

# **IEC-BC ANNUAL REPORT**

2015-2016

# IMMIGRANT EMPLOYMENT COUNCIL OF BC

## Connecting employers to immigrant talent

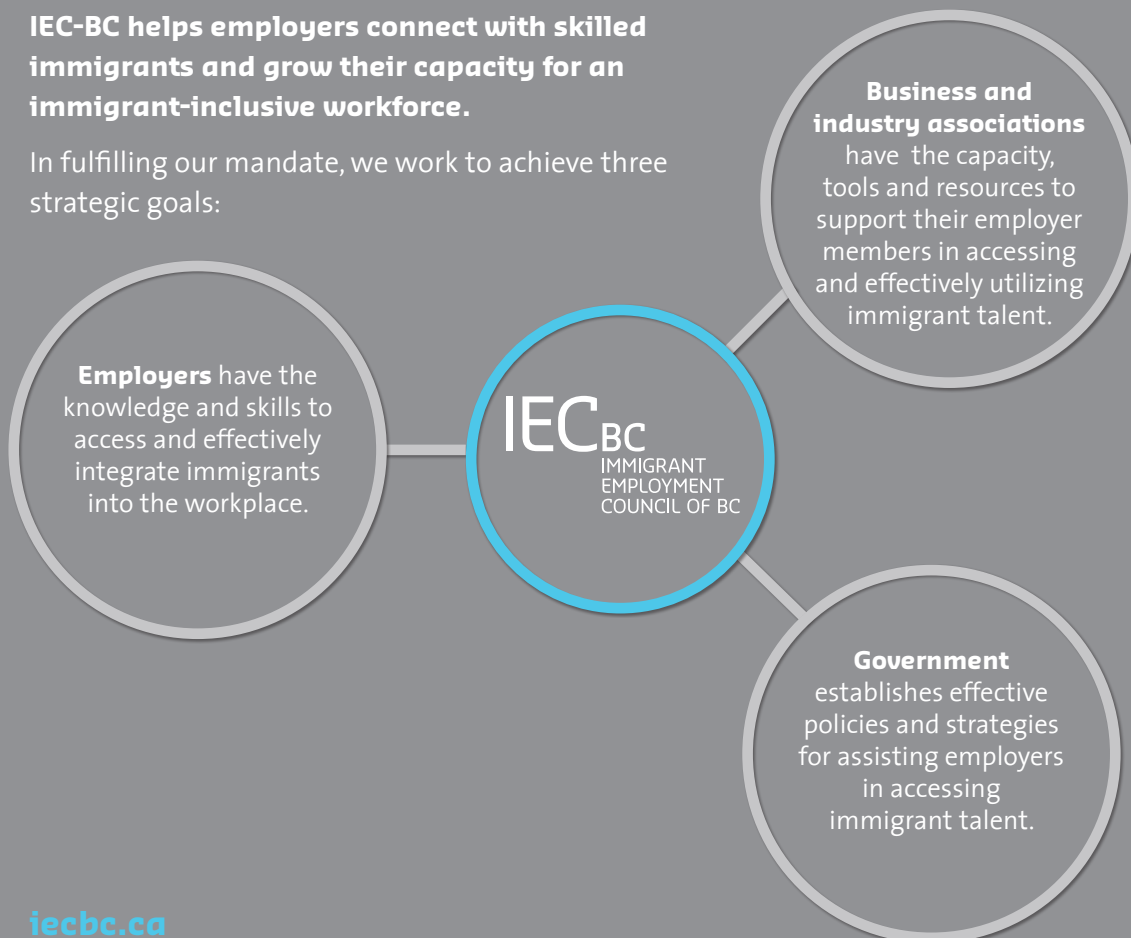
### ABOUT

**The Immigrant Employment Council of BC** is a not-for-profit society that works with employers to help them attract, hire, and retain qualified immigrant talent to address the shortage of skilled workers in this province. We work closely with employers, labour, business and industry associations, community organizations, government and other stakeholders to develop long-term labour market strategies, so BC companies can effectively compete in both the local and global markets. In addition, we provide practical tools, resources and programs to help employers connect with qualified immigrant talent and build inclusive workplaces.

### STRATEGIC GOALS

**IEC-BC helps employers connect with skilled immigrants and grow their capacity for an immigrant-inclusive workforce.**

In fulfilling our mandate, we work to achieve three strategic goals:



[iecbc.ca](http://iecbc.ca)

# A Pivotal Year

## A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR AND THE CEO OF THE IMMIGRANT EMPLOYMENT COUNCIL OF BC

**F**rom international security threats and massive displacement of people to growth in anti-globalization sentiments and polarized discourse on migration – last year was one of unprecedented shifts and dramatic challenges. With over 65 million people displaced by civil wars and regional conflicts, there are more refugees now than after World War II.<sup>1</sup> And there has been a disturbing rise of anti-immigration rhetoric in many parts of the world. Last year was a test of resilience, forward thinking, and humanity for individuals, communities, and governments – which some failed and others passed with flying colours.

In the face of global changes and challenges, the Canadian government showed leadership. At a time when so many fences were coming up and so many doors were closing, Canadians stepped up to respond to the plight of Syrian refugees with openness and compassion. Through government funding and private donations, and volunteer resettlement support – Canada has offered refugees a chance for a new life, and there has been strong local support to help them integrate.

In addition to upholding its humanitarian tradition to resettle those fleeing from war

and persecution, Canada continued to view immigration as a competitive advantage. Economic-class immigrants, refugees and beneficiaries of family reunification – were all viewed as an integral part of its human capital with a huge potential to contribute to the country's social, cultural and economic development.

It was also the year when strengthening Canada's knowledge economy and improving its global competitiveness were identified as strategic priorities by the new federal government. With an aging population and below-replacement birth rate, along with geographic and sectoral labour-force mismatches, access to talent remained one of the main drivers of productivity, innovation and long-term growth in existing and new industries across the country.

Throughout the year, Canada's employers faced both market challenges, as well as the tectonic shifts in the demographic and political landscapes. Creating inclusive workforces with diverse skill sets, perspectives and global connections became more of an imperative for businesses' success. And more than ever before, employers required impactful partnerships and effective solutions to meet their labour-force needs.

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR Global Trends Report 2016.  
<http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/6/5763b65a4/global-forced-displacement-hits-record-high.html>

For the Immigrant Employment Council of British Columbia, it was a year of inspiration and innovation, a year of identifying new strategies and developing new business models – all with a view to helping British Columbia employers effectively connect with immigrant talent and stay ahead of the curve.

On this journey, we were inspired and helped by the many employers, industry associations, immigrant settlement agencies, Professional Immigrant Networks (PINs), community leaders, and other stakeholders we have had the privilege to work with. We received the financial support of our funder, the Government of Canada, and we were very fortunate to benefit from the talents and commitment of IEC-BC's staff.

Kudos to all those who consistently help us realize our goal of advancing the labour-market participation of skilled immigrants in BC!



Philip Steenkamp  
Vice President, External Relations  
and Communications, UBC  
Chair, IEC-BC



Kelly Pollack  
CEO, IEC-BC

# Innovating and Inspiring Change

## 2015/2016 HIGHLIGHTS

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Responding to the year's challenges required leadership and innovation, and IEC-BC piloted cutting-edge projects, forged new partnerships, and served as a catalyst for change – in both attitudes and practices. Throughout the year, we engaged with our key stakeholders to identify strategies to effectively leverage the potential of the skilled immigrant labour force in BC, unlock hiring biases and remove barriers to the employment of global talent in the Province. As a known voice in the public debate on the labour market integration of skilled immigrants, we continued to challenge the status quo and offer innovative solutions.

In partnership with BCIT, we launched Facilitating Access to Skilled Trades in BC (FAST BC) – a unique online platform connecting BC employers and skilled immigrants. FAST BC helps employers find job-ready tradespersons in three sectors

with current or projected labour shortages across the Province – automotive services, power engineering and carpentry. It provides pre-arrival support for immigrants looking for jobs in these areas, allowing them to assess their credentials, identify and fill any gaps in knowledge and skills, learn about the Canadian context of their trade, and showcase their expertise to potential employers. This pilot project provides employers with an easy-to-use tool to identify suitable candidates, and boosts their capacity to build more inclusive workplaces.

The 2016 Employer Forum “Unlock Bias, Leverage Global Talent” marked a milestone in employers’ understanding of hiring barriers that can hinder business success. The event brought together HR professionals and hiring managers from more than 35 BC businesses to analyze ways to unlock hidden biases, share best practices in hiring and retaining

**Since its launch, FAST BC has generated interest among 8,000 users in over 50 countries.**

Top site visits have been from:

- |               |             |
|---------------|-------------|
| 1 India       | 6 Iraq      |
| 2 Philippines | 7 Singapore |
| 3 UK          | 8 Ireland   |
| 4 US          | 9 Australia |
| 5 UAE         |             |

### **2016 Forum Snapshot:**

- 87% of participants reported an increased understanding of strategies that can be used to mitigate biases during hiring and retention.
- 82% left the Forum with actionable items and practical strategies to hire and retain immigrant talent more effectively.
- 81% felt inspired to incorporate immigrant talent into their organizations’ talent management strategies.

immigrant talent, and learn about the tools and resources that employers can tap into. “Look beyond your assumptions and biases, build the business case for inclusion, recognize the return on investing in immigrant talent, prepare your organization to welcome new Canadians, and take steps to successfully integrate global talent,” – these were the major recommendations of the Forum.

Throughout the year, we also engaged with BC’s Professional Immigrant Networks (PINs). A viable source of talent representing high-growth industries, PINs frequently face barriers in integrating their members into the workforce and need tailored strategies to better connect to employers. IEC-BC’s concerted approach included clearly articulating the talent pool they represent, along with organizing two roundtables involving key stakeholders – BC employers, representatives of provincial and federal governments, and PINs. Following these steps, we hosted the “Professional Immigrant Networks – Building Your Brand” Forum, which became a strategic platform for deeper and sustained action towards the effective labour



market integration of PINs members in BC. According to the 40+ Forum participants, the effective labour market integration of PINs requires leadership and involvement of multiple stakeholders, including IEC-BC, employers and government.

IEC-BC shared best practices in tapping into global talent during two workshops at the 2016 Metropolis Conference in Toronto. “Attracting, Retaining and Integrating Newcomers in Rural and Remote Communities” aimed to build on the success of the communities that have adopted immigration as part of their economic growth strategies, and to find effective ways to deal with the unique challenges faced by employers in rural areas and small cities across Canada. “Multi-sectoral Collaboration: Towards Innovative Strategies for the Employment Retention of Newcomers” showcased the benefits of synergies between Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) and Immigrant Employment Councils (IECs) to identify the most sustainable solutions for newcomers and employers.

In addition to facilitating a face-to-face exchange of ideas, IEC-BC regularly offered distance-learning platforms to boost stakeholder capacity. In the 2015/2016 fiscal

#### **Some Key Findings about BC PINs:**

- Members represent growth sectors, including technology, science, finance and construction.
- Over 80% have a minimum of a bachelor’s degree.
- Over 90% have intermediate to advanced English-language skills.
- The majority of members are of prime working age, compared to 30% of all Greater Vancouver residents.

year, we hosted a series of webinars with topics ranging from leadership development through mentoring, to challenges and opportunities presented by the BC Provincial Nominee Program.

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**According to its participants, the enhanced MentorConnect model provides additional motivation to try different strategies. It is engaging, focused, and its length is perfect for busy professionals.**

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Building on the success of IEC-BC's key partnerships and core programs, we launched an enhanced mentoring program with the City of Vancouver. The pilot, which was inaugurated on March 15, 2016, incorporates components from the MentorConnect and Connector programs. This enhanced model was developed in response to employers' feedback, and it offers an innovative approach to connecting employers to the diverse talent pool of skilled immigrants in BC. Mentors also serve as Connectors providing referrals to program participants towards the end of the mentoring relationship.

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**"IEC-BC has been an influential partner in increasing immigrant labour market attachment, so that all newcomers to BC can work, live, and belong in a welcoming and inclusive community."**

—ANN JONES, TRI-CITIES LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP [LIP]

We built a targeted engagement strategy to grow and deepen relationships with our employer partners. The ultimate goal is to influence employers to build an immigrant-inclusive culture in their workplace. Throughout the year, we actively engaged with representatives from small to medium-sized enterprises in specific growth sectors, including information technology, construction and biosciences. We forged new partnerships and we helped relevant organizations identify strategic goals for the labour market integration of skilled immigrants.

And we leveraged the opportunities offered by #GivingTuesday – a day dedicated to giving back instead of indulging in consumption - by launching a successful social-media campaign that resulted in 10 new mentors coming on board to share industry-specific knowledge with new Canadians, and offer insights into the local context of their profession.

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**This holiday season, give the gift of time: Mentor a skilled newcomer professional @IEC\_BC <http://ow.ly/V4YTX> #givingtuesday #cdnimm**

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# Celebrating the Journey

## EMPLOYER LEADERSHIP

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SMEs and large employers, municipalities and professional associations – IEC-BC’s role as a solution broker and catalyst has involved creating multiple synergies. Through their involvement with IEC-BC, our partners promote their vision of diverse and inclusive workplaces. These organizations are well ahead in their journeys, offering unique approaches and perspectives. Here are just a few examples.

### **City of Surrey**

With a population of over 500,000, approximately 1,000 new residents every month, and the largest number of Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) than any other community in British Columbia, Surrey is consistently demonstrating leadership through various initiatives to welcome and integrate newcomers to Canada. The City recognizes the need for a proactive, collaborative and long-term approach to create a sustainable and resilient Surrey, and has made great strides implementing its Sustainability Charter. The City of Surrey believes that a truly welcoming community isn’t just tolerant of newcomers and cultural diversity but it embraces the contributions newcomers make to the cultural fabric of the community and its economy. Since February 2015, the City of Surrey has been actively involved with IEC-BC’s Connector Program, and it is a winner of our 2016 Leadership Recognition Award.

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**“Partnership with IEC-BC is helping us promote our vision of an inclusive and thriving community.”**

—NICOLA WEBB, GENERAL MANAGER HR

### **Applied Science Technologists and Technicians of BC (ASTTBC)**

The eighth largest self-regulating association in BC, ASTTBC recognizes the contributions made by skilled immigrants to British Columbia’s economy and society, and almost 40% of its new registrants are Internationally Trained Professionals (ITPs). The Association is taking a lead role in supporting and assisting ITPs in applied science & engineering technology to secure fair and equitable assessment of credentials, to achieve appropriate professional registration, to transition to employment in their chosen field and to settle into the BC community. It is fully committed to actively engaging and mobilizing currently under-utilized sectors of our population to support the continued growth of a prosperous BC economy. Along with the City of Surrey, ASTTBC is a winner of IEC-BC’s 2016 Leadership Recognition Award.

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**“Our organizations are ideally positioned to collaborate in educating BC’s employers about the value of Internationally Trained Professionals as employees.”**

—GEOFF SALE, MANAGER, INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED PROFESSIONALS PROGRAM





## BC Hydro

In 2016, BC Hydro was recognized as one of Canada's best employers by Forbes magazine, and also one of Canada's best diversity employers. It is one of IEC-BC's long-term Employer Partners, and the company's former President and CEO Bob Elton was our first Board Chair. To support the employment efforts of new Canadian job-seekers, BC Hydro encourages managers to hire skilled newcomers at junior-level positions and provides a defined career advancement plan, which includes timelines for performance and development reviews. It also recognizes provisional membership to regulatory bodies. In addition, BC Hydro employees volunteer as assessors of credentials and applications of internationally trained professionals for accreditation with the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of BC (APEGBC), and also explore ways to make registration more accessible to new Canadians. Lastly, a number of employees across the business have contributed their time, effort and capacity to the IEC-BC MentorConnect program, to provide industry-specific support to new Canadian job seekers and set them up for success. BC Hydro is another winner of our 2016 Leadership Recognition Award.

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**“At BC Hydro, we are becoming more reflective of our customer base, and we are looking beyond the traditional hire profiles.”**

—RAJ SHARMA, SENIOR MANAGER,  
CLAIMS AND FIELD SUPPORT

## Ampco Manufacturers

One of BC's top 100 tech companies, Ampco Manufacturers is also one of IEC-BC's newest Employer Partners. At our 2016 Employer Forum, the company's General Manager shared Ampco's best practices in hiring and integrating skilled new Canadians. Having realized that the company's sales and customer-service departments were too homogenous, Ampco Manufacturers saw diversifying its employee base as a business opportunity. The company made a commitment to change hiring practices to better reflect their customer base and invested in the integration of its immigrant employees. Ampco Manufacturers consistently focuses on what new Canadians bring to the team rather than on their perceived deficits, and investing in immigrant employees has reaped financial and human-capital benefits for the company.

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**At Ampco Manufacturers, we asked ourselves, “What is the cost of not hiring skilled immigrants?”**

—RON SUN, GENERAL MANAGER

# Making a Meaningful Difference

## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

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The MentorConnect and Connector Programs provide our Employer Partners with unique leadership-development opportunities, helping them gain global business perspectives and build extraordinary workplaces where differences are celebrated. It also helps them make a real difference in the lives of new Canadians. We asked one of our mentors to share his personal insights.

Mark Guppy, Team Manager—Channel Care, for TELUS in Burnaby, BC, knows the value of mentorship firsthand.

“I’ve personally had several mentors throughout my working life, who have been instrumental in my success and career progression,” said Mark, who started with TELUS in 2008 as a call centre agent, advancing through various positions before being appointed Manager in 2011 with 16 direct reports. When he received a company-wide email asking for volunteers to mentor new Canadians through IEC-BC’s MentorConnect program, he jumped at the chance to give back by sharing his knowledge, expertise and experience.

Mark was eventually matched with Paul Lee, a recent immigrant to Canada in his mid-40s who hailed from South Korea. Paul had

previously worked as a programmer with Sun Systems, before moving to California to work with a start-up company, eventually relocating to B.C.’s Lower Mainland with his family.

“Paul had very good credentials, work experience and a strong command of the English language,” noted Mark. “What he really needed was some assistance integrating into Canadian society and some direction on finding suitable employment. I also wanted him to get out of his comfort zone.”

Paul was hoping to find a senior IT position in Canada. “Employers often want you to learn about the company from the ground up,” said Mark. “Once they see your dedication first hand, then they’ll look at your experience. So I had to get Paul to lower his expectations.”

Paul heeded Mark’s advice and took a part-time job in the hospitality sector to gain some Canadian work experience. Three months later, Mark invited him to attend a career fair sponsored by the BC Institute of Technology.

### **In the 2015/2016 fiscal year:**

- 168 mentors engaged in the program.
- 78% of skilled immigrants who had participated in the MentorConnect program found employment within 6 months.
- 74% of Connector program graduates got jobs.



There, Paul connected with a recruiter from the Cactus Club Café chain of restaurants, who was looking for a professional to reorganize their IT department. He interviewed with the company shortly thereafter and three weeks later accepted a position as IT Architect with Cactus Club in Victoria, BC where he moved to raise his family.

Mark said he felt a great deal of pride in watching his mentee land a job in his chosen profession, and he went on to mentor two more new Canadians.

“There’s a real personal sense of satisfaction from playing a part in introducing the perspectives and life experiences that immigrants bring to corporate and Canadian culture, says Mark. We are a melting pot in many urban centres. It should be the same in business.”

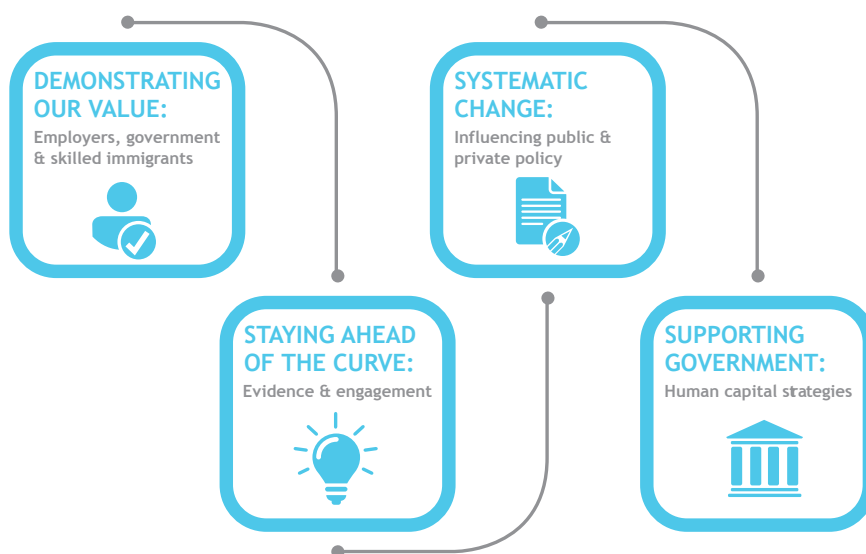
# The Road Ahead

## KEEP THE MOMENTUM GOING

In 2016/2017, BC's economy is projected to outperform all other Provinces, with a real GDP growth of 3% in 2016, and a real gain in 2017.<sup>2</sup> With an aging population, labour shortages in many sectors and an urgent need to boost productivity, immigration and global talent attraction will continue to be of strategic importance – to our Province and to our country. Filling in Canada's demographic needs, supporting its economic growth and innovation, and strengthening its diverse social fabric – immigration will continue to be critical to our long-term success and prosperity as a nation. As noted in a recent

*Globe and Mail* article, diversity remains Canada's "most important natural resource."<sup>3</sup>

But in order for this human potential to be fully unlocked, there must be supports in place – including those for our employers. It is often through meaningful labour market attachment that newcomers learn about and become fully integrated into their new homeland. Providing the necessary assistance to employers to find, hire, and retain new Canadians would maximize positive outputs and outcomes – for immigrants, businesses, communities, and Canada as a whole.



IEC-BC's track record of leadership is built on a solid foundation of partnership and collaboration in advancing skilled immigrant inclusion and integration into the workplace.

Our sustaining vision of building immigrant-inclusive workplaces is guided by a Board of influential leaders from business, government, education, labour and community organizations.

<sup>2</sup> The Conference Board of Canada. Provincial Outlook: Spring 2016 [http://www.conferenceboard.ca/press/newsrelease/16-06-13/strength\\_in\\_housing\\_sector\\_boosting\\_british\\_columbia\\_s\\_economy-204887403.aspx?utm\\_source=Home&utm\\_medium=Banner&utm\\_campaign=Slide2](http://www.conferenceboard.ca/press/newsrelease/16-06-13/strength_in_housing_sector_boosting_british_columbia_s_economy-204887403.aspx?utm_source=Home&utm_medium=Banner&utm_campaign=Slide2)

<sup>3</sup> "Innovation and Talent Acquisition Can Solve Our Growth Dilemma," *The Globe and Mail*. August 18, 2016 <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/rob-commentary/innovation-and-talent-acquisition-can-solve-our-growth-dilemma/article31446202/>



Employers and industry groups must be educated about the changes to the various streams in our immigration system to facilitate their access to the different immigrant and refugee talent pools. They need help identifying their role in supporting communities and sectors to attract immigrants to land and/or settle in rural and remote communities. Employers will also need to be educated about ways to balance valuing Canadian work experience with promoting and valuing global experience.

In 2016/2017, there will be a huge need for practical, effective, accessible and comprehensive support to small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) – the backbone of Canada’s economy. Because many SMEs have little experience with or capacity to tap into immigrant talent, they need assistance in the form of tools, resources and training to effectively incorporate skilled immigrants into their workforce mix.

For both SMEs and larger businesses, especially in high-growth sectors, there will be a continuing need to retain skilled international talent that can boost our innovation and productivity and that will contribute to making Canada a true knowledge economy.

By the end of 2016, Canada is expected to welcome between 280,000 and 305,000 new immigrants.<sup>4</sup> There is an important role for Immigrant Employment Councils to ensure that these new Canadians become fully integrated in their new homeland. In 2016/2017, IEC-BC will continue to champion solutions for BC employers, create synergies and bring the employer perspective to immigration policies and programs.

4 Canada’s 2016 Immigration Levels Plan <http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=1038699>

# Board of Directors

The IEC-BC Board represents a mix of influential leaders in business, government, labour, education and community organizations.

**Philip Steenkamp, Chair**

Vice President, External Relations and Communications,  
University of British Columbia

**Ben Hume, Vice-Chair**

President, Sheppards Building Materials Inc.

**Neelam Sahota, Secretary-Treasurer**

CEO, DIVERSEcity

**Dave Byng**

Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education

**David Keane**

President, BC LNG Alliance

**Fiona Macfarlane**

Managing Partner, British Columbia;  
Chief Inclusiveness Officer, Ernst & Young

**John Winter**

Former President and CEO, BC Chamber of Commerce

**Queenie Choo**

CEO, S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

**Robin Ciceri**

President, the Research Universities' Council of BC

**Taj Kassam**

President/COO, Sandman Hotel Group

**Tom Sigurdson**

Executive Director, Building and Construction Trades Council

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For more information, please contact [info@iecbc.ca](mailto:info@iecbc.ca) or visit our website at [www.iecbc.ca](http://www.iecbc.ca)

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# IECBC

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