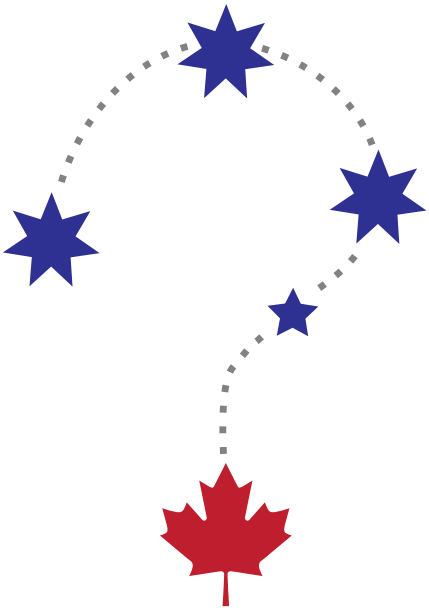

2ND CANADA-AUSTRALIA ROUNDTABLE ON FOREIGN QUALIFICATION RECOGNITION

REPORT

Prepared by

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On March 20-22, 2013, the Institute for Research on Public Policy, with support from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and the Australian High Commission to Canada, held the 2nd Canada-Australia Roundtable on Foreign Qualification Recognition in Vancouver. The more than 70 participants included academic experts, Canadian federal and provincial government officials, Australian federal and state government officials and representatives from a variety of professional organizations and regulatory bodies. The roundtable aimed to build on the initial Australia-Canada roundtable, held in Melbourne in 2011; to explore in detail the issues involved in foreign qualification recognition (these are reviewed in the Australia and Canada backgrounders distributed to participants before the roundtable); and to provide participants with the opportunity to learn about foreign credential recognition processes and innovations in the public, private and civil society sectors. Given the many similarities between the two countries, such as federalism, high immigration levels and a strong focus on skilled migration, these roundtables provide opportunities for policy-makers working on foreign qualification recognition and occupational regulation issues in the two countries to share their experiences and learn from one another.

Before the roundtable a research workshop on foreign qualification fecognition was held, on the afternoon of March 20. That evening, the opening dinner was attended by participants and other guests representing organizations with broader economic interests in Canada and Australia. Yuen Pau Woo, President of the Asia-Pacific Foundation, delivered the keynote address, which focused on the growth of international labour mobility and the competition to attract skilled and talented individuals, particularly those from developing countries.

The roundtable was organized into eight sessions. One featured the signing of updated mutual recognition agreements between the national organizations representing engineers and certified accountants in each country. Ed Fast, Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway for Canada, gave a speech to mark the occasion. In a related session, participants divided into three groups to discuss the two mutual recognition agreements and the Quebec-France Agreement on the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications. The remaining six sessions consisted of panels of experts and practitioners who focused on a range of themes, including recent trends in immigration policy and selection, language testing by immigration officials and occupational regulatory bodies, providing information about foreign qualification recognition, investigating the fairness of occupational licensing processes, assessing qualifications before and after immigration and developing mutual recognition agreements to ease mobility of skilled individuals from one country to another. The roundtable and workshop presentations, as well as the program and other documents for each event, are available here.

Yuen Pau Woo, President of the Asia-Pacific Foundation, delivers the keynote address at the opening dinner.
Photo: Don Erhardt

Public Values and the Regulation of Occupations

Although a number of the roundtable presentations focused on practical means of addressing foreign qualification recognition (FQR), several presenters explicitly addressed the values that underlie the procedures adopted by regulatory bodies. Many noted that protecting the health and safety of the public is essential and often the main priority for regulators, even if that means prohibiting many immigrants from practising the profession if they do not meet the licensure requirements. However, other values came up frequently, including economic efficiency, transparency in the application processes for occupational licences and ensuring fairness in setting standards so that internationally trained individuals are not excluded or deterred from practising by requirements that are too onerous.

A major conceptual contribution came from Katie Elkin's presentation. She contrasted the goals of *public protection* and *public interest*. For her, public protection is a subset of the public interest. That is, public protection, as a goal, focuses on preventing harm to a broad subset of people who use services. Thus, the purpose of regulating doctors would be to ensure that they have the ethical and practical training to minimize the likelihood of harming their patients. From this perspective, occupational regulatory bodies have to exclude or punish members of the occupation who do not meet ethical or competence standards. Although public protection is a widely held value, conceptions of the public interest and public purpose can vary considerably. There may be cases in which public protection needs to be moderated to protect the overall public interest. For example, in regulating health care professions, governments may have an interest in the supply of members of a profession,

as part of a broader interest in ensuring the availability, accessibility and funding of health care. As a result, they may want to increase the supply of licensed professionals in underserviced areas, particularly rural and remote regions. Furthermore, as Arthur Sweetman pointed out in his presentation, governments, rather than consumers, often pay for the services of regulated professions. This is perhaps most obvious in health care. However, it would also hold for a number of other professions, such as engineering: for example, for civil engineers working on infrastructure projects.

In this context, André Gariépy, Quebec's fairness commissioner, pointed out that societies have different views about government regulation in general and about how to regulate professions and trades. Nevertheless, in Canada, Australia and other countries, there's a trend for governments to be more involved in policy orientation of the regulation of professions and occupations, and to bring more oversight where regulatory functions are not directly assumed by government agencies.

Other presenters noted that the priorities of occupational bodies may not necessarily match those of the government and/or the public. For example, self-regulating membership-based professional associations may have incentives to restrict access in order to benefit their current members by, for example, pushing up wages. There was a general view that various governance structures can have an important impact on outcomes. In this context, Gariépy identified regulation by a government agency, self-regulation by a legally designated entity, voluntary self-regulation by a professional association and leaving the entire process to market forces. These frameworks differ considerably in terms of oversight, the involvement of the professionals and the regulatory organization's autonomy, among other matters.

Louise Hand, Australian High Commissioner to Canada, welcomes participants.
Photo: Don Erhardt

Progress on Foreign Qualification Recognition

A considerable part of the roundtable program consisted of presentations and panel discussions about steps that governments, regulatory authorities, non-governmental organizations and other bodies have taken to facilitate the recognition of foreign qualifications. In this regard, many of the participants, including Louise Hand, Australian High Commissioner to Canada, noted some clear similarities between Canada and Australia.

Mitigating the problem through immigrant selection

Immigration policy is a key example of an area of common experiences and shared policies, often by design. Over the past several decades, Canada and Australia have seen shifts in their source countries, and both now rely primarily on immigrants from Asia — especially China, India and the Philippines. Both countries prioritize the selection of economic migrants, who constitute a strong majority of total immigrants and temporary mi-

grants in both countries, and both have moved in recent years to a model of two-step migration, in which potential immigrants enter first as temporary workers or international students, then apply for permanent residence later. (Two-step migration tends to sidestep the issue of foreign qualification and skills assessments, particularly in the case of international students.)

CIC has announced two major policy shifts inspired in part by current practices in Australia. The first is requiring applicants for permanent residence under the Federal Skilled Worker Program (commonly known as the points system) to have their educational credentials validated and evaluated by assessment organizations designated by CIC before they arrive. These evaluations will serve two purposes: preventing fraud and improving immigration selection by assigning points for education according to how an applicant's foreign educational credential compares with a credential completed in Canada. Australia has had a similar, but more widely applicable, offshore premigration qualification assessment requirement since 1999. Often, the organizations mandated to assess foreign qualifications for migration to Australia are the same organizations that assess newcomers' qualifications for occupational licensing.

The second policy shift is the implementation of an expression-of-interest system, originally developed in a somewhat different form by the New Zealand government. Under Australia's program, which has been in place since 2012, potential immigrants and temporary migrants can submit online an expression of interest (EOI). EOIs include descriptions of work experience, educational backgrounds and language skills, along with a mandatory offshore premigration skills assessment. Based on an EOI assessment, an applicant is matched with employers or state/territorial governments facing labour shortages in that applicant's occupation. CIC intends to implement this system in 2014; however, the full details about these policy changes have not yet been announced. These immigration selection policy changes are important not because they will have a direct impact on FQR, but because selection rules determine who goes through licensing processes.

Overseas qualifications assessments

Australia has long-standing experience with qualification assessments before migration. Among the main providers of these services are VETASSESS (vocational education and training assessment) and Trades Recognition Australia (TRA), which cover the skilled trades, along with a wide variety of regulatory bodies that focus on skilled professionals. In recent years, 66 percent of permanent residents to Australia admitted under the skilled stream, along with 58 percent of temporary skilled migrants to Australia, were professionals. As a result, the bodies regulating individual professions, particularly accounting, engineering and health care professions, conduct a large portion of the offshore premigration assessments.

Another qualification assessment body is the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition of Australian Education International (AEI-NOOSR), under the jurisdiction of the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education. In his presentation, Mark Darby pointed out that, over time, AEI-NOOSR has conducted fewer and fewer assessments of educational credentials, as other organizations and agencies have stepped in to fill this role. AEI-NOOSR performs credential assessments only when no other organization or agency is equipped to do them. The reason is that it is helpful for assessing bodies to have specific knowledge about the fields involved, which is why many professions in Australia have their own qualification assessment agencies. One former immigration official from Australia also noted that it was difficult for immigration officers in Australia to perform qualification and skills

assessments before 1999, when the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) decided to transfer this role to outside agencies that were more familiar with the specific professions.

In Canada, a number of organizations already provide educational credential assessments for people within and outside regulated occupations. They include World Education Services (WES) and other members of the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada. WES, founded in 1974, is a nongovernmental organization that is recognized as a service provider by the Ontario government. It provides credential evaluation reports for educational degrees, after validating their authenticity. It also provides an online self-assessment tool free of charge that allows individuals and employers to have an idea of the potential outcome of the assessment. These services are particularly useful for FQR in unregulated occupations, which make up 80 percent of all jobs in Canada.

CIC intends to incorporate the services of some assessment organizations into the immigration selection process, starting on May 4, 2013. After that date, applicants under the Federal Skilled Worker Program will be required to undergo assessment and validation of their foreign educational credentials. These assessments will be used only for immigration purposes, not for occupational qualification recognition. This is in part because assessments for immigration cover only educational credentials, whereas a number of regulatory bodies require other factors to be assessed, such as work experience. As a result, many newcomers to Canada who are trained in occupations that are regulated in Canada will have to go through a separate post-arrival FQR process.

Participants benefited from networking opportunities.
Photo: Don Erhardt

Language testing

One of the more contentious issues at the roundtable was language testing. A wide range of studies in Canada and Australia have shown that official-language knowledge is crucial to the recent immigrants' labour market success — a point that a number of participants emphasized. As a result, in both countries language testing is a mandatory part of the selection process for economic immigrants. However, a number of other categories of newcomers, including refugees, do not go through the same testing process and thus face different challenges after arrival.

Concerns were expressed that regulatory bodies might use language testing for purposes other than ensuring a minimal level of competence: for example, to restrict the supply of people in a given profession in order to raise the wages of those already qualified. If regulatory bodies want to limit the supply of qualified individuals, one way to do so is to raise the standard for a passing grade on language tests. Other participants pointed out that language skills are only one part of professional communication, which also includes general communication skills and cultural awareness. As a result, language testing may not capture the full range of communication skills that may be necessary, particularly for professions dealing directly with the public.

Erik Lloga was particularly critical of the use of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Originally, the purpose of IELTS was to assess nonnative speakers' English-language competence for university admission. In practice, however, governments and regulatory bodies often use it for immigrant selection or occupational licensing.

A number of participants found it interesting that while many regulatory bodies have language testing requirements, Certified Practising Accountants (CPA) Australia does not. According to a representative of the organization, this is because accounting is a global profession, and CPA Australia provides licensing used informally outside Australia, particularly in Asian countries, where the working language is not English. Consequently, CPA Australia does not consider English-language skills part of the essential competencies for licensing. Their representative also noted that accountants intending to migrate to Australia have to go through English-language assessment as part of the immigration selection process. Employers also frequently want to see evidence that potential employees are competent in English. As a result, while the organization encourages migrants to provide evidence of English-language knowledge, it does not require it for licensure. Some participants were interested in whether this practice could be a model for other regulatory bodies, particularly given concerns about the potential duplication of requirements between the immigrant selection and occupational licensing stages.

Investigating fairness in foreign qualification recognition

In Canada, one of the major recent developments has been the establishment of provincial officers specifically charged with examining fairness in FQR and overseeing the regulatory bodies. These officers are often called fairness commissioners, following the terminology used in Ontario, which pioneered this practice in establishing its Office of the Fairness Commissioner in 2006. Now Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Quebec have similar offices. Notably, the Quebec fairness commissioner has the authority to investigate complaints from candidates for qualification recognition.

Ximena Munoz, Manitoba's fairness commissioner, observed that many players are involved in FQR but they have not all been working together. She emphasized the importance of having clear standards for what constitutes fairness. In Manitoba, this involves laying out a clear path to licensure for foreign-trained individuals, assessing their work experience and educational degrees, focusing on occupational competencies and formal qualifications, removing unnecessary fees (specifically those that go beyond just cost recovery) and eliminating

duplicate requirements for documentation (such as a criminal record check for occupational licensing when it is required for immigration to Canada).

Ensuring internationally trained individuals are well informed

One issue that came up at various points was the possibility that current policies and practices may be giving false hope to internationally trained immigrants. If it is not made clear to potential immigrants that the occupational licensing process is separate from the immigration process, applicants may assume that they will be able to practise in their occupation once they receive permanent residence when in fact this is often not the case. In Australia, this issue does not apply to economic migrants, since they have their qualifications assessed offshore prior to migration. Humanitarian or family class immigrants, and temporary migrants, typically start the FQR process only after arrival. Since Canada is moving toward a model of offshore pre-migration assessment as part of the immigration selection process, this will also be important for Canadian policy-makers to consider.

These issues point to a serious information imbalance between what is necessary to become licensed to practise in a regulated occupation in Canada or Australia and what internationally trained individuals actually know. As a result, a large number of the roundtable participants have been involved in providing information to internationally trained individuals, either before or after migration.

In Australia, a wide variety of government agencies, including DIAC and TRA, and government-sponsored third parties, such as VETASSESS, have long been providing internationally trained individuals with information about occupational licensing procedures.

In Canada, the federal government and several provincial governments, along with private organizations, such as WES and the Association of Canadian Community Colleges, have undertaken a number of initiatives in recent years, funded by governments, to inform internationally trained individuals about the issues they will face in seeking licensure in Canada. Notably, the Foreign Credentials Referral Office (FCRO), part of CIC, has a wide variety of programs to help internationally trained individuals navigate the FQR process. Some of the FCRO's programs focus primarily on prearrival in-person orientation sessions in other countries, mostly in Asia. One example is the Canadian Immigrant Integration Program (CIIP), a CIC-funded project of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges. CIIP's orientation sessions focus on labour market readiness and are offered to federal skilled workers and provincial nominees, and their spouses and working-age dependants, while they are still overseas during the final stages of the immigration process. CIIP offices are located in China, India, the Philippines and the United Kingdom. In addition, CIIP provides satellite services in 25 other countries where there is sufficient demand.

The FCRO also produces a considerable amount of online material, including a workbook for newcomers, occupation fact sheets for more than 25 professions and an information guide for small and medium-size businesses (*The Employer's Roadmap*). In addition, it funds a number of external Web sites, such as the International Qualifications Network, a Web site designed to foster information exchange among employers, immigrant-serving organizations and regulatory bodies. Similarly, the Foreign Credential Recognition Program under Human Resources and Skills Development Canada has funded a number of information Web sites, such as the Working in Canada Web site. Engineers Canada has a Web site, Roadmap to Engineering in Canada, funded by CIC, which provides a self-assessment tool for applicants so that they know what criteria they will have to meet.

National Health Care Regulation and Consolidated Assessment

In 2010, Australia and its states and territories adopted the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law — a framework establishing a single set of bodies, called National Boards (of which there are now 14), to regulate health care professionals on a nationwide rather than state and territorial basis. These National Boards set up requirements for professional registration and develop policies, guidelines, codes and regulations. The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency administers the National Boards.

One major issue in moving to national regulation was the scope of practice: people with the same professional title perform a range of tasks within their scope of practice in one state or territory that is somewhat different from the tasks performed in another state or territory. This makes it difficult to assess how the training and professional norms in one jurisdiction compare with those in another. As John Lockwood noted in his presentation, in Australia only dentists had a consistent scope of practice across the states and territories before the National Law came into effect.

The general sense among participants was that national regulation would be extremely difficult to pursue in Canada. Canada is a far more decentralized federation than is Australia, and the provinces are frequently unwilling to cede responsibility, particularly in as sensitive a field as health care. However, some professional associations have started to move in this direction on their own. Christine Nielsen of the Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science, a national umbrella organization covering laboratory scientists outside of Quebec, outlined how seven provincial regulators decided to cede their power to the national organization, which has a pseudo-regulatory function (Quebec does not participate, and in Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia laboratory scientists are an unregulated profession). Although the decisions of the Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science are not binding on the provincial regulatory bodies, they provide guidance. Nielsen also outlined a number of best practices related to assessing the qualifications of internationally trained medical laboratory technologists, including accepting the results of a wide range of language exams.

In the nursing field, Mary-Anne Robinson explained that the various provincial regulatory bodies dealing with nurses (and professional associations from provinces where the occupation is unregulated) have formed Canadian councils of nurse regulators, one for each of the main nurse classifications: registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses and licensed practical nurses (called registered practical nurses in Ontario). Twenty-three nursing regulators from across Canada have joined together to establish the National Nursing Assessment Service, a centralized Web site for internationally trained nurses to apply for assessment by as many nursing regulators as they want, across the provinces and across nurse classifications using a single application form. With a focus on competency standards, which the 23 regulators have agreed to harmonize, each international applicant will receive a complete assessment. A pilot Web site will be launched in autumn 2013, and the service is slated to be fully operational in 2014.

Provisional and restricted licensure

In Canada, regulatory bodies generally provide only one category of licence for entry into regulated occupations; there is relatively little tradition of providing provisional or temporary approval. However, Australian regulatory bodies have long provided other types of approval beyond no licensure and full licensure, at least for health care professions. A number of participants suggested that this could be a faster way to enable foreign-trained individuals to practise their professions while they are waiting for a full licence. However, other participants expressed concern that some people holding provisional licences may have no clear pathway to a full licence.

Given the recent increase in the number of temporary foreign workers admitted to Canada and Australia, the issue of provisional licensing is likely to be important in coming years. However, it is perhaps most pressing in Canada, where a number of regulatory bodies, particularly those governing health care professions, require applicants for licensure to be either citizens or permanent residents.

In both countries, there is a practice of offering licences restricted to particular areas of need such as remote and rural regions. In Canada some regulatory bodies have introduced licences that restrict health care professionals to practising in specific geographic areas within a province. However, this may contravene the Agreement on Internal Trade, which commits governments to protect the free movement of labour throughout Canada, and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which provides citizens and permanent residents with freedom of mobility.

As Richard Murray discussed in his presentation, Australia has an areas-of-need pathway for internationally trained doctors. This allows these doctors to practise in underserviced areas if they meet the criteria in the job description, and provides a simplified process for them to register as health care professionals in Australia as long as they have a medical degree and pass an English exam. Many participants were concerned about whether those going through the areas-of-need pathway were actually qualified under Australian standards and whether they would have access to professional support and development. Others argued that this was a way to address the need for health care professionals in underserviced areas and pointed out that there are time limits on how long individuals can practise under the areas-of-need pathway. In particular, when internationally trained doctors gain permanent residence in Australia, they must meet the full registration requirements.

Ed Fast, Minister of International Trade for Canada, addresses the roundtable.
Photo: Don Erhardt

Competent-authority pathway to licensure

As Peter Procopis detailed in his presentation, Australia has a competent-authority pathway for medical doctors licensed in Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. In light of the similarities between the qualifications processes and quality standards in these countries, the Medical Board of Australia has decided to recognize the licences granted by the relevant bodies in those countries as being transferable. This decision was taken on the basis of decades of empirical research on professional training outcomes

for doctors licensed in these jurisdictions. Importantly, for recognition, foreign-trained individuals do not generally have to have trained in the country that licensed them, either by going to medical school or by having an internship in that country.

The competent-authority pathway received considerable attention at the roundtable. Some of the Canadian participants initially expressed concern that such a program would run afoul of human rights laws. However, it was pointed out that the procedure does not explicitly privilege certain source countries because eligibility is based on where the person wishing to migrate was licensed to practise, not where he or she was educated. During this discussion, some participants noted that this is an example of the "skewed" mutual recognition between Canada and Australia, where Australia is more likely to recognize Canadian qualifications than Canada is to recognize Australian ones.

Mutual recognition agreements

In recent decades a number of bilateral and multilateral mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) to promote FQR have been signed. Some are between governments while others are between regulatory bodies. Some key examples of the former are the 1996 Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement between Australia and New Zealand and the 2008 Quebec-France Agreement on the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications. Under the latter, more than 70 occupations have developed individual MRAs. Participants were divided about one key provision of the Quebec-France accord: the stipulation that only those licensed and trained in one jurisdiction can obtain recognition in the other. For example, this rule would prevent someone licensed in Quebec but trained in Ontario or in a country other than Canada from being eligible for recognition in France under the Quebec-France accord or any occupational MRA developed under it.

A number of participants expressed support for MRAs as useful tools for addressing FQR. However, some suggested that MRAs cannot address all the issues involved in FQR, in part because MRAs are easiest to negotiate between relatively similar jurisdictions, which may exclude important source countries.

On March 22, the two umbrella organizations for engineers in each country, Engineers Canada and Engineers Australia, and the two regulatory bodies for accountants, Certified Practising Accountants Australia and the Certified General Accountants Association of Canada, renewed standing mutual recognition agreements. Although these agreements do not have legal force, they improve mobility within these two professions. Ed Fast, Minister for International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway for Canada, was present for the signing. He spoke about the importance of MRAs for the mobility of labour between Canada and Australia, the need for continued economic growth in both countries and the desire to promote international trade (as reflected in the joint statement on MRAs issued by the Canadian Council of Chief Executives and the Australian Industry Group in 2012). The Minister also congratulated the four regulatory bodies on their collaboration and noted that the Government of Canada would support MRAs when possible and practical.

Closing Observations

The closing panel focused on identifying policy issues in foreign qualification recognition that need to be considered in the future. The general sense was that although both countries have made progress in addressing foreign qualification issues, further work is necessary.

Jeff Hughes, Chief Operating Officer, Certified Practising Accountants Australia, and Lyle Handfield, Vice-President, International and Corporate Affairs, Certified General Accountants Association of Canada, sign a renewed mutual recognition agreement.
Photo: Don Erhardt

Maurice Allen, National Assessor, Engineers Australia, and Kim Allen, Chief Executive Officer, Engineers Canada, sign a renewed mutual recognition agreement.
Photo: Don Erhardt

Following a discussion about the Quebec-France accord, a number of participants indicated quite strong support for the idea of developing a Canada-Australia framework agreement on qualification recognition that could lead to MRAs between regulatory bodies and provide for the regular exchange of best practices and information. It was suggested that the similarities in the two countries' educational systems and occupational regulations would facilitate the development of such a framework. There was some debate about how much structure such an agreement should provide: whether it should provide only a nonbinding set of guidelines or establish binding rules. Although the specifics would be up for negotiation, the general idea of setting up a government-to-government framework under which professional associations and regulatory bodies could develop and sign MRAs had strong support.

There was also general agreement that improvement is required in both countries' research and data collection to support policy-making. So far, academics and other researchers rely on a limited set of data sources such as the census, or survey data from Statistics Canada such as the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada. Australian researchers have tended to use similar sources, notably the Australian census and the Continuous Survey of Australia's Migrants. However, questions about the impact of policy changes on outcomes cannot be answered using these data sources.

As Ted McDonald suggested in his presentation, one way to address this is by ensuring that, in the future, all the organizations involved in FQR, including government agencies, professional associations, regulatory bodies and educational institutions, systematically collect data. He added that there may be potentially useful data sources that are not widely known or available to academic researchers. Following his argument, the first step would be to ensure that organizations involved in FQR, immigration policy, labour market outcomes and other related fields communicate with each other about the existence of their data sets, methods of collection, and so on. Organizations should explore whether it would be possible to link data sets, although there would likely be limits to this practise given the ethical and legal rules regarding the sharing of personal or proprietary information. However, other participants noted that collecting and storing data, as well as documenting existing data, can be expensive, so it is important to weigh the costs against the benefits.

Participants mentioned data collection projects that are well under way:

- Learning from Experience Project: Funded by Alberta Health and Health Canada, this will assemble data on outcomes for internationally educated nurses, to inform the revision of licensing standards for the occupation.
- Tracking of Overseas Orientation Session Graduates: The FCRO is implementing an online survey of participants in CIIP information sessions abroad to collect information on FQR, employment outcomes and overall settlement supports three months, one year and three years after newcomers arrive in Canada.
- Continuous Survey of Australia's Migrants: Between 2009 and 2011, DIAC conducted a five-wave survey of a representative sample of immigrants from the family and skilled streams. The full results became available in February 2013 and will likely be a key part of assessing the outcomes of FQR policies in Australia in the coming years.

Looking at foreign qualification recognition issues more broadly, Naomi Alboim began her remarks in the closing panel with a call to "get on with this." She went on to observe that further and faster progress

needs to take account of a number of immigration policy shifts in recent years, and she proposed a range of ideas for possible Canada-Australia collaborative research:

- What values and objectives should we prioritize for the assessment and recognition of foreign qualifications? For example, how do we find the right balance between potentially competing values such as public protection versus public interest; social accountability versus risk management; equity versus efficiency; demand versus supply? What are the appropriate roles for government and regulatory bodies in the determination and implementation of these balances? Building on what a number of participants said throughout the roundtable, she asked whether new governance structures are necessary to address FQR adequately and, particularly, whether governments need to play a stronger role in regulating occupations.
- How well do the existing approaches perform in ensuring that all those who are licensed are competent to practise, and that all those who are competent to practise are licensed?
- Research has shown that language skills matter for immigrants' labour market outcomes. What should the minimum standards be? Should they be different for immigration and licensure purposes? Have some regulatory bodies set too high a standard? Which language assessments are most effective for ensuring competence in professional communication?
- A major shift in recent years has been the increase in the involvement of employers at the selection stage. As Lesleyanne Hawthorne showed in her presentation, employer-selected immigrants to Australia do extremely well in the labour market, with employment rates above 90 percent. What are the long-term impacts of what Hawthorne and Alboim called the "privatization of the selection process"?
- Australia (and, to a lesser extent, Canada) has been moving to two-step immigration applications (with the expression-of-interest system), two-step migration (with migrants arriving first as international students or temporary foreign workers) and two-step occupational licensing (with provisional or temporary licensure as the first step). How effective are these practices? Are people getting stuck at the temporary or provisional levels? If so, how common is this?
- Both Australia and Canada face challenges in providing health care and other services to people living in rural or remote areas. However, most of the research on these underserviced areas has focused on health care services, when such areas may also require services from other regulated occupations. What can Canada learn from Australia (and Australia from Canada) about service in remote and rural areas? Is it appropriate to rely on internationally trained professionals to service these areas? If they are a part of the solution, how can we ensure their success and the provision of quality services?

The Next Canada-Australia Roundtable

In the future, it will be important to broaden the scope of discussion and policy review. The 2nd Canada-Australia Roundtable on Foreign Qualification Recognition touched only on a few major themes, particularly the issues of which values should underpin foreign qualification recognition and occupational regulation. These questions will not go away, and it will be important to address them. In addition, there has been little discussion of how to improve the FQR process for humanitarian and family class migrants. In Australia, the process is very different for these immigrant classes, compared with other immigrants. In Canada

David McKinnon, Canadian Deputy High Commissioner to Australia, delivers closing remarks.
Photo: Don Erhardt

the process will be changing when CIC introduces mandatory pre-migration education assessments.

A number of participants noted that the two roundtables held to date have focused primarily on highly educated professionals (particularly health care professionals), and skilled trades have not received much attention. Given that skilled trades account for a substantial proportion of regulated occupations, this could be a focus for the next roundtable. One participant suggested that the regulation of the skilled trades in Canada and Australia may already be quite similar, and future collaboration may well be productive. This was supported by Citizenship and Immigration Canada's suggestion that the 3rd Australia-Canada Roundtable on Foreign Qualification Recognition, tentatively planned to be held in Australia in 2015, could focus more extensively on the issues involved with foreign-trained individuals in regulated skilled trades.