

India Abroad: Speeding up the temporary foreign worker program

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India Abroad November 2, 2007

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AJIT JAIN

in Toronto

Immigration Minister Diane Finley convened a closed- door, roundtable discussion with a group of South Asian businessmen and professionals, October 19, to get feedback on temporary foreign workers' programs and ways in which the government could get some of India's brightest and best to come to Canada. Immigration lawyer Ravi Jain of Green and Spiegel, one of the invitees, said they discussed two topics with Minister Finley - foreign credential recognition and the temporary foreign worker program. "I told her quite directly when she announced the Foreign Credential Referral Office a few months ago, the government should tie federal funds to the provinces to a condition that the provinces enact legislation with teeth -legislation that will ensure professional bodies are fined if they do not remove barriers to access."

In regard to the temporary foreign worker program, Jain told the minister Service Canada was doing a great job in Ontario where processing of applications of foreign workers is three weeks, but out West, the processing time was six months. His suggestion was "We need more 'pre- approval' offices and officers to be able to use their discretion to be able to conclude there would be a 'significant benefit' to issuing temporary work permits."

Aditya Jha, COO, Osellus, a Toronto- based software company, who was among the invitees, said he was happy the Conservative government was "seriously in the consultation process and my suggestion to Minister Finley was those who are in the professional category with immigration applications in an advanced stage of processing, should be allowed to start their foreign credentials process while they are still in their native country. The government should also start the process of recognizing educational institutions in India and elsewhere, rather than only focus on individuals. Initially, top institutions and universities can be recognized." Ravi Jain was critical "of the arbitrary way of decision-making at the Canadian high commission in New Delhi. Applicants are frequently refused with a letter with seemingly arbitrary boxes ticked for explanations of refusals." He said he knows from a large number of immigration cases his firm handles that "officers frequently refuse on the ground the applicant has weak ties to India. But weak ties always exist for students and spouses of workers here." Others invited included Rahul Petkar (Polaris), Sesh Parthasarthy (Infosys), Mukesh Gupta (Tata Consultancy Services), Vikram Khurana (Prudential Consulting), and Ajit Someshwar (CSI) .