

More global workers set sights on Canada

Country leapfrogs U.K., Australia to take second spot as employees' preferred destination: Poll

BY MARCEL VANDER WIER

CANADA has quietly jumped into second place among preferred global destinations for employees considering moving abroad for work.

While the United States remains firmly in front, Canada has leapfrogged both the United Kingdom and Australia in terms of desirability, according to a poll released by the Canadian Employee Relocation Council (CERC), a not-for-profit organization in Toronto.

The 2017 CERC Global Mobility Survey garnered responses from 10,091 workers in 20 countries.

The U.S. dropped by four percentage points to 30 per cent compared to 2012, while Canada jumped two points to 22 per cent, ahead of the United Kingdom and Australia — both at 19 per cent after incurring small declines.

Canada's surge comes as other more typical employee destinations experience unrest, said Stephen Cryne, president and CEO of CERC.

"With what's going on within other regions of the world, Canada is seen as being open to migration," he said. "I don't think it tells a definitive story, but what it does is give us insight into the thinking and trends that are out here amongst working women and men."

"At a time when countries like the U.K., the U.S. and Australia are making it more difficult to get people to come, Canada's going in the opposite direction, and I think that's a good thing. We are on the right track when it comes to the development of policy. We're seen as a beacon, frankly, on the immigration file, in terms of having a good system."

Policy a driving factor

The findings are a result of Canada's progressive immigration program-

ming, some of which has been intentionally created to lure top global talent, said Cryne.

"We have the Express Entry system, a new Global Skills Strategy," he said. "Canada is seen on a global basis as being very progressive in the development of its immigration programs. It's also seen as very welcoming to immigrants."

The research lends support to the country's efforts at attracting workers, said Cryne.

"This gives support for the business community's efforts to promote more open mobility with our government," he said. "And I think it gives our government information that they're on the right track in terms of developing a more progressive migration policy."

Canada's rise in desirability concurs with what is happening on the ground, according to Wanda Cuff-Young, vice-president of operations at Work Global Canada in St. John's.

"You see what's happening in the United States," she said. "All you have to do is turn on the television. It's causing a lot of disconcert."

Canada also has many attractive benefits — especially free health care and friendly immigration policies, said Cuff-Young.

"I have dozens of these inquiries every week," she said. "(Workers) feel Canada is a safe and viable place to come to. It's a safe place to raise a family. I hear that three times a day."

But Canada's immigration system still has its share of complexities, making it more difficult for global recruits to relocate here, said Cuff-Young.

"Canada is highly regulated. The bureaucratic process is so slow. Just because you have a great candidate

doesn't mean they can come to Canada. You have to pass all of these requirements. You have to have an employment contract; there's documentation.

"It's not an easy process. You need professional help."

Recruitment challenges

Still, CERC's findings come as welcome news for Canadian recruiters, especially as Atlantic Canada continues to deal with a major worker shortage, alongside a skills gap in terms of what many people are being trained to do versus actual labour market needs, she said.

"It's a complex issue."

While restaurants, information technology companies and healthcare facilities struggle to find appropriate staff, heavy equipment operators are unable to locate work in their desired field, she said.

Fast-track programming should help alleviate the situation, but the key for employers is finding workers who will stay long-term and grow with the business, said Cuff-Young.

"Newfoundland and Labrador doesn't need temporary workers," she said. "They need people to move here from wherever they are with their wife and children, to get a house and to stay here."

When it comes to the global recruitment process, the ultimate responsibility falls on the employer, said Cuff-Young.

"There's a lot of illegal activity which happens," she said. "A lot of people come to Canada to work and they buy the jobs, especially in the food sector. They'll do anything to come and there's a lot of firms that take advantage of people."

Companies in need of new re-

cruits should contact their provincial board of trade or employer council for assistance, said Cuff-Young.

"We bridge the gap with information sessions to demystify (the process)."

Reluctance to relocate

While Canada is growing in popularity amongst global jobseekers, the prospect pool may actually be shrinking, according to the CERC poll.

Forty per cent of global employees said there is nothing their current employer can do to convince them to take an international assignment, while just 18 per cent said they would be very likely to temporarily relocate for two years in another country for a 10 per cent pay raise and full-time job.

Those numbers are a stark difference to a 2012 CERC survey.

The trend is partially due to improving standards of living in "supply countries" such as China and India, said Cryne. Skilled workers simply don't have the same pressure to relocate for work.

Additionally, there is a growing reluctance in terms of employees considering moving for work.

"It is increasingly more challenging and complex for companies to motivate employees to move for work," said Cryne.

Overall, global employees are less inclined to want to move abroad than they were five years ago, he said.

"The rise in protectionism and opposition to global trade and immigration in some regions are very likely influencing the thinking of employees about moving for employment."