

Minister of Citizenship and Immigration
Honourable Chris Alexander
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada
K1A 0A6

March 1st, 2014

Dear Mr. Minister:

An interesting dilemma is unfolding in our manufacturing sector that I believe needs some immediate attention by your office. I would be happy to meet with you in your Ottawa office or your constituency office to discuss the remedies for this, and I've attached a copy of this email to Minister Goodyear our area Member of Parliament.

This issue was ironically brought to my attention through a relative's desire to immigrate to Canada from one of the Islands that make up the Azores. As you may know, Cambridge has a substantial Portuguese population so it's an obvious choice for many on the Islands. This particular individual asked if I may be able to connect him to some industries that would likely hire his skill set, that of a high end Stainless and rare steel welder (titanium etc). He was coming over to visit family, so I arranged a few companies for him to meet with who were in the hiring mode. All of the fabricators/manufacturers I took him to, where he did a weld test, offered him a job immediately. I was rather taken back, thinking maybe this individual possessed some rare talent, unique ability or something else. However I was concerned, as a Chamber of Commerce CEO, to find that this particular skill was extremely rare, and generally only is acquired if you happen to win the bidding war with many other companies looking for this skill. This gentleman was offered a starting rate of up to \$30/hour, where he comes from, the rate is closer to \$10.

So with that, these employers started immediately looking into the FTW program to get him here as quickly as they can. In fact the one who needs him immediately, is the only ORIGINAL supplier for Tim Horton's left, as you know, since the sale to Wendy's many of the suppliers have moved to south of the border. The current owner's father actually sat down with Tim Horton and Ron Joyce to discuss the design and needs for the very first Tim Horton's. They supply all the stainless fabrication for restaurant rehabilitation and new construction. Tim Horton's recently announced their intentions on building 500 more stores in Canada by 2018. This individual needs to ramp things up fast, but is restricted by his ability to acquire this particular skill.

What this individual found was that his past 8 months of advertising for positions with a third party employment agency do not qualify in order to demonstrate that he has in fact been advertising with no luck. The Ministry official tells him that he must demonstrate he has advertised Nationally with the name of his business, mailing address, contact information (who, number, email), starting wage and along with this his incorporation/business number attached to the ad. I guess I wouldn't have to explain

the deer in the headlight look that he gave me when he heard that. There is confusion over the regulation because advertising is advertising and utilizing a third party is for most employers the most effective and efficient. In over 50 years of operation, this company has never placed a job ad with their incorporation/business number in it, almost wouldn't know where to find it, actually would be concerned about publishing it, and lastly wonders what in the world difference would it make? Secondly, it is simply not practical any more for a company to put their business name and contact information in as every single unemployed person applies predominantly so they can continue to collect their EI, not because they are necessarily qualified. He had a couple dozen through the agency come for an interview, none of them had the necessary qualifications. He did have one come through and of course hired him on the spot. He did steal him from another employer, however he worked one week and tendered his resignation because he got a job offer in Alberta for 8 dollars an hour more. This skill simply isn't readily available, and if anyone is going to displace themselves from their current place of residence, it's likely going to be to move to Alberta where wages are 30% higher.

The other aspect, and I know most of these are with good intentions to get unemployed Canadians to work, but they simply hand-cuff, restrict and hurt business. There is an added burden of having to wait for weeks to have approval, when they know absolutely no one is available, unless they can steal them from another employer, can cause difficulty in meeting production deadlines and future job prospects. Most SME's would absolutely want to hire a Canadian first, rather than be challenged sometimes with language (not in this case) and possibly from not being able to readily get their past employment history verified. And 100% of Canadian SME's do try and hire locally. To do a National ad campaign would mean having to move an individual from BC or Newfoundland, probably having to help financially to get them here, and concern they may get here and just leave, it makes it as challenging as a FTW. However the FTW is tied to a contractual obligation from an employment perspective which is more suited, especially when it is for a skill set so rare. My personal concern is when the industry leaders know, generally a lot more than bureaucrats in Ottawa about what is available, where you get it and how much does it cost, it seems so restrictive and so blatantly obstructive that they begin to think how we hope they won't.

What employers are starting to look into is that since the CETA program will be coming into play in the next 18 months or so, they are looking at developing relationships with SME's in Europe, having the work done there, and they would import the finished product for less money because the welder there makes less than here, and Stainless Steel is rather inexpensive in places like Spain. Employers have no choice, they can't get read seal skilled trades men/women because the process is virtually impossible. I am aware that this last budget even tightened it up more, it's harder now, in order to support the new Apprenticeship program. The problem is, they can't wait for these apprentices to graduate in three years, then get 4 years of Stainless experience when the job is required to be completed in three months. To be honest with you Mr. Minister, this is an enormous problem for business right now, the Federal programs haven't ever worked, we have been telling the Federal Government what to do for years on immigrant skills required and the Federal Government keeps granting immigration status to Engineers, Architects', Consultants, Doctors (who can't practice), etc. I have a close relationship with our Immigrant workers programs, never met a welder or pipefitter yet, and these trades are so desperately needed.

As I said earlier, this individual I had an experience with, had 4 job offers, if I'd of taken him to 6 places, he would have had 6 offers. Our current polity and procedure for this type of situation, has a process that is not meeting the needs of the gap in Canada, it is not certainly meeting the needs of business in SW Ontario, it's just not working. We are pushing our manufacturing sector further and further away, and I'm quite certain that the underlying objective of this Government, isn't to do that. How do we then deal with the Skilled training programs when there are no businesses left who need skilled workers, only high tech computer programming jobs, and jobs at Walmart and McDonalds. The 50 % of kids graduating this year from high school who do not have the scholastic ability to go to University, will (no pun intended with the recent Winter) be left out in the cold. The apprenticeship program is a great initiative and will have value in 5 or more years down the road, right now business needs some help and support to keep the machine working until that day comes where we have these necessary skills.

My understanding is some of these requirements are ``procedural changes or amendments that the Ministers office has the ability to change. It would be helpful for you to assist business in some manner, even if it's a one off now and again to ensure Canadian and Ontario businesses can get the labour they need now.

Again I'd be pleased to meet any time!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Greg Durocher', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Greg Durocher
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