



Comité sectoriel
de main-d'œuvre
de l'industrie maritime

SUMMARY

**STUDY ON QUÉBEC IMMIGRANTS WITH MARINE
QUALIFICATIONS**

JULY 2008

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Study context and goals

In 2005, a report by the Training Workgroup, set up at the Marine Industry Forum, highlighted various problems affecting marine transport workers in Québec. Among them was the shortage of navigating personnel.

To solve this human resources problem, the Workgroup proposed seeking out new workers among immigrants interested in Canadianizing their skills. However, the situation surrounding these workers, likely to represent a potential hiring pool for navigating personnel, was not documented, and hence not well known.

Consequently the Human Resources Sectorial Committee of the Marine Industry (CSMOIM) mandated *Groupe Réseau Conseil* to conduct a study on this matter. The study goals were:

- To describe the marine industry context for integrating immigrant workers into navigating personnel positions (navigation officers, marine engineering officers, deckhands and engine room rating);
- To produce recommendations designed to promote Québec marine immigrants' access to navigating personnel positions.

Methodology

Given the small size of the immigrant population targeted, the study used a qualitative survey approach based on the so-called information saturation data gathering technique. The scope and diversity of the sources and data gathered make it possible to achieve study objectives.

The sampling of candidates contacted divides into three main categories:

- Marine employers
 - Ship owners
 - Ferries
 - Port authorities
 - Unions
- Social players involved in the marine immigrant labour market entry process
 - Transport Canada
 - Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles (MICC)
 - Comité d'adaptation de la main-d'œuvre – Personnes immigrantes (CAMO-PI)
 - Human Resources Sectorial Committee in the Marine Industry (CSMOIM)
 - Other organizations likely to work with the target group

- Immigrants with marine qualifications who are able to have careers as navigating personnel with the following duties:
 - Navigation officer
 - Marine engineering officer
 - Deckhand, including bridge watch
 - Engine room rating

Data was gathered in face-to-face and telephone interviews and two group interviews with immigrants with marine qualifications.

The data sources consulted are primarily those of the MICC. Despite ongoing efforts, it was unfortunately impossible to access Transport Canada's marine immigrant database.

CSMOIM would like to thank all of the organizations who contributed to the study, especially CAMO-PI.

Marine immigrant profile

The study revealed that Québec marine immigrants holding officer certification outnumber non-graduates. According to MICC data, from 2001 to 2006, on arriving, 113 immigrants were officially declared navigation officers, marine engineering officers, deckhands and engine room rating. Only 8 were seamen.

According to MICC data, from 2001 to 2006, more than two-thirds of marine immigrants officially declared officers were from Northern Africa, one-quarter were from Eastern Europe and the rest were from Western Europe (Table 1).

Table 1 – Origin of newly arrived immigrants declared marine officers, 2001-2006

	Northern Africa	Eastern Europe	Western Europe
Deck officers	23	11	5
Marine engineering officers	42	11	3
Total	65	22	8

According to data obtained from Transport Canada, from 2003 to 2005, approximately 200 immigrants applied for recognition of equivalencies of their foreign certification (Table 2). This corresponds to almost 4 times more applications than the number of immigrants officially declared marine workers when entering the country.

Table 2 – Number of applications for equivalencies in Transport Canada offices

Québec offices	2003	2004	2005
Montréal	41	56	44
Québec	20 (approx.)	20 (approx.)	20 (approx.)
Rimouski	1 (approx.)	1 (approx.)	1 (approx.)

Main findings

The study identified three types of obstacle to marine immigrant labour market entry:

1. System-related obstacles;
2. Marine industry-related obstacles;
3. Immigrant-related obstacles.

1. System-related obstacles (related to structures, policies or regulations governing the immigration process)

- Lack of information before immigrating to Québec

Persons with marine qualifications wishing to immigrate to Québec are given very little useful information on how the Québec marine industry operates, how to become part of it, and how to prepare their file. Foreign government departments and delegations have no information on the operating structure giving access to marine industry jobs. No information is provided since there is no communication tool promoting this industry.

- Poor knowledge of marine industry human resources requirements

Emploi-Québec and the community organizations devoted to labour market entry lack information on human resources requirements, job availability and career prospects in the marine industry. The marine sector is not a priority for MICC immigration officers' recruitment efforts abroad. The study even noted that immigrants regularly do not declare their marine skills when applying to immigrate to Canada.

- Regulatory barriers to opening a file for obtaining Canadian papers

Immigrants wishing to work in the marine industry as navigating personnel must apply to Transport Canada for recognition of equivalency of their foreign certification and service time at sea. The following conditions must be met:

- Be a Canadian citizen or landed immigrant with a permanent resident card;
- Have valid papers issued under the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW95) without tonnage or trip restrictions. Sea time is checked. Coastline sea time is not recognized;
- Have official documents translated into French or English;
- Have papers from country of origin authenticated (process can take up to one year—often the main cause of delays in getting recognition).

Generally, Canada does not recognize papers obtained in other countries, apart from Great Britain, Australia and some US states.

Further, depending on the results of the equivalency study, the candidate must pass a certain number of compulsory training examinations to obtain the equivalency. These requirements, deemed very strict by the industry and immigrants, are designed to ensure knowledge of the Canadian marine system and the special features of navigation regulations specific to Canada.

- Difficulties accessing training required to obtain Canadian certification

- Financial difficulties

The cost of training to enter the marine labour market is a major obstacle for immigrants. Given their precarious situation, many immigrants have considerable financial problems. Currently, two assistance programs exist. The first, offered by Emploi-Québec, consists of assistance to support regulated training and ensure job maintenance. Consequently, it does not target recognition of foreign papers and requires a job connection. Until they have started becoming integrated into the marine industry, the only assistance program available to immigrants is the Transports Québec program, which allocates financial support of 50% of tuition fees for courses leading to officer certification.

- Geographic difficulties

Distances from training centres were also identified as an obstacle to the equivalency recognition process. The great majority of candidates live in the Montréal area and training is given in Rimouski or the Québec City area. This means they must leave home for periods of up to several weeks, without means of subsistence.

In addition, the courses required are often given only once a year and must sometimes be cancelled due to a lack of professors or sufficient number of candidates, which significantly slows down the equivalency obtention process.

2. Marine industry-related obstacles

- Complex, misunderstood job access rules

Immigrants have difficulty understanding the processes involved in getting a job in the marine industry. To begin with, information is not readily available. There are many rules for entering the labour market. Immigrants have trouble decoding information applying to their situation. The roles of unions are also misunderstood. The marine industry union culture often differs from that of other countries.

- Hiring practices that are not favourable to immigrants

It is difficult for an immigrant to find his or her first regular job in the marine industry. They are usually offered temporary jobs replacing others for short periods of time.

Interviews of employer representatives showed that 75% of those who hire immigrants integrate them at a level lower than the certificate of competency recognized by Transport Canada.

- Absence of reception and integration practices specific to immigrants in the marine industry

The lack of knowledge about Québec maritime culture, implicit operating rules with regard, notably, to exercising leadership and interacting with employees, behaviour to adopt under certain specific circumstances, etc. can hinder newly arrived immigrants.

3. Immigrant-related obstacles

- Poor knowledge of the Québec maritime culture and the language

The main job entry difficulties immigrants experience are related to language (French or English depending on the company) and culture. The foreign officers that generally adapt best are those that are the most flexible and best able to work with unionized workers in the context of small crews.

Main recommendations

- Work with all partners concerned (MICC, Transport Canada, CSMOIM, IMQ, Emploi-Québec, employers and unions) to implement a strategy to

- attract immigrants with international, national or provincial qualifications and/or experience;
- Target countries known for their maritime culture and develop pilot projects;
 - Add a descriptive data sheet on career prospects and conditions for entering the marine industry to the MICC website;
 - Envisage mechanisms for disseminating information to the various players involved (MICC, agencies abroad, labour market entry organizations, immigrants) to facilitate immigrant labour market entry;
 - Develop products to help familiarize immigrants with the Québec marine context;
 - Promote the *Program for Immigrants and Visible Minorities* (PRIIME program) to the marine industry;
 - Propose, to Transport Canada, a joint analysis of equivalency criteria designed to facilitate immigrants' entry into the marine industry;
 - Implement activities to make workplaces aware of cultural diversity;
 - Plan for reception and labour market entry activities specific to immigrant worker requirements (linguistic training, mentoring, twinning, etc .).

Conclusion

In the Québec marine industry, integrating qualified immigrants into navigating personnel positions is a process that involves numerous obstacles. The study begins by noting a shortcoming in the information obtained and disseminated by immigration process players. Government departments and delegations abroad have no information on how the marine industry labour market is structured or how it operates. Further, Emploi-Québec and the community organizations dedicated to labour market entry are unaware of the marine industry's great need for human resources. Consequently, immigrants with marine qualifications have no information on Transport Canada's conditions for getting recognition of equivalencies and on the Québec marine industry in general. This information would be very useful in preparing their file and understanding the Québec marine industry before arriving in Québec.

Immigrants regularly lack access to and resources for the equivalency recognition process.

The study notes that immigrants' main labour market entry difficulties are related to poor knowledge of the language, Québec's maritime culture and the implicit rules for operating on board ship. Better immigrant worker reception and job access measures could offset these shortcomings and promote their labour market entry.

Finally, the study's recommendations are designed to propose solutions to facilitate the integration of Québec immigrants with marine qualifications into navigating personnel positions.