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NEWS RELEASE

North Africans encounter barriers and discrimination in Quebec's job market

Study calls for intercultural training for local employment counsellors

Montreal – In spite of a sound knowledge of French and superior levels of education, Moroccan and Algerian newcomers to the province of Quebec have extraordinarily high unemployment rates. The principal reasons for this discrepancy are explored in a new study from the Institute for Research on Public Policy.

The study's authors interviewed 22 North African job seekers and 15 employment counsellors in Sherbrooke and Montreal to try to better understand why this group of seemingly qualified immigrants is struggling to find work in the province. In the analysis, the authors identified three perceptions shared by both parties. Firstly, that immigrants are finding it difficult to have their foreign work credentials recognized by employers in Quebec, secondly, that immigrants from the Maghreb lack certain useful qualifications – like the ability to speak English and previous Canadian work experience – and finally, that there is discrimination by employers against North Africans.

But, while the two groups agree on the above factors, they have conflicting perceptions of each other's level of effort, motivation and commitment to the employment search. Immigrants from the Maghreb feel they are entitled to a job and to more individualized employment support services, since they were selected on the basis of criteria linked to their skills. Employment counsellors, on the other hand, believe that immigrants must compete with all other job seekers and are primarily responsible for taking the steps needed to find work. The authors recommend that all job counsellors in Quebec undergo intercultural training in order to help them better address negative stereotypes about Moroccan and Algerian immigrants.

"This would provide an additional tool that counsellors could use to combat their own feelings of helplessness about discrimination. This could also help them to encourage employers to reconsider their prejudices about North Africans and to focus on their primary concern: finding competent workers to do the job well," says co-author Annick Lenoir-Achdjian, an associate professor at the University of Sherbrooke

"Les difficultés d'insertion en emploi des immigrants du Maghreb au Québec : une question de perspective," by Annick Lenoir-Achdjian, Sébastien Arcand, Denise Helly, Isabelle Drainville, and Michèle Vatz Laaroussi, can be downloaded free of charge from the Institute's Web site (www.irpp.org).

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