

BC Roundtable Finding Its Voice
Capacity Canada Gets a Warm Welcome
New Co-ordinator for BC Roundtable
Doctors Going Public
News of BCITP Associations
**Federal Government Launches Its
Internationally Trained Workers Initiative**

BC Roundtable Finding its Voice

Now embracing 22 independent ITP organizations, the BCITP Net Roundtable has begun to approach provincial leaders and candidates with the message that more needs to be done to integrate qualified immigrants into BC's workplaces.

The Roundtable recently sent a letter to MLAs, party leaders and provincial leadership candidates, saying, "Professional regulatory bodies have legal obligations under the BC Human Rights Code and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms that prohibit them from discrimination based on grounds such as place of origin. Under this legislation the principle of equity is breached when systemic barriers are not addressed."

While acknowledging recent provincial efforts and funding to improve integration, the letter also suggests further actions in areas such as training loans and funds, English language training, changes to regulatory policies, and employment bridging programs.

The Roundtable's various committees continue to meet regularly. The Bridging Committee has made recommendations for the use of BC Skills Connect funding to help ITPs in the Okanagan. The Website Committee is further developing the BCITP Net website and discussing the addition of a bulletin board to connect ITPs throughout the province.

Capacity Canada gets a Warm Welcome

Capacity Canada's recent meetings in Alberta and Nova Scotia have created great interest among local community and professional leaders. Co-ordinators Patrick Coady and Oksana Buhel heard strong expressions of desire to attract and retain ITPs in these regions, and to see Capacity Canada act as a partner and resource there.

Capacity Canada has also been invited to make a presentation in mid-May to the Atlantic Mayors' Conference. This year's conference will focus solely on immigration issues, especially on attracting and retaining professional and skilled workers.

A new Provincial Roundtable is forming in Alberta, based on a partnership between Capacity Canada and the Alberta Network of Immigrant Women. Another Roundtable is being planned in Nova Scotia.

Meanwhile, Capacity Canada's new national leadership council is planning its first meeting in Vancouver in June. The council's members will include ITPs representing Provincial Roundtables, plus provincial co-ordinators and managers. This meeting will include discussion about the establishment of a National Roundtable of ITPs.

Capacity Canada is a joint initiative of BCITP Net and PROMPT (Ontario's Policy Roundtable on Mobilizing Professions and Trades). For more information see www.capacitycanada.ca.

New Co-ordinator for BC Roundtable

BCITP Net's Roundtable marks a new stage in its development with the appointment of Priti Shah as co-ordinator. Ms Shah, herself an ITP, is an experienced facilitator and community activist. She especially looks forward to the task of developing leadership capacity among ITPs and within their organizations.

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Ms Shah brings her leadership skills and experience to the Roundtable's efforts to:

- work collaboratively to promote ITPs' access to their professions,
- develop strategies to influence government and regulatory bodies in the area of access to professions,
- provide a collective voice for ITP organizations with regard to policy and best practices on access to professions, and
- provide leadership in the development of policy recommendations and in promoting the Roundtable and its recommendations.

To contact Priti Shah call 604-945-5836.

Doctors going Public

International medical graduates (IMGs) in Vancouver have been attracting a growing amount of public attention to their need for recognition and integration into Canada's medical system.

The Association of International Medical Doctors of BC (AIMD BC) has petitioned BC's premier and health minister with more than 1000 signatures, making specific suggestions for more action.

AIMD BC has also struck working committees to place advertisements of their situation in community papers, and to monitor their response. Ads are planned for Vancouver, Victoria, Nanaimo, Kelowna and Prince George.

Radio and newspaper stories are also becoming more frequent as journalists become better acquainted with the issues relating to immigrant professionals and skilled workers. The doctors hope to make their concerns a public issue throughout the provincial election campaign.

News of BCITP Associations

Vancouver Island – New local co-ordinators Alvaro Moreno (Victoria) and Maggie Wouterloot (Nanaimo) are settling in to the work of strengthening their chapters and increasing public awareness. BCITP Net's general co-ordinator, Patrick Coady, attended a meeting of over thirty ITP's in Victoria in April. He will also attend the Nanaimo group's regular meeting in May to lead discussions about networking and media training.

Okanagan – ITPs continued their discussions with Rick Thorpe (Minister of Provincial Revenue) and Collin Mercer (International Qualifications Program). It is important that politicians and policy makers understand the additional challenges of isolation and lack of accessibility for ITPs in the region.

Federal Government Launches Its Internationally Trained Workers Initiative

The Government of Canada has announced a comprehensive strategy to integrate internationally trained professionals into the Canadian work force.

The Internationally Trained Workers Initiative provides a total of \$319 million in new and previously announced funding, for five distinct areas of action.

The initiative allocates \$75 million to improve the integration of internationally trained doctors, nurses and other health-care professionals into the Canadian medical system. The money will be shared among the provinces over the next five years.

BCITP Net's Co-ordinator, Patrick Coady, said, "BC's IMGs are very much encouraged by this funding. We've worked very hard for the last two years to achieve recognition and action on this issue, and we appreciate the federal government's leadership. But \$75 million spread over five years, shared by all of the provinces, won't go far. It's a good first step, but the work isn't over yet. What's most important now is that the provincial governments must strongly align themselves with this action."

The initiative also includes a new Foreign Credential Recognition program and an Enhanced Language Training program for skilled and professional workers. An Action Plan Against Racism will also be implemented to discourage racist discrimination, including discrimination in the workplace.

The fifth item, a new web portal, will help to prepare newcomers for the Canadian labour market and society before they arrive. For more information see http://canadainternational.gc.ca/GTC/Going_To_Canada-EN.aspx.

*Do you have news for BCITP Net?
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