

Immigrant workers claim discrimination



BILL KEAY/VANCOUVER SUN

Dr. Gian Singh Sangha, an India-born scientist, was denied a job in the Northwest Territories after he was deemed to be overqualified. He won a human rights commission decision a year ago, but was not offered a job or compensation.

Indo-Canadian professionals step up fight to win skilled jobs

BY KIM BOLAN
VANCOUVER SUN

Scientists, doctors and other highly skilled immigrants are driving taxis and working security jobs because of discrimination against foreign-trained professionals, say Indo-Canadian community leaders.

And they want all levels of government to work to end discrimination against foreign credentials so that Canada can benefit from immigrants with advanced education.

Jarnail Singh Bhandal, of the Khalsa Diwan Society, joined more than a dozen leaders at Vancouver's Ross Street temple Tuesday to voice support for Dr. Gian Singh Sangha, an India-born scientist who was denied a job in the Northwest Territories after he was deemed to be overqualified.

Sangha won a human rights commission decision a year ago saying he was

discriminated against, but was not offered a job or compensation.

He is now taking his case to the Federal Court of Canada next week to seek a remedy in an action supported by Bhandal's society, as well as the Akali Singh and Guru Nanak Sikh temples.

"We realize that the talent of the people coming here are underutilized," Bhandal said. "Whoever comes here, their credentials should be recognized and there should not be any discrimination."

Sangha, who has not been able to get a job in his field, said many have been affected in a similar way in trying to gain employment in Canada.

"It does not make any sense that a PhD or an engineer or a medical doctor should drive a taxi or do a security job for \$10 or \$12," Sangha said.

His lawyer David Perry said Canada is operating under "false pretences," bringing in immigrants because of their qual-

ifications and then making it hard for them to find work.

"We are desperately short of skilled labour. We are scouring the world looking for skilled labour. When they come we won't hire them."

Sangha, 58, is asking the federal court to award him back pay or employment in his field after he was turned down in 2001 for a job with the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board despite being top-rated for the position.

Indo-Canadians are not the only people affected by the problem, said Vancouver City Coun. George Chow, a professional engineer and an immigrant himself.

"I think our government has opened the doors to these qualified professionals to come to the country so to deny them the opportunity for employment, it is just not acceptable," Chow said.

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