

# Immigrants welcome

*Province has one of highest rates of finding work after arriving*

By Murray McNeill

Manitoba has one of the highest success rates in the country when it comes to immigrants finding work after they arrive here, according to the results of a new Statistics Canada study released Monday.

The agency's *Canadian Immigrant Labour Market in 2006* study found immigrants living in Manitoba had among the highest employment rates and the lowest unemployment rates of any province in the country.

That was true even with very recent immigrants — those who have been here five years or less who traditionally have the hardest time finding work because of language barriers, lack of Canadian work experience or lack of recognition of foreign credentials.

Statistics Canada said the employment rate among those immigrants in Manitoba was a country-leading 73.1 per cent. They also had the second-lowest unemployment rate, at 6.8 per cent.

It said most new immigrants to Canada struggle to find work in the first decade after they arrive, particularly in the first five years. But the problem is most acute in Quebec, where the unemployment rate for even established immigrants — those that have been here longer than 10 years — remains at 9.2 per cent, it added.

For Meharban Singh Gill, an engineer from India who arrived in Manitoba in June 2005, the search for work lasted a mere 10 days before he landed an engineering job at Buhler Manufacturing's Versatile tractor plant in Winnipeg.

"I was very surprised because I was anticipating it would be very hard in the beginning," Gill said in an inter-

view Monday.

"I was prepared to do anything for survival. But I did not have to do that. Now I have a good start and I can build on that."

Gill said the reason he was hired so quickly is because Versatile needed a quality engineer and he had worked as an engineer in a large tractor plant in India. So he had the skills they were looking for, he added.

Tayeb Meridje, a labour market specialist with Success Skills Centre who helped Gill find the job at Versatile, said Gill was lucky to have found an engineering job so quickly. He said many professionals who immigrate to Canada often end up having to take a lower-paying, unrelated job until they can complete the additional training they need to obtain their Canadian accreditation.

But even at that, Meridje said, the employment success rate among new immigrants is still much better now than it was even seven years ago when he first joined Success Skills Centre. He said there are a number of reasons for that.

One is that many of today's immigrants are better trained and better qualified than they used to be, he said. Also, many of them who come to Manitoba are looking for jobs in the manufacturing and biotech industries and Manitoba has a lot of those types of companies.

Statistics Canada said Manitoba's highly successful Provincial Nominee Program, which tries to match skilled workers with jobs before they arrive, may also have contributed to the province's strong showing. It noted that in 2006, Manitoba received 50 per cent of all the provincial nominees who came to Canada.

## A look at finding work in Manitoba

Here is a breakdown of the employment and unemployment rates for Manitoba workers aged 25 to 54 years (the core-working age) in the four key categories covered in the Statistics Canada study: (With ranking among 10 provinces in brackets):

Category of worker	Employment rate (%)	Unemployment rate (%)
1. Very recent immigrant (here five years or less)	73.1 (1st)	6.8 (2nd)
2. Recent immigrant (here 5 to 10 years)	83.5 (2nd)	N/A*
3. Established immigrant (here longer than 10 years)	87.2 (3rd)	2.8 (3rd)
4. Born in Canada	85.0	3.2

\* Not available

— Source: Statistics Canada

Ben Remel, assistant deputy minister of the immigration and multicultural division of Manitoba Labour and Immigration, agreed the nominee program has contributed to Manitoba's success in finding jobs for new immigrants.

He said the nominee program accounted for 6,600 of the approximately 10,000 new immigrants that arrived in Manitoba last year. And the plan is to continue growing that number each year as the province works towards meeting its long-term goal of attracting 20,000 new immigrants a year by 2017.

But he noted that only about one-third of the Manitoba nominees have jobs waiting for them when they arrive. Most are in occupations the province has identified as high-demand occupations, including skilled tradesmen, biotech workers, information-technology workers and truck drivers. That increases their odds of finding jobs.

He said it also helps that the Mani-

toba economy has been quite robust in recent years, which creates a demand for more workers. As well, the provincial government has invested a lot of time and resources into developing programs and services aimed at helping immigrants find work after they arrive.

"We don't just leave it to chance."

Not surprisingly, Winnipeg also stacked up favourably compared to seven other mid-sized Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) included in the Statistics Canada survey.

The agency found that recent immigrants — those who have been here between five and 10 years — living in Winnipeg had the second-highest employment rate (83.1 per cent) in the country. Only those living in Halifax had a higher rate, at 88.9 per cent.

Winnipeg also had the narrowest gap in employment rates between very recent immigrants and Canadian-born Winnipeggers, at 12.7 per cent.

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