



## MANITOBA IMMIGRANTS' SAFETY INITIATIVE COMMUNITY UPDATE ~ FALL 2007

### PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS:

Safety Services Manitoba  
International Centre of  
Winnipeg  
Workers Compensation Board  
of Manitoba

### ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Assiniboine Community  
College Brandon  
Employment Solutions for  
Immigrant Youth  
International Centre of  
Winnipeg  
Manitoba Chamber of  
Commerce  
MB Federation of Labour  
MFL Occupational Health  
Centre  
MB Labour & Immigration  
New Flyer Industries  
Palliser Furniture  
Red River College  
Safety Services Manitoba  
Service Canada  
Success Skills Centre  
University of Manitoba  
University of Winnipeg  
Victor Mager Adult Learning  
Centre  
Winnipeg Chamber of  
Commerce

### **PARTNER AGENCYS' MESSAGE**

Teaching new employees safe work practices can be challenging. It can be even more challenging when the new employees speak and understand little to no English and come from different cultural and work environments. Understanding these challenges, Safety Services Manitoba and the International Centre of Winnipeg, with the support of the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba, are committed to the development of the Manitoba Immigrants' Safety Initiative (MISI).

The development of this unique Initiative is based on a model of community engagement and capacity building. As partner agencies, we are extremely pleased by the interest in and the willingness of organizations to participate in the development of the Manitoba Immigrants' Safety Initiative. Other organizations participating in this initiative are listed on the left sidebar.

The over-reaching goal of the MISI is to build a sustainable Manitoba Coalition for immigrant worker health & safety. As a Coalition for immigrant workplace health and safety, we can identify and implement best strategies and build a shared resource network.

We acknowledge and thank all organizations currently working toward building a culture of workplace health and safety for current and future immigrant workers in Manitoba. Immigrant workers contribute to the Manitoba economy and to everyone's quality of life; we must, therefore, be committed to providing all newcomers with a healthy and safe work environment.

*Michael Waite, ED Safety Services MB  
Linda Lalande, ED International Centre*

### **PROJECT UPDATE**

With the Research Phase of the Manitoba Immigrants' Safety Initiative completed, we have now entered the Development Phase. The Development Phase of the Initiative will see the development of specific programs and resources. These programs and resources will address the needs described in the secondary and primary research, completed in June 2007.

The research identified four areas that present challenges and barriers to maintaining the health and safety of immigrant workers. These four areas are: language, cultural differences, appropriate education resources, and workers understanding their rights and responsibilities. There is also a need to increase immigrant workers' awareness of and accessibility to existing workplace health and safety programs and resources.

Four Development Committees have been formed to look at programming and resource development in these areas. In addition, an Education Advisory Committee has been established to provide support and consultation to these working groups. The willingness of organizations and individuals to become involved in these committees, and work toward building a sustainable immigrant health and safety initiative, has been extremely gratifying.

The number of immigrants arriving to Manitoba every year is rapidly increasing, as is the number of different countries they come from. We have a shared responsibility to ensure healthy and safe workplaces for all newcomers.

*Richard Nordrum, Project Manager  
Email: btconnections@mts.net*

## Secondary Research Findings

### Workplace Health and Safety Training for Newcomers: Global and Local Perspectives

As the demand for both skilled and unskilled workers intensifies in Manitoba, and the number of newcomers to the province increases, the need for formalized workplace health and safety training for immigrant employees is increasing. Immigrant workers in particular may be at greater risk of injury as they are more likely to be employed in higher risk and lower wage sectors of the workforce. As a first step in the Manitoba Immigrant Safety Initiative, the Institute of Urban Studies (IUS) undertook a review and evaluation of workplace health and safety education initiatives for immigrant workers from both global and local perspectives.

The IUS review found that most of these types of education initiatives are conducted in the United States. Examples of workplace health and safety education for immigrant workers included advocacy-based initiatives, as well as an emphasis on community collaboration and networking. In Canada, only a patchwork of initiatives could be found.

This emphasizes the need for the development of formalized workplace health and safety training for immigrants to Canada.

The objective of the IUS review was to outline a range of best practices exemplified in both Canada and abroad. These best practices include the translation of brochures and fact sheets, and the dissemination of workplace health and safety information through websites and media outlets. The review also offered examples of education programs that provide useful examples, however, the overriding characteristic of these programs is the high English benchmark that is required by immigrants to participate in the training. In particular, this finding supports the need for the development of a preventative strategy for workplace health and safety in the province of Manitoba that specifically meets the needs of immigrants with lower levels of English proficiency.

*Institute of Urban Studies, U of Winnipeg  
See the full IUS report at [www.safetyservicesmanitoba.ca/  
manitoba\\_immigrants\\_safety\\_initiative.aspx](http://www.safetyservicesmanitoba.ca/manitoba_immigrants_safety_initiative.aspx)*

## Primary Research Findings

### Focus Group & Interview Findings

As summarized above, the Institute of Urban Studies undertook a broad environmental scan of immigrant workplace health and safety programs and resources in the research phase of the Manitoba Immigrants' Safety Initiative. As well, the project team spoke with over 100 employers of immigrants and immigrant employees, in focus groups and interviews across the province.

Discussion occurred with employers and employees from a broad range of sectors, and employers in rural communities as well. These communities included Arborg, Winkler, Carmen, Brandon, Thompson and Steinbach. Reaching immigrant employees, however, proved more challenging. Employers such as Palliser Furniture and groups such as the Afghan Association of Manitoba and the Philippine community assisted with this.

The project team elicited a broad range of input regarding the needs and challenges of keeping immigrant workers healthy and safe at work. Interestingly, the feedback from immigrant workers and their employers was similar. Language and cultural barriers, understanding of legislation, rights and responsibilities, and awareness of and accessibility to information about workplace health and safety were their main areas of concern.

The findings of the primary research are guiding the MISI Development Committees' work, as they develop resources and programming for the initiative. Without the participation of employers and immigrant employees, we would be less effective in our work, so we sincerely thank all participants for their input.

*J. Heinrichs, MISI Project Assistant*

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