



## BILL 124 HCCI SUBMISSION

My name is Madina Wasuge. Thank you very much, members of the committee, for this opportunity to convey to you on behalf of Hamilton Centre's for Civic Inclusion our position on Bill 124 -Fair Access to Regulated Profession Act . I am the executive director of Hamilton Centre fore Civic Inclusion (HCCI). HCCI is a community-based civic resource centre, committed to working as a catalyst for anti-racist change across Hamilton. HCCI initiates and supports transformative processes that promote equity and create racism-free and inclusive environments in all areas of civic life.

**Mission:** A community-based network, mobilizing all Hamiltonians to create an inclusive city, free of racism and hate.

**Vision:** A united community that respects diversity, practices equity, and speaks out against discrimination.

**Goal:** To create in every sector, and among youth, effective and sustainable ways of integrating all Hamiltonians into the civic life of the community, using their contributions to create a strong and vibrant city.

Employment is one of the main issue raised by Hamiltonians during many consultation conducted in our community, specifically from International Trained Professionals and HCCI has developed this goals

### Goal

**To work on the issue of employment to create models of inclusive, racism-free work environments that ensure:**

- **equal access to job opportunities**
- **equitable treatment in the workplace**
- **inclusive participation within the employment sector**

I will not retell the sad and painful stories of the many immigrants who are failing to integrate successfully to our economy, as those stories are well known to you. However, the result is that poverty rates amongst visible and immigrants in Hamilton have grown; newcomers account about 52%; this, at a time when Ontario is getting the best and brightest cohort of immigrants in its history. Many of these unemployed and underemployed immigrants are well qualified to work in a regulated profession and are passing Canadian entry exams but are then denied internships or other qualifying standards that effectively shut them out of the profession. We can say unequivocally that

not one of these thousands of internationally trained individuals who have come to Hamilton have said that regulatory bodies should ease or lower their standards.

They understand that regulatory bodies have an obligation to maintain standards that protect the public.

What they do want is fair and equitable entry criteria into the profession. Bill 124 addresses this issue directly and it is for this reason and because of the impact on the livelihood of internationally trained individuals that we believe the bill should be proclaimed into law without delay.

This bill represents one of the boldest attempts by the provincial government to address inequities that confront newcomers. We are concerned that delays will continue to compromise opportunities for internationally trained individuals. Unfortunately, there is a long history in this province of missed opportunities to address issues of importance to immigrants. As long ago as in 1989 the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation released the task force report on access to trades and professions, which was also meant to address this issue. There was much hope and anticipation that the important recommendations contained therein would be executed. It took 11 long years before one of the recommendations was realized, with the establishment of an academic credential assessment service. This cannot be allowed to happen to this legislation. All three political parties need to declare their commitment to ensure that Bill 124 receives final reading during this session of Parliament.

With regard to proposed amendments to the bill, much has been made of the fact that Bill 124 does not contain some of the recommendations made by George M. Thomson in his report entitled Review of Appeal Processes from Registration Decisions in Ontario's Regulated Professions, released by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration last year. More specifically, it has been proposed that the bill incorporate the establishment of independent regulatory appeals tribunals and a fair registration practices code. What has been ignored by critics is that Bill 124 replaced these recommendations with a fairness commissioner and a set of fair practices principles to achieve the same result.

The fair practices principles are outlined in Bill 124, part II, article 5, as "registration practices that are transparent, objective, impartial and fair." They are further specified in part **III, article 6**, where a regulated profession is required to provide information about its registration practices, where said information is to be provided in a timely fashion and where the regulated profession is to specify any related fees.

Section 7 goes on to require a regulated profession to ensure that decisions are made within a reasonable time and that written responses are provided within a reasonable time.

**Section 8 requires** a regulated profession to provide reviews or appeals of its decisions within a reasonable time. It also requires a regulated profession to provide an applicant with the opportunity to make submissions with respect to a review or appeal.

These are some examples of fair practices principles contained in Bill 124 that replaced the fair registration practices code. The intent is to have these principles enforced by a fairness commissioner, who is empowered by the bill to have regular compliance audits conducted of the regulated professions, to set audit standards for these audits and to make compliance orders. These practices and the enforcement role played by the fairness commissioner should mitigate the need for an expensive and adversarial appeals mechanism.

Another welcome feature of Bill 124 is the establishment of an access centre for internationally trained individuals, which would provide information and assistance to internationally trained newcomers. This is another initiative that responds to concerns about the complexity of the transition to employment for newcomers and the lack of coordination and information about available resources. As service providers, we know that the labour market is a moving target, and that current and reliable information for consumers is difficult to maintain. A centralized service like the access centre that would focus on the needs of internationally trained individuals would be a welcome and valuable resource.

In conclusion, the Hamilton's 'Centre for Civic inclusion believes that Bill 124 represents a bold step forward in correcting inequities and unfair practices faced by internationally trained professionals. ***HCCI is looking forward to participate in further consultations during implementation phase of Bill 124 and is urging the government and all parties to collaborate in the process of addressing the issue of licensing and accreditation for the benefit of all Ontarians***".

We urge you to support it and to recommend it for third and final reading.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our position to you today.