

Immigrant Issues

Internationally trained lawyers can get into legal work.

By Wendy Terry

Internationally trained lawyers have one of the most challenging professions in which to recertify when moving from one country to another as the law is language based and nation specific. Moreover, many Canadian laws are based on case law, that is, one case sets a precedent for all other similar cases that follow, whereas many other countries base their laws on an established code that governs all decisions. However, there are avenues other than recertification for lawyers to transfer their legal background into legal work here. This article outlines some options.

Foreign trained lawyers have several advantages in seeking out work in highly regulated (governed by laws) fields here. First, despite the differences in laws from country to country, the legal processes in every country share many similarities. So having a background in a legal system irrespective of the country is valuable knowledge. Second, given today's global environment, knowing another legal culture is valuable in many legal or business organizations that increasingly work internationally. In fact, you can obtain a permit as a Foreign Legal Consultant in Ontario by applying to The Law Society of Upper Canada. Finally, in a multicultural community like the GTA, your other languages can be very helpful to newcomers struggling with legal problems in English. You need to start looking around for a specific area where these general skills can be transferred to.

By browsing through college and university calendars for continuing education or part-time studies, you can get some ideas about where to start transferring your skills. In general the legal field uses a lot of assistants or paralegals to keep costs down. There are job opportunities here.

You will need patience as all the calendars are organized slightly differently, and each college has different programs though many are similar. At the end of this article we have listed our finds from a scan of all school, college and university calendars.

First before browsing, think about your legal experience. Was it mainly in employment law, international trade, corporate business or ebusiness, estates, litigation, real estate, family law, criminal defense or prosecution? Besides these, other highly regulated areas include information technology, health and safety, powers of attorney for those who are physically or mentally incapacitated, copyright, public administration, taxation and policing. In the insurance industry, claims adjusting requires a good legal sense.

Now, look for certificate programs offered at the colleges in these areas that are usually listed in the Table of Contents in the front of the college calendar. Or look for individual course listings in these areas, which are usually listed in the back of the calendar in the Course Index.

Then think about the level of legal expertise which you could begin to work at: for example, a law clerk, a legal assistant or a legal secretary. You could work towards certification as a paralegal (accredited by the Law Society of Upper Canada). Or you could work in a related job like a human resource clerk specializing in employment law, or an officer for a company specializing in international trade and business law and so on.

Most libraries have a reference copy of the part-time or continuing education calendars for each college and University. It is helpful to scan these calendars in addition to a key word search on the Internet as you are more likely to see a course that is related to your particular background by scanning a calendar. You could miss it in a web site search because if you do not use the exact wording that course might not pop up.

Another useful way to find related courses is to tell a program coordinator at a college what you are interested in and your background as they can help you identify a course because of their in-depth knowledge of their program offerings. Also, educational institutions have information nights scheduled for specific program areas. So ask if there is one scheduled for the law certificates.

Second, get a volunteer job in a community agency that provides legal advice to the public. By looking in the Blue Book, a Directory of Community Services in Toronto, you can find such agencies. Every

public library has a Blue Book. By looking in the subject index you will find over seventy legal areas that community groups work in. These agencies do things like accompany their clients to court sessions dealing with the following: citizenship; crime; family law such as divorce, support payments, child custody; small claims; traffic; and probate (wills). Some agencies help with business start-ups, licenses, and franchises, some with legal documents, filling out forms. They help with landlord and tenant issues and property standards. They help with employment law, occupational health and safety, workplace standards, with conflict (disputes resolution) and mediation. There is a whole group of agencies called Community Legal Services. Ask the librarian to show you how to use the Blue Book.

You can find a relevant volunteer position Volunteer Toronto, a kind of employment agency for volunteers. 416-961-6888.

Third, take a course in legal terminology or an introduction to law to learn legal terms in English and about the Canadian legal system.

The most affordable introductory courses are offered by the Toronto District School Board in its General Interest programs offered in the evening. One is called Law, offered at Leaside High School and the other is Civil Litigation at Overland Learning Centre. These cost around \$100. For more information, phone 416-338-4111.

Looking through the college calendar, you will find a number of introductory courses. For example, the course index in the back of the George Brown College Continuing Education calendar shows two courses, Legal Terminology and Introduction to the Legal System. At Sheridan, listed on-line are Introduction to Law in Society and Law in the Workplace. The General Education section of Seneca's Part-time Studies calendar shows course entitled Law and the Citizen. At Durham College, listed under Justice in the main body of the Durham College Continuing Education calendar are two introductory courses: Canadian Law and Provincial Legislation and Criminal and Civil Law.

Humber offers a Legal Studies Certificate composed of nine courses that would give you a good introduction to Canadian law. Even if you took just the first course, Introduction to Canada's Legal System, you would pick up a lot of vocabulary and concepts.

Finally, once you are in an introductory class on Canadian law and/or in a volunteer job at a community agency that helps clients with legal issues, network with people like your teachers, other students, lawyers, paralegals and counsellors who will know how to help you get your foot in the door here in Canada.

The following is a listing of some programs of study found in the continuing education or part-time studies calendars for colleges and universities. that could help get you back into legal work here in Canada. Programs that are related to growing job markets in highly regulated fields like, copyright, health, environment, mediation, e-commerce, construction have been italicized.

Some courses are offered by distance education (correspondence or online). Most calendars have a separate section to list these course but the calendars for Humber and Durham indicated in the course regular listings which ones were offered on-line.

Colleges

George Brown College (416-415-2000) Ext 2163

Certificate Programs listed under Business Skills and Management include:

International Trade Certificate; Law Clerks Exams Preparation for the Institute of Law Clerks of Ontario; Legal Assistant Certificate; Paralegal Certificate.

Individual courses under Business Certificates not listed directly under the law certificates include: Commercial Law, Income Tax, Family Law, Employment and Human Rights Law

There is a course in Music Contract and Copyright Law, areas which have grown due to digital access to music.

Seneca College (416-491-5050)

Certificate programs listed in the Contents include:

Import and Export Business, International Market Development, Customs Professional;

Institute of Law Clerks, Associate Level; Law Clerk: Court and Tribunal Agent (paralegal certificate); Immigration Practitioner, Mortgage Agent. Investigative Sciences and Police Studies

Individual courses under Business Studies not listed directly under the law certificates include: Business Law for Accounting; Industrial Relations; Occupational Health and Safety, the Legal Environment for Human Resource Managers,

Centennial College (416-289-5300)

Certificate programs directly related to law are: Law Clerk Certificate. In fact they list this Certificate as being available through Distance Education.

Other related certificates are: International Business, Labour Relations and Chartered Insurance Professional- Claims Series, Human Resources Management.

One Certificate, Payroll Compliance Practitioner stood out as other colleges had one course in this area but Centennial has a whole Certificate program.

Individual courses listed under General Education were Occupational Health and Safety and Employment Law in Canada. Individual courses listed under the Human Resources Certificate included: *Dispute Resolution*, Contract Negotiation and Grievance Arbitration and Contract Administration. There is Business Law course listed under Business certificates.

Humber College (416-675-5005)

Certificate programs directly related to law are: Law Clerks Certificate; Legal Assistant Certificate and the Court and Tribunal Agent Certificate (Paralegal)

Other related certificates are: International Business, Immigration Consultant, Human Resource Manager, Municipal By-laws Certificate, Chartered Insurance Professional-Claims, and *Alternate Disputes Resolution Certificate*.

Individual Courses under Business Certificates included one in Business Law and there were two under property management: Condominium Law and Tenancy Law in Ontario.

GTA Colleges

Durham College (905-721-3052)

Here there is a Court and Tribunal Agent (Paralegal) Diploma Program listed.

Other Certificate Programs in highly regulated areas include Health and Safety for the Workplace, Health and Safety Labour Studies

Individual courses listed under Business certificates are: Business Law, Employee Labour Relations, International Business, Occupational Health and Safety.

A lot of these courses were offered on line if they were a box with OL in it was placed beside the course.

Under Technology there is a course titled Regulations and Enforcement which is a review of environmental protection legislation at both the federal and provincial levels. Work in this highly regulated area is growing exponentially.

Sheridan College (905-845-9430 Oakville) (905-459-7533 Brampton) In the Credentials index, the following areas are listed under Justice Studies: Court and Tribunal Agent (Paralegal Certificate), Law Clerks Certificate; and, under Business Office Administration, a Legal Certificate. Note the Paralegal Program will only be offered full time after the Spring 2009 term.

Other Certificates listed under Business that are highly regulated areas include: Chartered Insurance Professional especially the Claims adjustment area and International Business.

Individual courses not listed under the law certificates above were found by looking in the course index. They were Law for Business Managers, Family Law, under the Human Resource Management Certificate- a course in Industrial and Labour Relations and a course in Occupational Health and Safety.

Career Colleges

In this issue of Learning Curves, there is an article on Career Colleges. Some Toronto Career Colleges offer programs in Legal Assistant, Law Clerk of Paralegal.. They are: Herzing College (416-599-6996), Trios

College (905-814-7212) and the Canadian Business College.(416-925-9929)

Universities

Ryerson University (416-979-5035)

Unlike the colleges there were no Law Certificate programs listed in their Continuing Education Calendar but there were Certificate programs in highly regulated fields like International Business, Human Resources Management.

Individual laws under Business Certificates included Business Law, Law of the Market Place, Employment and Labour Law, Issues in Information Technology Law. In the Certificate in Public Administration- a course in Equity and Human Rights.

In a Facility Management Certificate was a course in Health and Safety Law.

There were numerous law courses under Health and Aging. Any field to do with aging and health is growing given the aging of the baby boom generation in Canada and the corresponding growth in health care services. They included:

Gerontology Certificate, a course in Law and Aging

Health Services Management Certificate, a course in Law for Health Managers

Leadership and Management for Nursing Certificate, a course in Health Law which, depending on your previous experience in health law, you could get permission to take.

University of Toronto-School of Continuing Studies (416-978-2400)

The calendar lists numerous courses under a section Business Law and Insurance. As well as a course on Business Law and Claims Management,,

Construction and Surety Law, Legal Issues in E-commerce and Litigation- All About Civil Suits. With an increase in E-commerce and infrastructure spending work in these highly regulated areas should grow too.

As well the School offers Certificates in Language and Translation for 15 different languages and the School has an ESL Program. There is work for interpreters in our courts given our multiculturalism

York University (416-736-5616)

The Division of Continuing Education in the Atkinson Faculty offers a Certificate Program in Dispute Resolution and a number of workshops in Mediation in areas for the Family, Labour Relations, Harassment in the Workplace. Dispute resolution and mediation are increasingly used as an alternative to costly and lengthy formal legal processes.

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