Simon Lam  
Citizenship and Immigration Canada

As a Sociology major and someone who came to Canada as an immigrant, I have always wanted to work within a government department that focuses on immigration. Immigration is a very controversial topic and is an issue that nearly everyone has an opinion about. Since I wanted to learn more about Canadian Immigration I applied for my dream job working for Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC).

CIC has three main lines of business: citizenship, multiculturalism and immigration. The citizenship department of CIC processes all the applications from beginning to end, conducts citizenship ceremonies and responds to request for proof of citizenship, while the multiculturalism sector encourages communities to develop relationships amongst all cultures. Lastly, the immigration department deals with all new immigrants who are either entering or leaving the country.

During my workterm in the Programs, Policy and Planning unit in Vancouver, I worked with the Settlement & Resettlement Regional Program Advisor, the Federal-Provincial/Territorial Relations and Engagement representative, and the Senior Planning Officer. Since I worked in three separate areas, with three different supervisors I was provided with several opportunities to tackle various projects and assignments at the same time, which required focus and organization.

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Innovation and government might not be two words that one usually expects to find in the same sentence. However, while working with a dynamic group within the Federal Government, to be part of a team that is helping to facilitate innovative solutions for the Real Property Branch of Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC). PWGSC’s Public-Private Partnership Development and Advisory Services, National Center of Expertise (P3 NCOE) provides consultative and advisory services for office accommodation projects for the federal government, as well as infrastructure projects for other federal government departments.

As a P3 Co-op Advisory Officer, I assisted the team within the areas of project management, drafting reports and supporting business processes, with an overall goal of helping to facilitate informed decision making. I was interested in the P3 NCOE, as it is a small group with a unique combination of a strategic business components, policy development and actual delivery of projects. As an emerging group that was established in 2007, this co-op opportunity presented the chance to contribute to the development of the P3 NCOE’s business lines, mandates, roles and responsibilities.

With the immense amount of new knowledge learned throughout my co-op workterm, it is unfortunate that I can only touch on a few of the highlights here. Since the start of my workterm, I have learned projects management skills and an understanding of how projects are delivered while adhering to the policies and procedures of the federal government. This co-op workterm offered me the opportunity to further hone my writing skills in a professional capacity while developing professional documents including a 50-page draft for a project worth $975 million. I have also gained insight into the “machinery of government” with regards to the procedures for infrastructure and project approvals process, including Treasury Board submissions and other government operations.

Although my co-op workterm has been a steep learning curve, it has provided me with the opportunity to explore a career within the public service sector. I finished my workterm with an offer to remain a casual term employee while continuing my studies and because of this, I truly believe that this opportunity was instrumental in launching the next chapter of my career. cover story continued...

One of the more interesting projects I worked on, was observing the Community Airport Newcomers Network (CANN) service. This service welcomes new immigrants when they first arrive at the Vancouver International Airport and provides them with information, as well as a friendly face. My observations involved travelling to the airport every week to observe the CANN staff and the services they provided to new immigrants.

This job has taught me how to further manage my priorities and how to balance different workloads from multiple supervisors. My time at CIC has given me a wealth of new knowledge in terms of where immigrants are situated in Canada. With Canada becoming more culturally diverse every year, I hope this workterm will help me acquire a job in the future.
Zahra Abdulla
Alcatel-Lucent University

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to do a co-op workterm away from home? This term I had the opportunity to do a co-op term at Alcatel-Lucent (ALU) in Ottawa. It all started with a dream of working in another province, followed by applications, interviews and finally a call from HR at ALU offering me a Business co-op position. Excitement filled every inch of my body when I heard the amazing news! Next, there came the logistic of moving away from home and since this was my first time leaving my family, I had many things I had to take into consideration: accommodation, transportation, meal planning, laundry and making new friends. I think the biggest challenge was packing the things I would need for four months into one suitcase, especially knowing that Ottawa had extremely cold winters. Luckily finding accommodation close to work was easy, thanks to help from my co-op advisor. Everything worked out better than I could have ever imagined and the home sick feeling I had when I arrived disappeared within a few weeks as I was able to settle into my new environment rather quickly. I stayed with a wonderful couple and three other roommates that always kept me company. Their constant presence definitely helped contribute to making my adjustment of living away from home much easier.

As a Program and Operations Coordinator, my responsibilities at work included preparing PDF courseware and the rest of the necessary documents for candidates enrolled in ALU University. I also completed large auditing tasks, editing activities and updated database content regularly. All in all, it was a very rewarding workterm because I got to expand my technical skills, as well as learn new tools to help me stay efficient and organized.

As a General Studies major, I thought that my co-op opportunities would be limited to the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. However, to my surprise, I have successfully obtained and completed two Business Co-op positions. My experience within the world of business reminds me daily that I should always keep an open mind because I know if I hadn’t, I wouldn’t have experienced either of the workterms I have now completed. So to anyone considering a co-op away from home, I say go for it! It is a unique, life changing opportunity and a good way to enter the workforce and gain valuable life and work skills.

Mihai Beschea
Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)

This January I started my second co-op workterm as an Informational Management Specialist Assistant with the RCMP. I worked in the Operational Information Systems Department where I maintained and updated police files and records. My main priority for this work term was to support the existing staff on various tasks and to familiarize myself with operational files and with the records management computer systems including PRIME (Police Records Information Management Environment) and PIRS (Police Information Retrieval System). My duties included ensuring that electronic and hard copy police investigation files were up-to-date, organized and operationally effective. I also executed search queries for Pardon Notifications and assisted with the process of archiving historical files. I will continue to work in the Information Management department over the summer 2012 semester and I will be focusing on reviewing files on the PRIME system to determine if they have archival value.

Throughout this workterm I learned a great deal of technical skills, such as operating record management programs and the organization of operational police documents. I was also exposed to the federal government work environment, a major employer of Arts and Social Science students. However, the most significant learning experience I had was the exposure to a career work environment. I had the chance to experience a workterm where all the employees, from management to the rest of the staff, were focused on...
building a career and were passionate and engaged in their work. This was my first time experiencing such a high level of enthusiasm, dedication and professionalism in the workplace and it helped to enhance my understanding of what a career is like and what it means to have one.

I chose to work for the RCMP because it complemented my academic focus in Criminology. I have had the opportunity to put into practice some of the theories and information I have gained from my courses on policing and criminal law and I plan to continue my studies and go onto graduate or law school. This co-op position has given me the chance to gain in-depth knowledge of policing, while also experiencing a true career environment. This workterm has been extremely valuable for my future career in the criminal justice system.

arts co-op
summer 2012 placements

upcoming workshops:
July 4 - Discover Co-op Info Session
July 7 - Co-op All-in-One Workshop
July 10 - Co-op Resume Workshop
July 19 - Co-op Interview Workshop
July 20 - Create Your Own Opportunity
July 24 - Co-op Cover Letter Workshop

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