

Award recognizes initiatives to attract skilled workers to Prince George

Receives IEC-BC Leadership Award

PRINCE GEORGE, BC - Heather Oland says it is her job to make sure one of the fastest growing cities in the country “isn’t a well kept secret.”

The business and service hub for a region hosting massive resource initiatives, Prince George has one of Canada’s highest employment rates. You name it, this city needs the skill set and Oland, CEO of Initiatives Prince George (IPG), the city’s economic development arm, says much of the skill solution lies with immigrants who arrive in Vancouver, unaware of the opportunities in Prince George and other smaller communities.

IEC-BC recognized Oland’s leadership and commitment to attracting and retaining skilled immigrants to Prince George with a Leadership Award at its inaugural awards ceremony on April 9.

“People don’t come to Canada to be unemployed in a big city,” says Oland who has spearheaded projects to get the word out about opportunities in BC’s north. In 2012, IPG, the Prince George Chamber of Commerce and IEC-BC co-hosted an employer forum that explored challenges and solutions to attracting immigrant talent. Stemming from that forum, IPG received funding through IEC-BC’s Employer Innovation Fund for online career fairs that saw Prince George employers connect virtually with immigrant job seekers elsewhere in the province.

IPG doesn’t have staff on the ground in Vancouver but has designed programs, such as IPG’s website “Move Up Prince George” that has employers seeing new Canadians as welcome new talent and immigrants seeing Prince George as a great place to live and work.

“We’re putting in the building blocks to allow success,” says Oland. “We’re a facilitator, we build relationships and communicate to new Canadians and employers that they have choices. Move Up Prince George provides a portal for them to find each other.

“Its early days, but we’re feeling pretty confident and proud,” says Oland. “We’re helping people imagine being happy here.”

Funded by the Government of Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Province of BC, IEC-BC is a provincial non-government organization that stimulates the integration of skilled immigrant talent into the province’s workforce by fostering solutions, building connections and being a champion to help employers attract and retain skilled immigrant talent.

To learn more about the IEC-BC Leadership Recognition awards visit <http://iecbc.ca/2015-leadership-awards>