



SIAST program to match employers, foreign workers

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REGINA (SNN) -- Matching the skills of foreign tradespeople with the requirements of Saskatchewan employers is the goal of a new initiative launched by the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST).

The new program would assess the credentials of applicants to the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (SINP) and Citizenship and Immigration Canada while the potential immigrants are still living in their home countries. A feasibility study into the viability of the program is expected to be completed in June and the program is anticipated to start in the fall.

David Harvey, director of business development and international partnership for SIAST, said the new program matches well with the institution's expertise in prior learning and assessment and with its prior partnership with international training institutions.

"We felt we could match this with our other experience overseas, where we could develop a program where we could recognize these skills in the trades on a fairly cost-efficient basis. This would provide a better service for Saskatchewan employers that are facing a major crunch with their labour markets," said Harvey.

Gurcan Kocdag, president of Doepker Industries, said the trailer manufacturer does skill-testing with possible employees in their home countries before they come to Canada. But having the skill level verified is not the same as having their certification recognized.

"We would then be able to use a skilled person in their chosen profession based on the skills and abilities appropriately certified.

That would be the biggest advantage for us," Kocdag said of the new program.

Through the foreign credential recognition program, SIAST would partner with international institutions to assess immigration applicants with respect to Canadian and Saskatchewan labour market demands. Harvey explained that with people applying for SINP, the government and employers are not certain the applicant has the skills needed to work here.

"Instead of people arriving and then maybe finding out their skills don't match, we want to do that assessment before they come here. This will save time and money for the employers and time and money for the applicants," said Harvey.

Through the program, a possible immigrant will be assessed on their technical skills, language skills and non-technical skills, such as teamwork and communication. The project is expected to initially focus on trade vocations such as welder, machinist, heavy duty mechanic and pipefitter.

"The immigrant and the employer will have a good idea whether this person can be successful in the labour market or not," said Harvey, adding the partner institutions may also provide training to fill in any gaps in an applicant's skills.

Countries where the program may be conducted are those that are a high priority for the

SINP and where SIAST has significant experience. Such target countries include Ukraine, South Africa, South Korea and the Philippines.

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