Selection (Dec 17, 2007 – March 31, 2008)

- Confirmed commitment of employers interested in participating in the Temporary Foreign Worker Recruitment Pilot
- Assisted employers in completing documentation to request a Labour Market Opinion - over 60 jobs (mainly cooks, food counter attendants, servers, room cleaners)
PHASE TWO RESULTS: CON’T

Recruitment & Selection (Dec 17, 2007 – March 31, 2008)

- Advertised for potential employees ie: from Hotels in Playa Dorada
- Prepared and delivered 2 workshops with over 400 interested foreign workers - January 26, 2008 – to discuss the foreign worker program, what is expected, about living in Canada etc.
- Completed job applications and obtained personal history of each person – ie education, work experience etc.

- Set up and held personal interviews with interested foreign workers not able to attend workshops (approx. 30)
- Reviewed, sorted and ranked over 350 applications
- Visited the Ministry of Labour in Santo Domingo to discuss project and possible partnership with Ministry of Labour
PHASE TWO RESULTS:  
CON’T

Recruitment & Selection  (Dec 17, 2007 – March 31, 2008)

• March – Service Canada gives positive Labour Market Approval for only cooks in our area
• 12 cook positions approved
• Pre-screened over 60 applicants based on qualifications and immigration requirements
• Conducted reference checks on 32 selected applicants for interview

• Held interviews with 32 potential candidates
• Candidates Selected For Employment
• Met with Immigration Official from Canadian Embassy to discuss Visa requirements
• Trained DR consultants on Immigration requirements
PHASE THREE RESULTS:

Visa Process  (April 2008 – August 2008)

- Assisted 12 foreign workers in completing and obtaining necessary documentation to apply for work visa
- Set-up meetings and accompanied 6 foreign workers to initial visa appointment (6 opportunities lost due to extensive time delays in visa process)
- Assisted foreign workers who received their visas with flight arrangements and other arrangements (6 foreign workers received their visa and came to Canada July – September)

PHASE THREE RESULTS: CON’T

Visa Process  (April 2008 – August 2008)

- Held a final workshop with over 350 Dominican Nationals as follow-up to this project
- Completed final report in March 2009