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NEWS RELEASE

Foreign Work Experience Scores High Points in Canada's Immigrant Selection Process but Is Discounted by Employers

*Beyond better information and mechanisms to improve foreign
credential recognition, Canada should place greater emphasis on
foreign students as a preferred source of immigration*

Montreal – Increased immigration is a central plank of the Canadian government's strategy and a key factor in improving the country's economic prospects. Quebec, which has its own selection process, has also indicated its intention to increase the number of immigrants to the province. Yet, as the IRPP study being released today shows, recent immigrants are having increasing difficulty integrating into the labour market, even though they are more skilled and better educated than their predecessors.

In this paper, Brahim Boudarbat and Maude Boulet (both from Université de Montréal) compare the deterioration in the entry-level earnings of recent immigrants in British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec and the factors at play. While the downward trend in immigrants' labour market outcomes is well documented, less is known about the different patterns that exist in individual provinces. While the drop in the earnings of recent immigrants is less pronounced in Ontario for both genders, the study also reveals that the decline is most pronounced among male immigrants in British Columbia and female immigrants in Quebec.

As Canada needs to continue reaping the economic and social benefits of successful immigration, this situation requires redress.

According to Boudarbat and Boulet, the lack of recognition of work experience gained abroad is a large part of the problem. Moreover, in Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia, immigrant women find it more difficult than their male counterparts to have their credentials recognized.

To counteract this problem, the authors recommend placing greater emphasis on foreign students as a preferred source of immigration. Having lived in Canada, foreign students have already begun adjusting to Canadian life. In addition, they have (or will soon have) a Canadian degree, and they generally do not have foreign work experience to be recognized. The authors also address the immigrant selection grid, which, they argue, overemphasizes work experience. They contend that more weight should be given to age (to favour younger candidates) and where newcomers have obtained their education.

Boudarbat and Boulet also suggest that the Quebec and Canadian governments need to improve the mechanisms to inform potential immigrants about the realities of the Canadian labour market. They posit that better information would result in fewer credential-recognition problems and lead to a more positive work experience for newcomers. To this end, they prescribe creating more bridge-training programs. These have had tremendous success, but more programs are needed to respond to the demand.

Détérioration des salaires des nouveaux immigrants au Québec par rapport à l'Ontario et à la Colombie-Britannique, by Brahim Boudarbat and Maude Boulet, can be downloaded free of charge from www.irpp.org

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