

'This is a real humiliation for them'

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The family lives on social assistance

but Mr. Moros, an architect, and Mrs. Moros, a speech pathologist, hope one day to work in their trained professions.

Acquiring the proper qualifications to work in Canada, however, is an uphill battle.

Even getting menial jobs is difficult, as employers would prefer someone who speaks English.

"We have found that what employers want is people to speak English," said Felina Rezza, the Moros' settlement counsellor with Catholic Community Services of York Region, one of the largest agencies serving new immigrants in the region.

"An employer doesn't have the patience. How is he (Mr. Moros) even going to make change when he's pumping gas? Employers have a large pool (of prospective workers) to draw from."

The agency is funded annually by the federal government (\$1 million for immigrant services including settlement and adaptation, job workshops and school programs), the province gives \$90,000, Catholic Charities offer \$375,000 and York Region's United Way gives the agency \$60,000.

Meanwhile, the Moros have no credit history, drivers' licences or employment references here. They are trying to get volunteer jobs so they can build their resumes.

"It is very hard," Mrs. Moros admitted. "But the most important thing is we are happy now. We are together. We have good things to share and we found special people. These people, all the time open doors for us, all the time help us."

Ms Rezza, a settlement counsellor for 15 years, said the Moros are typical of the clients she sees settling in York Region.

They are well-educated families, many of whom have fled atrocious conditions in their homelands, looking to become productive members of society.

However, Ms Rezza said many stumbling blocks stand in their way.

Government gives immigrants the impression there are countless jobs available in Canada for highly skilled professionals, she said.

But professionally trained immigrants, such as doctors, teachers and engineers, usually spend years attempting to get the qualifications or credentials they need to work here.

"This is a real humiliation for them," Ms Rezza said.

"In some ways, it makes it harder for professionals to come here. I think they came with higher expectations. Some

really come unprepared. A lot of our clients really thought they would get a job in their field."

Ms Rezza complained the government offers "misleading" information about employment opportunities to immigrants and argues politicians should provide more training and support so newcomers can qualify to work in their professions.

At the same time, she said immigrants also face hurdles learning English, adapting to a new culture, finding affordable housing, establishing credit, finding agencies that will advocate on their behalf, securing health care coverage and seeing their children assimilate into a society they don't understand and are often uncomfortable with.

"I think for most people, they find it really, really difficult. It's difficult for the first few years," Ms Rezza said.

"The first five years, it's just trying to hold it all together with survival needs."

An immigration symposium called Embracing Diversity (sponsored by the United Way, Catholic Community Services of York Region, York Region and the Simcoe York District Health Council) was held last October to determine the needs of York's growing multicultural population.

A report highlighting issues identified at the symposium concluded:

- Immigrants find it difficult to get information about services in York because it often isn't available in their mother tongue or is too complex to understand;
- There isn't one single place where newcomers can get information;
- Affordable housing is hard to come by and isn't designed to house extended families;
- Public transit is difficult to use;
- Improvements are needed in English as a second language courses;
- Foreign-trained workers often find it difficult to compete in a labour market that is generally highly sophisticated and one that seeks workers with Canadian expertise and formal academic credentials;
- Students are often branded by their peers as "different" or feel they must isolate themselves from their ethnic communities if they want to fit into the

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