



Third Annual *All Are Welcome Here:*
Living and Working Without Discrimination
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Final Report

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A Community Initiative of Individuals and Organizations

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Evaluation of the Event

85 of 137 attendees offered feedback on the event. These individuals included service providers, community members, members of the education sector, government representatives, and others. Their main goals for attending the event predominantly included learning new information, supporting London becoming a more welcoming and inclusive community, to network, and to support the LMLIP and its partners.

On 7-point scales, respondents rated the event as extremely useful overall (mean = 6.2), enjoyed the keynote speaker (mean = 5.8), and made some new contacts at the event (mean = 4.8). Of note, participants indicated that they would be very likely to attend a similar event in the future (mean = 5.9).

In the open-ended responses to questions, participants indicated that the most beneficial aspects of the event included the keynote speaker, networking opportunities, and the discussion and sharing of new information. For future events, participants would like to again include case studies, hear more from newcomers themselves, and hear about what is working to address discrimination in other communities.

Overall, the event was a great success and the LMLIP looks forward to working with the community to hold future events.

Housing Scenarios and Group Responses

Scenario #1

A family of five lives on the 5th floor of a high-rise building. At the time when this family was in desperate need of an apartment, nothing else was available.

As time goes by, more and more tenants complain about the noise from the family at late hours, the stomping of kids' feet all day long, and loud conversations at any time of the day. The housing manager follows the company's rules and gives a verbal warning to the family. After a while as nothing changes, a written warning is given to them. The housing manager communicates the rules of the company about noise at late hours, and tries to help the tenant by putting down rugs, but things do not improve.

The community gets involved and blames the company for the bad treatment the family receives. The housing manager decides to evict this family.

Group Responses

The Problem

- Housing shortage so family was put in suboptimal housing to begin with
- Cannot tell small kids to keep quiet and the apartment may not be sound proof
- Manager's treatment was extreme
- Lack of communication between landlord and tenant
- Tenants need to understand their rights and be educated as to Canadian culture
- Some groups thought there was discrimination. Some did not.
- Can't prove discrimination in this situation
- Usually landlords easily justify their decisions
- Landlord needs to take into account that this is impacting other tenants

The Solution

- The landlord should warn the tenant again about the level of noise and make sure they understand the consequences
- The manager needs to sit down with the family and discuss how to solve this situation because of all the complaints – e.g., counsel parents to change habits to be less noisy in the evening after certain times (e.g., bedtime)
- Improve communication between the landlord and tenant
- Landlord should be prosecuted for actions-didn't follow process for renting/what had to be done, didn't give written notice
- Family should try to find new housing and be supports so that their rights are not violated
- Family should obtain letter of support from community
- Education for both parties on cultural communication
- Everything should be in writing so there is no misunderstanding
- Landlord can try to move them to the first floor or work with partners to find different accommodation

Scenario #2

A newcomer family moves into an apartment building on the 8th floor. They are happy to be in this building and want to maintain their apartment. Within the first month, the neighbours below complain about water seeping down through their ceilings. The landlord checks with the tenant on the 8th floor who cannot explain why there is water coming from their apartment.

The situation continues and one day, the landlord sees water seeping under the door of the 8th floor tenant's apartment into the hallway and speaks to the tenant about this. The tenant is surprised that there is a problem. The landlord demands that the tenant pay for the damages to the 7th floor apartment and hallway.

After a while, it comes to light that some newcomer families tend to use lots of water when cleaning the floor in their homes. The tenant believes that they are being discriminated against because they use different cleaning methods.

Group Responses

The Problem

- Water seepage was caused by tenant's cleaning method
- Not enough information was given on cleaning methods
- Case appears to be unintentional
- Lack of communication between the landlord and tenant
- No discrimination-housing manager seemed to follow the correct steps; anyone would be asked to pay for this type of water damage even if it was unintentional
- This is a cultural issue

The Solution

- The tenant should be educated about cleaning methods in Canada
- Someone should investigate to find out if the case is as it appears
- There should be information sheets around the apartment building about appropriate cleaning techniques
- The landlord should provide progressive warnings to promote action
- Help to change the family's behavior without judging them
- The landlord should be provided with some education to understand cultural differences
- Could have a team to educate people when they move into the building – preventative teaching
- The landlord needs to explain further why there is a problem and why the tenant needs to pay for the damage
- Check in on insurance for tenants and landlords
- Landlord needs to come up with payment arrangement for the tenant

Scenario #3

A newcomer family who came through the provincial nominee program arrived last year to settle in London. Both husband and wife are highly educated. They have two children. They stayed at an Airbnb in London for two weeks as per their contract. They do not know anyone in London. During the two weeks they started looking for an apartment to rent and contacted several landlords. They were not approved because they did not have credit in Canada and due to this, they were asked to get a co-signer.

At this time, they needed more time to find a rental property, so they had to move to another Airbnb for another two weeks. They started contacting their friends abroad who might know someone in Canada to accept to be their co-signer and it was a nightmare to find someone whom a friend might know in Canada. After four weeks, they were successful in finding someone from another community whom they met by chance, and who willingly accepted to be their co-signer on the rental application.

Group Responses

The Problem

- The family has no credit history in Canada and doesn't know anyone in Canada
- Asking for Canadian credit history may be used as an excuse not to rent to the family
- Asking for a co-signer/guarantor is a problem- clients end up paying rent 6 - 12 months in advance in order to get around co-signer/guarantor problem
- A lot of risk here-they may have to pay in advance and cannot get their money back if things go wrong
- Some groups thought there was discrimination. Some did not.
- If it is discrimination, it may be both individual and systemic discrimination
- At an individual level, sometimes landlords can be selective and ask for credit history to give housing to those with more money who are more established
- However, the same rules apply to Canadians

The Solution

- Provincial nominee program should include checklist including need for co-signer
- Look at the funds they had to show to come into the country
- Be sure tenants are not treated differently based on race or gender
- Landlord websites should indicate the need for credit history – if you do not have these requirements, please do not contact us
- Government should provide credential to skilled immigrants looking for housing
- Settlement services to provide education/classes on renting
- Newcomers should start building credit history as soon as possible
- Could ask company who sponsored them to co-sign

Employment Scenarios and Group Responses

Scenario #1

Felipe who migrated to Canada from a Central American country, alleges that over his three years of employment with ABC Farms as a farm labourer, he was denied full-time, permanent employment, while other white employees with less seniority were made permanent. Despite his seniority, Felipe was the first one to be let go during seasonal layoffs. The employer denied Felipe's allegation of bias, indicating that they presumed he understood the nature of seasonal work, since over his three years of employment, he had always returned to the same job after layoffs.

Group Responses

The Problem

- Felipe feels like he is being discriminated against because he didn't get a permanent job
- Seems to be miscommunication between Felipe and his employer – e.g., does the employer realize that Felipe wanted a permanent job?, was the employer clear about the continual seasonal nature of Felipe's position? Did Felipe understand the seasonal nature of his job when he took it?
- A number of the groups, but not all, thought this was discrimination because Felipe was passed over for white employees with less seniority

The Solution

- Improved communication on both parts so that there is a greater understanding of what both perspectives are and they understand each other better – the employer might not have understood that Felipe wanted a permanent job; Felipe may not have understood that his position would always be seasonal
- Maintain good relations with employer
- Felipe should formally apply for the permanent positions and ask for a written response
- Felipe should know his rights and gain a better understanding of company policy
- Determine whether there are labour regulations that cover this
- Felipe should learn the system and report to people in power

Scenario #2

An automotive company in the Southern Ontario region usually offers additional training opportunities to employees who consistently demonstrate a willingness to go beyond the call of duty. Even though the practice is not formalized, it is considered the 'go to' approach by management.

Jennifer, a white Canadian factory worker, alleges that over her five years as an employee, she was treated differently than her Asian-Canadian male colleagues with the same years of service. When opportunities for additional training arose in her area of specialty, she felt that management ignored her and sent Asian-Canadian males instead. She left her employment as a result of this treatment. The employer denied the allegations.

Group Responses

The Problem

- It is difficult to prove bias in this case because there is no formal application process for training
- Lack of formalization can lead to invisible bias
- Criteria for additional training seems to be subjective, leaving room for bias to play a role
- There seemed to be a perception that men would be more likely to go beyond the call of duty than women
- Many groups thought there was evidence of gender discrimination, some thought there was racial discrimination

The Solution

- Gender bias education for the boss
- Employer should formalize the criteria for additional training and put this in writing – need to be specific in what competencies they are looking for
- Jennifer could have talked to her boss and talked to HR about the situation and asked them to explain how they selected those for additional training, rather than quitting
- Jennifer should have asked her boss what she needed to do to access more training
- Jennifer could have asked to see her job performance evaluation, and could also have talked to the labour board about the situation

Scenario #3

A woman and her husband migrated to Canada in 2016, and engaged the services of First Choice Employment Agency, through which they applied for jobs. They were told by the agency that their qualifications from another country were not recognized in Canada. First Choice Employment Agency clearly states in their agreement that the client is responsible for the evaluation of Non-Canadian qualifications. No attempt was made to assess and validate their qualifications and no efforts were made to provide job finding assistance. During the period of their engagement with First Choice Employment agency, they were denied positions that were given to Canadian-born applicants who were much less qualified.

Group Responses

The Problem

- Newcomers are not fully informed about the lack of recognition of their qualifications and where to go for credential evaluation. They need to be fully informed, so they don't come to Canada and end up with nothing
- It's the reality that newcomers must be patient and think about starting back at entry level, but why? That's not right. Often newcomers have more experience than Canadian born.
- It is not the employment agency's responsibility to get the credentials evaluated – this was in the agreement
- Employment agency is not providing good service and probably shouldn't have accepted these newcomer clients
- Some groups said there was discrimination, some said there was no discrimination and it was more a case of the agency being negligent
- Discrimination may be based on immigrant status and the nationality of the applicants
- Immigrants feel discriminated against when their qualifications are not recognized

The Solution

- Should tell immigrants about credential assessment before coming to Canada to inform their decision - let us know before we come
- The newcomers MUST have their credentials evaluated as a first step upon arrival
- Better communication – people need to be more proactive (both the employment agency and the people immigrating)
- The company should provide information on how to validate credentials or direct newcomers to services that provide this information
- It would be useful to educate the employment agency about international degrees
- The immigrants should go to another agency that supports newcomers
- We must shift programs to fit needs
 - Employers should find positive ways to communicate the benefits of doing the evaluation in order to obtain the job