Canadian Bearings brings partners together for networking

On Thursday, October 13, Canadian Bearings hosted a group mentoring session to strengthen newcomer connections to the manufacturing and industrial supply sectors in Southwestern Ontario in collaboration with the London-Middlesex Immigrant Employment Council and WIL Employment Connections. Joining Canadian Bearings in the Skill Centre were Armo Tool, JMP Engineering, and Carproof. All four companies highlighted the strength of immigrant talent, and were clear that hiring globally is a sound business practice.

A panel of business leaders came prepared not only with advice for immigrants seeking employment, but also with a long list of openings at each company including everything from VP positions to database analysts, to accountants, to customer service representatives.

When asked for advice on how someone could fill one of those vacancies, Ben Whitney underlined the importance of networking. He also highlighted that even though most of the jobs at Armo Tool are technical in nature, and require specific skill sets, ultimately, soft skills are just as important. Other members of the panel echoed this: employees need to be dependable, work well as part of a team, and need to be willing to learn. It was a powerful illustration that technical skills are not the only skills required when working in a technical industry.

Patricia Teall-Trudeau, Larry Gregoris and Adam Douglas also talked about other skills that may not be specific to an applicant’s education. Speaking more than one language is a great asset that an applicant should highlight as an asset to international business development. Skills in computers (it is an increasingly digital world), logistics, customer service, sales, creative thinking and research were also highlighted. The panel pointed out that research is crucial in your job search, as well as your job.

The event concluded with an invitation from Glendalynn Dixon of Carproof and member of the LMIEC Leadership Council for more employers to Source Locally, Hire Globally and consider mentoring newcomer talent. Thank you to all the participants for their valuable advice and insight.
Attracting newcomer talent to Southwestern Ontario

Stakeholders across the City of London and the communities of Middlesex County continue to come together in innovative ways to strengthen the ability of our regional economy to attract, welcome and embrace the skills and talent of newcomers to Canada.

On January 14, 2017, a group of over 140 Community Diversity and Inclusion Champions came together to embark on the process of developing a Diversity & Inclusion Strategy for the City of London. The new strategy will play a key role in helping to build a diverse, inclusive and welcoming community by supporting all Londoners to feel engaged and involved. As 1 in 5 Londoners are newcomers to Canada, the strategy and its implementation are very important to our community.

On November 16, 2016, the City of London hosted an event to share an update on the London Community Economic Road Map. Through the priority of “a top quality workforce,” stakeholders are working together to ensure local employers have access to the talent they need and to promote the importance of diversity and inclusivity as drivers of London’s workforce and economy. At the event, an online dashboard was launched. The tool will help all Londoners receive updates and information on the actions underway that will impact the economic success of the city and the newcomers that choose London as a destination.

Communities across Middlesex County are also eager to welcome newcomers to their workforce and economies. The We Are Middlesex series began airing on September 13, 2016 and takes viewers on a road trip throughout the eight municipalities that make up Middlesex County. Some of the first feature episodes have highlighted Strathroy-Caradoc, Middlesex Centre and Thames Centre and Adelaide-Metcalfe. The show features stories and experiences of new immigrants and provides information on useful community services, places of interest, local eateries, businesses and annual cultural events. This successful We Are Middlesex project is a companion to the We Are London series.

As a support to this important regional work underway, the employer-led London Middlesex Immigrant Employment Council is working on a research project through a grant received in November 2016 from the Ontario Centre for Workforce Innovation. The project will help us better understand if Southwestern Ontario is attracting the immigrant talent pool necessary to meet its changing workforce and economic needs by answering the following key questions: Are immigrants working in their intended occupations in the region? In what industries and occupations have immigrant talent attraction and retention strategies been most effective? What industries and occupations continue to have skills gaps? The results of the research will be shared through regional planning tables by December 2017.
RBC Royal Bank celebrates mentoring month

On January 24, 2017, the Royal Bank of Canada partnered with the LMIEC to celebrate mentoring month. Immigrant Employment Councils (IECs) and their mentoring programs across Canada have been marking the month of January as an important time to thank volunteer mentors, appreciate the support of community partners, recognize the impact of mentorship and encourage others to give the gift of mentorship.

Over 600 mentees have been matched through the LMIEC Mentorship for Immigrant Employment program over its 8-year history. Mentors and mentees spend 24 hours together spread out over a few months. That is over 14,000 hours of meetings and networking, helping immigrants to Canada gain a foothold in their chosen careers. Martin Zuniga led a panel discussion with the talented “graduates” of the program, who shared stories of their own road to employment in London’s labour market with an audience of business leaders, community partners and internationally trained professionals seeking meaningful employment.

Martin is himself an immigrant, having come to Canada from Colombia 14 years ago. He is now the manager of the downtown branch of the Royal Bank in London. In fact, four of the six people leading the discussion were employed by RBC, which powerfully illustrates their commitment to the program. Alexandra Rodriguez, Artem Serikov, and Ala Ajami joined Martin in sharing their journeys of employment success at RBC. The panel also featured Catherine Kamhunga who is now in the accounting department of Larlyn Property Management, and Lameck Osinde who is moving from a role with Startech.com to opportunities in the educational sector.

Questions for the panel focused on their experiences as mentees: How did mentorship help you overcome challenges? How do you keep your connections (business and otherwise) alive, since so much of your success relies on your network? Do you have any advice for mentees?

Panelists underlined the importance of networking: always be ready; you do not know when an opportunity will present itself. Schedule reconnecting with colleagues and friends; you may not be able to let relationships grow organically. One of the panelists noted that even though he had been successful in finding work, he might have been able to speed up the process if he had made a connection sooner. Another noted that in some cases, your credentials carry less weight in Canada; a strong referral from someone you know can often go a long way toward alleviating doubts. Perhaps one of the greatest successes was that in hearing all the panelists share their advice, it was clear that the mentees have now become the mentors.
Canadian Immigration Levels Plan released

“To those fleeing persecution, terror & war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith. Diversity is our strength.” - Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada

After an extensive consultation process in the Summer of 2016, the Canadian government released its 2017 Immigration Levels Plan on October 31, 2016 which included a renewed commitment to a strong immigration program and a goal of welcoming 300,000 immigrants in 2017. The plan includes a balance of high immigration levels with improvements to the immigration system, including reducing backlogs.

One focus for backlog reduction includes family reunification. Immigrating to a new country is often a long and difficult process, and many families opt to have one member move to a new country ahead of the rest to get established. But that extra step has often been impeded in the past. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) made efforts in 2016 to speed spousal applications up, and had already seen some progress. By December, IRCC had managed to reduce wait times for applications originating both within Canada (by 15%) and outside of Canada (by 10%).

However, at the beginning of December 2016, IRCC announced even more changes to the process, in an effort to reduce backlog and wait times even further. IRCC has announced that is will aim to have processing for applications completed in 12 months, down from 26 months for in-Canada applications, and 18 months for applications originating outside Canada’s borders. The Government of Canada has increased the number of positions available. In 2015, nearly 70,000 applications were received for 48,000 spots. In 2017, the new levels plan allows 64,000 spousal applications.

In addition to improved family processing, the Government of Canada committed to a 7% increase in its economic immigration programs over the levels of 2016 and announced first steps to address Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) issues. This included the elimination of the 4-year cumulative duration rule for TFWs in Canada in order to prevent unnecessary hardship and instability for workers and employers. The plan also reaffirmed Canada’s commitment to provide a place of refuge for those fleeing persecution with a focus on welcoming 40,000 refugees and protected persons in 2017.

All immigration streams of the 2017 Immigration Plan set the foundation for Canada’s economic growth. Stakeholders in London and Middlesex look forward to working with newly-appointed Minister Ahmed Hussen in the continued advancement of the plan as we actively seek to attract and welcome newcomer talent to our region.