

The NBSMLT represents health professionals at an international scale!

The New Brunswick Society of Medical Laboratory Technologists (NBSMLT) has recently obtained funding from Health Canada and the provincial government to develop a Bridging Program for Internationally Educated Medical Laboratory Technologists (IEMLTs). The NBSMLT is the provincial regulatory body and professional association for approximately 700 Medical Laboratory Technologists (MLTs). This 4 year project started in August, 2011 and will come to a close on March, 2015. In light of this project, various new collaborations have been established with many key partners; including but not limited to educators, employers and the Government of New Brunswick.

The NBSMLT had the opportunity to participate in an international event called Destination Canada which was held in Paris in November, 2011. This was following a great initiative driven by the Government of New Brunswick, *Ministry of Post-Secondary Education Training and Labour*, and *The Population Growth Division*. Destination Canada is a forum at which people who are interested to immigrate to Canada are welcomed and can even be recruited by Canadian employers. During the event, immigration officials, employers, and institutional representatives meet French candidates to explain the immigration process and discuss employment opportunities in Canada. Some employers conducted interviews and recruited candidates on-site. Due to the increasing shortage of MLTs in New Brunswick and given the various initiatives that are currently in place for IEMLTs, the



Janelle Bourgeois (right) and Yamama Tamim

NBSMLT and Vitalité Health Network were invited to participate in this forum. Of course, Medical Laboratory Technology is a regulated profession in most jurisdictions in Canada, so the intent was not to hire IEMLTs on the spot, but rather to inform them on the process to become licensed in Canada. For regulated professions, employers cannot hire candidates unless they are licensed by the regulatory body.

As the only healthcare representatives at this forum, we explained this process to French MLTs, but also provided information to other health care professionals who were interested in practicing within their own profession in Canada. If an internationally educated health care professional (IEHP) wishes to work in Canada, he or she must first communicate with the provincial regulatory body to determine the steps involved for credential recognition as well as the steps to obtain a license to practice before contacting a potential employer. Our profession is one of the few that has a national Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) process. We are very fortunate that the CSMLS has been on the leading edge in this area. At this event, Ms. Yamama Tamim, Director of laboratory services of Vitalité Health Network and I provided information to over 100 health care professionals and helped them to understand the role of a regulatory body and the credential recognition process that is necessary to become eligible to practice. We provided them with helpful website addresses including those of their respective regulatory bodies.

In most cases, they were not aware that the process to become licensed was so complex and that it often required additional education and training. We interviewed 22 MLTs with various educational backgrounds and work experience. The purpose of these interviews was to determine common gaps in the scope of practice when compared to the CSMLS standard. The information collected will be very useful for the development of the New Brunswick Bridging program for IEMLTs.

In addition to the great experience of Destination Canada forum, the Population Growth Division and Pôle emploi (France) arranged a meeting with *l'Institut de formation des techniciens de laboratoire medical (IFTLM)* of l'Université Catholique de Lyon. In the morning, participants were invited to make a presentation on their respective organisations. The following organisations were represented: Collège Communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick, Vitalité Health Network, Population Growth Division and the NBSMLT. The NBSMLT presented on professional regulation and prior learning assessment for MLTs in Canada. Next on the agenda was a presentation from the Director of the MLT program at IFTLM. In the afternoon, we welcomed 15 French Technologists who had an interest in immigrating to Canada.

During this event, we were invited to a reception at the Ambassador's residence for the launch of Destination Canada 2011. At this reception, Ms Tamim and I had the opportunity to converse with the Canadian Ambassador to France, Mr Marc Lortie and his Minister. We highlighted the various collaborations for the integration of IEMLTs that are in place both provincially and nationally. We also explained that the NBSMLT is developing a bridging program for IEMLTs and mentioned how fortunate



Janelle Bourgeois (right) with Mr. Lortie

we are to have a national Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) for our profession and support from our government.

This experience gave us an opportunity to establish provincial, national, and international networks and contributed to raising the profile of our profession. We hope to build on these efforts as the project unfolds. I was very proud to represent our profession as well as our province at this event. The province of New Brunswick has shown to be proactive by inviting the regulatory body and the employer to ensure that the information relayed to the internationally educated health professionals is clear, accurate and timely.

I would like to extend a sincere thank you and genuine appreciation to the CSMLS. They have provided so much information and support to the NBSMLT for this event as well as for the New Brunswick Bridging program project development.