

EU-STEP Heads to Mexico, Ontario and Germany

Last spring, following successful job fairs in Germany, the BCCA EU-STEP initiative gave some thought to other locations that might prove fertile ground for attracting skilled workers to BC. Mexico seemed a likely spot, given its relative proximity to Canada and the number of workers interested in moving abroad. In fact, initial discussions with construction associations and immigration specialists indicated that there was a good chance that we would be quite successful in recruiting skilled workers in Mexico.

We were optimistic that the workers were there, however, the organizational logistics were immediately problematic. Locating the skilled construction workers proved to be very difficult. When BCCA initially looked into staging a job fair event in Guadalajara the project had to be stopped midway. After placing several ads in local newspapers the resumes received had little to do with construction. Instead, we got resumes from veterinarians and pig farmers as well as administrative people. Where were the skilled construction workers? Although the initial efforts did not bear much fruit, we persisted.

Our second attempt involved a local company and was preceded by meetings to verify that our needs could be met. We decided to hold an event with only pre-screened candidates. This was important as candidates needed to do a medical and criminal record check before being able to apply for a work permit. So, with a date set of December 2, 2007 our local partners in Guadalajara set out to find a couple of hundred skilled construction workers: carpenters, drywall installers, roofers, power line men and mechanics. EU-STEP together with a number of participating construction companies, headed down to Mexico.

Approximately 270 resumes were reviewed and of those 120 individuals were chosen for personal interviews. On the day of the event all was set up—tables, chairs, backdrop, interpreters, and a waiting room filled with 120 candidates,

all of whom were very quiet and respectful with no complaints about a wait time. These construction workers, aged between 21 and 51, had many years of construction experience. A dapper young 23 year-old, for example, already had nine years of carpentry experience under his belt despite his youth.

Interviews were held all day with some people being asked to come back for a second round. Some interviews resulted in immediate job offers. Many of the Mexicans were so stunned at being offered a job so quickly that they just kept sitting in their interview chairs even though they had been assured that they would receive the paperwork in due course. In one instance the hiring company filled out the paperwork for two job offers on the spot in order for these workers to believe they had been hired. In Guadalajara construction workers make about 300 dollars/month and they were very pleased with the positions being offered by the BC companies.

Of the 120 skilled workers interviewed about 40 received job offers. The first Mexicans are expected to arrive at the end of January/early February 2008. We are looking forward to the contribution they will make within the BC construction industry and EU-STEP will continue to maintain contact with our Mexican partners to locate and recruit more skilled workers for our members.

Coming up for the BCCA EU-STEP initiative, the next recruiting effort will happen in Ontario where the BC Government is setting up four job fairs in the southern region of the province February 26th – 29th. The BC Government has identified the area as a potential source of skilled workers for BC and EU-STEP will be there to review potential candidates for our industry.

The week following the job fairs in Ontario, it is back to Germany where there will be two

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construction-related job fairs similar to those hosted in 2007. These well-attended events are organized by the German equivalent of HRSDC along with the Immigration Section of the Canadian Embassy in Berlin and a number of Canadian provincial governments and will take place:

March 4, 2008 – Essen, Germany
March 6, 2008 – Leipzig, Germany

EU-STEP will be there to assist participating member companies by providing:

- all information on logistics and locations as well as forwarding job descriptions for posting on the website of the Federal Employment Office in Germany
- direct assistance in all matters
- translation where required

- trouble shooting while in attendance at the fairs
- collecting the fees for the events, coordinating payment and keeping members posted on the whole trip before, during, and after the events

If you are in need of skilled construction workers, you should consider participating in one or more of these job fairs. EU-STEP has facilitated the entrance of over 300 skilled construction workers into BC for the benefit of member companies. As a BCCA member, if you need workers, be sure to take advantage of EU-STEP's services.

Those interested in participating or needing further information should contact Regina Brodersen, EU-STEP Director, at the BC Construction Association:

Email: regina@bccasn.com or phone (250) 475-1077.

BC Construction Show Coming Soon!

The BC Construction Show returns to the Vancouver Convention & Exhibition Centre, February 13th & 14th, 2008. With 550 exhibits and 11,388 visitors at the 2007 show, the event is Western Canada's largest annual exposition for the design, construction, renovation, retrofit and refurbishing of all building types – residential and commercial.

See and learn more about all the major products, technologies, services and solutions for the construction industry. All buildings are applicable: commercial, single and multi-unit residential, educational, healthcare, hotels, institutional and more. The Show includes:

- 100 Speakers, over 45 Seminars
- Western Canada's largest seminar program for renovators, developers, builders, contractors and subcontractors.
- 75 New Products and Green Products!
- Learn about new and innovative products, systems and services. Stay informed about the very latest in new technologies that can improve building performance and revenue
- Up-to-date information on 46 different categories of products, technologies, building systems and services. Save time and stay informed
- 550 Exhibits

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The mission of the BCCA is to provide leadership and excellence in the representation of and service to British Columbia's construction industry