

# **IEC-BC ANNUAL REPORT**

2014 - 2015

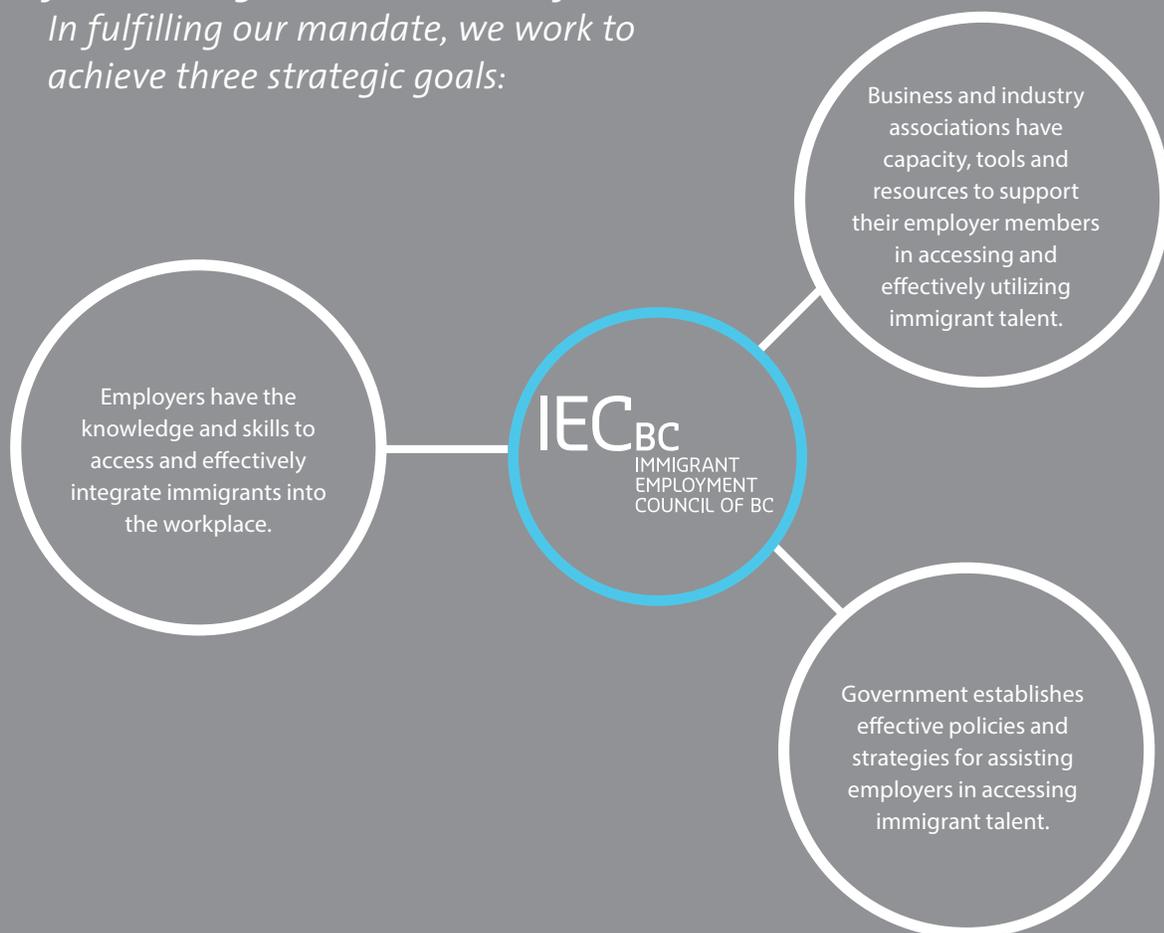
# IMMIGRANT EMPLOYMENT COUNCIL OF BC

*Connecting employers  
to immigrant talent*

## STRATEGIC GOALS

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*IEC-BC helps employers to connect with skilled immigrants and grow their capacity for an immigrant-inclusive workforce. In fulfilling our mandate, we work to achieve three strategic goals:*



## ABOUT

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The Immigrant Employment Council of BC (IEC-BC) is a not-for-profit society that stimulates the integration of skilled immigrant talent into the province's workforce by developing solutions, building connections and serving as a champion to help employers attract and retain skilled immigrant workers. IEC-BC helps employers build and diversify their workforces by connecting skilled immigrants to employers, building partnerships with business and industry associations, convening community forums on immigrant employment, connecting settlement agencies to the business community, linking employers to professional immigrant networks and increasing awareness and knowledge about human resources best practices.

Since 2008, IEC-BC has been working with employers, business associations and other key stakeholders to improve hiring practices, encourage new public policies and programs, and change perceptions about professional immigrants in order to grow BC's economy through effective immigrant labour-market integration.

For more information, please visit [www.iecbc.ca](http://www.iecbc.ca)

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR AND CEO

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*On behalf of the Board of IEC-BC, we are proud to present the Council's first annual report outlining the organization's activities and accomplishments for fiscal 2014/2015.*

It was a monumental year for IEC-BC. In July 2014, IEC-BC made the transition from being a program of Vancouver Foundation, which incubated the Council in 2008, to become an independent not-for-profit society. This evolution is a reflection of the strong programming provided by the organization in helping employers and communities access and integrate the full range of skills that trained immigrants bring to British Columbia. It's also indicative of the challenging environment BC employers are operating in today, underlining the pressing need for programs and public policy reforms that help eliminate barriers to attracting and retaining qualified immigrant talent.

The economic implication of failing to fully utilize the immigrant talent available in this province is staggering. The unemployment rate for recent immigrants is more than double that of Canadian-born workers. This is largely due to the numerous roadblocks that prevents many new Canadians from working in their chosen profession. In Canada it's estimated that skilled immigrant underemployment costs the economy \$11.4 billion annually in lost wages.

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Over the past year, IEC-BC has made significant progress in helping employers access, retain and integrate skilled immigrants into the workplace through consultation, collaboration, and education. A particular goal of ours has been to bring employer concerns about labour market challenges to the attention of government.

The progress we've made in improving immigrant hiring practices, advancing new public policies and changing the narrative about labour market integration of skilled immigrants can to a large degree be attributed to the valuable partnerships IEC-BC has established with business and industry associations, community leaders, immigrant settlement agencies, government and other stakeholders. These partnerships are vital to our success. The commitment and passion our partners bring to the table really helps expand the scope, scale and effectiveness of the programs and services we provide.

While inroads have been made in making BC workplaces more immigrant inclusive, there is still much more that needs to be done. As we look ahead to the coming year, IEC-BC will be placing a renewed emphasis on consulting with and engaging employers, partners and government to better prepare employers for the workforce challenges of the future by improving their ability to effectively utilize immigrant talent.

In closing, we would like to take this opportunity to extend our personal thanks to our funders, the Governments of Canada and BC, as well as Vancouver Foundation and the staff of IEC-BC, who work so hard to help us realize our goal of advancing labour market participation of skilled immigrants in BC. We would also like to thank the many employers, industry associations, immigrant settlement agencies, Professional Immigrant Networks (PINs), community leaders, and other stakeholders we have had the pleasure of working with over the years for helping build an immigrant-inclusive workforce where every contribution counts.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Philip Steenkamp'.

Philip Steenkamp  
Vice President, External Relations,  
Simon Fraser University  
Chair, IEC-BC



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kelly Pollack'.

Kelly Pollack  
CEO, IEC-BC

# YEAR IN REVIEW

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*By any measure, 2014-15 was a milestone year for IEC-BC. One of our proudest accomplishments this past year was our success in facilitating dialogue and networking opportunities among skilled immigrants, employers, community agencies and other partners needed to help employers overcome barriers to tap into the immigrant talent pool.*

Our one-day summit Mind The Gap – Winning Global Talent for BC's Continued Prosperity held last year really set the stage for 2014/1015 by bringing together more than 80 business, industry, government and community leaders to identify strategic immigrant workforce development practices needed to address the looming shortage of skilled workers in BC. Over this last year, IEC-BC held numerous workshops, roundtables and events to keep the conversation going and encourage like-minded partners to explore opportunities and develop innovative solutions to create diverse, inclusive workplaces that improve labour force participation by qualified immigrants. Our overall objective in bringing various stakeholders together is to foster sustainable cultural change within the employer community that breaks down systemic barriers and creates immigrant-inclusive workplaces integral to the future economic prosperity of the province.

In realizing this vision, IEC-BC has been fortunate to have attracted a Board of respected leaders from the business community, labour, academia, community organizations and government. This past year we welcomed six new Board members from labour, LNG, manufacturing, tourism and hospitality, and the settlement services sectors. The inherent strength of our Board lies in the diversity of opinions around the table and the genuine desire of all Board members to foster a fundamental shift in public policy and employer practices and procedures so business leaders can take full advantage of the energy and talent that qualified immigrants offer. IEC-BC's Board has been instrumental in ensuring our programs respond to the distinct needs of employers, communities, new immigrants and other stakeholders while supporting governments' efforts to diversify and grow the economy.



## BUILDING CAPACITY AND AWARENESS

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*IEC-BC made significant inroads throughout the year towards deepening our engagement with, and strengthening the capacity of Professional Immigration Networks (PINs) – groups of immigrant professionals who have organized themselves, often by occupation, to forge connections between members, employers and community agencies to help integrate their members more quickly into the labour market.*

We conducted an online survey sent to more than 4,000 PINs' members across the province to gain a better understanding of demographic and labour market-related characteristics of the Province's top 10 PINs. With this research in hand, we hosted two Immigrant Employment Roundtables, one with PINs and employers and the second with PINs and provincial and federal governments, to address key immigrant employment issues and discuss collective action needed to tackle skills and labour shortages. A follow-up forum was held with the PINs to act on some of the key themes coming out of the Roundtables, with a particular focus on building brand awareness of PINs and increasing collaborations with employers and communities. IEC-BC continues to place a high priority on working with PINs, governments and key employer groups to identify partnership opportunities and connect immigrants with unfilled jobs related to their training and chosen profession.

## CONNECTING BUSINESS LEADERS WITH GLOBAL TALENT

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*To help new immigrants build their professional networks, IEC-BC launched its relationship-building Connector Program in late 2014 in Vancouver and Campbell River, modelled after the award-winning program created by the Halifax Partnership.*

This program matches skilled immigrants with established local professionals, who in turn connect them with contacts in their occupational field. The City of Vancouver was the first employer to partner in a pilot of the Connector program. Over a three-month period, 27 City of Vancouver employees volunteered to meet with a skilled immigrant over coffee, helping to establish industry connections leading to potential career opportunities.

Connector complements our existing MentorConnect Program – IEC-BC's first program launched in January 2012 with the City of Vancouver and three immigrant serving organizations, ISSofBC, MOSAIC and S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Under MentorConnect, skilled immigrants new to BC are matched with local professionals in an occupation-specific mentoring relationship over a four-month period. The program has been a resounding success with more than 300 mentoring matches to its credit and an average of 75 percent of newcomers finding employment in their chosen field. Since its inception, the MentorConnect Program has grown to include 10 employer partners and 10 service provider organizations and provides mentors with valuable professional development skills, while providing mentees with local insights and access to professional networks and employment opportunities.

IEC-BC also forged numerous valuable partnerships over the year, collaborating on projects with both the BC Chamber of Commerce and the Human Resources Management Association (HRMA), among others. We worked closely with the BC Chamber of Commerce to raise awareness among employers of the value of recruiting and retaining skilled immigrant workers and the resources available to support them. We also collaborated with HRMA by providing professional development programs that are eligible for HR accreditation.



## The opportunity in Northern BC

World class talent and rewarding career opportunities are all right here in British Columbia. We're connecting Northern BC employers requiring skilled or professional workers with new Canadians who want to advance their careers and settle in welcoming communities. Get connected today!

## BROADENING OUR REACH

*To broaden our reach across the province, we hosted a series of employer webinars covering credential assessment, mentoring and Citizenship and Immigration Canada's new Express Entry system. Feedback from the webinar series from the 300 attendees was exceptionally positive, and plans are underway to expand the program.*

One of the significant challenges facing small and medium-size enterprises is their lack of experience with or capacity to attract, retain and integrate immigrant talent into their workplaces, particularly in northern BC. Recognizing this, IEC-BC launched its Northern BC Initiative in 2015 to increase awareness and promote opportunities for employers to tap into immigrant talent in Prince George, Prince Rupert and Fort St. John as well as connect professional newcomers with resources in local communities. The initiative was supported by an extensive marketing and communications campaign to drive traffic to the project's dedicated website, [www.northernbcjobs.com](http://www.northernbcjobs.com), which included job boards for local communities along with useful online tools for employers and job seekers. In its first month of operation, the website attracted more than 7,500 visitors – 80 percent of them new users – and continues to generate significant web traffic.

Three employer workshops on attracting and recruiting immigrant talent were also held in targeted communities in partnership with local Chambers of Commerce and co-facilitated by HRMA. These workshops were extremely well received with upwards of 80 employers attending from Fort St. John, Prince George and Prince Rupert.

“Canada, be prepared to compete with Mexico, Turkey, Southeast Asia, BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) for the brightest minds.”

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Demetrios Papademetriou, President, Migration Policy Institute (2014 Mind the Gap Summit)

## ADVANCING PUBLIC POLICY

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As part of our efforts to advance public policy, IEC-BC CEO Kelly Pollack gave a presentation to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration on Promoting Economic Prosperity Through Settlement Services in March. Ms. Pollack outlined the barriers employers face in successfully integrating skilled immigrants into their workplaces and called for greater support to demystify and engage employers in a more demand-driven immigration system, including use of the Express Entry system and Canada Job Bank. This recommendation was included in the Standing Committee’s final report which was issued in June.

*Showcasing best HR practices plays a primary role in our efforts to inform and educate employers, industry associations, professional member organizations, settlement agencies and communities on creative approaches for recruiting and integrating immigrant talent into the workplace.*

This past April, we had the pleasure of honouring 13 worthy individuals and organizations at the inaugural IEC-BC Leadership Recognition Awards event, whose inspiring examples of innovation and commitment set a new standard for workplace diversity and inclusion in BC.

## BC FACING THE PERFECT STORM FOR LABOUR SHORTAGES

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*British Columbia is facing a chronic skills shortage.*

According to BC Labour Market Outlook 2022, more than one million jobs are expected to open up in the province by the end of this decade with many of these jobs opening in central and northern BC. The Provincial Government estimates that even with full participation of the existing population, about 25 percent (265,000) of the future labour force supply will need to be filled by international workers. The reason? There simply aren't enough trained British Columbians in areas of the province to fill the current and anticipated jobs needed to ensure our province's future economic growth.

An aging population, low provincial fertility rates, fewer students graduating from K-12, inadequate employment and training programs, and highly-underutilized immigrant talent are creating the perfect storm for labour shortages in BC. Like many jurisdictions, BC is facing fierce competition from other provinces and countries for skilled immigrant talent to fill its projected labour gaps. The United States, for example, is considering sweeping immigration reform that will significantly increase its access and attractiveness to international workers, adding even more competition to BC's ability to attract and retain well-educated, skilled, immigrant workers.

*Clearly, employer support and education along with public policy and program reforms are needed to directly address the most pressing barriers to immigrant employment and integration.*

The benefits of harnessing the talents of new Canadians are considerable. Skilled immigrants are more than twice as likely as Canadian-born residents to have a post-secondary degree and tend to be more innovative and entrepreneurial than those born in Canada. Studies in both the United States and Canada have shown that job creation increases and the economy improves as the number of qualified immigrants swells.

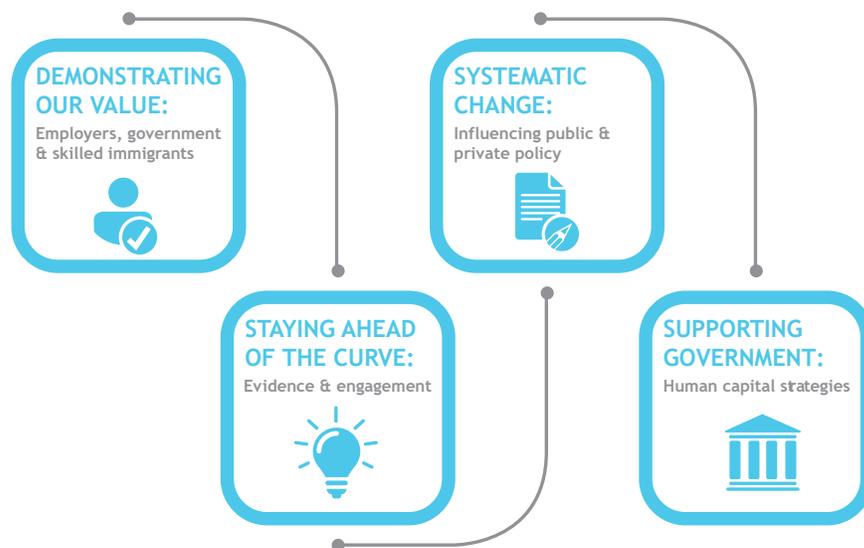
IEC-BC is committed to working with government, employers, business associations, communities and other stakeholders to break down barriers and find ways to improve labour-force participation for skilled immigrants. The economic future of BC depends on it.

# IEC-BC FIVE YEARS OF LEADERSHIP

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*The Immigrant Employment Council of 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 collaborative table where business, labour, government, community leaders, immigrant-serving organizations and other stakeholders develop solutions together. Following are highlights of IEC-BC's milestones in helping BC employers access skilled immigrant talent.*

## The Road Ahead



## REGIONAL FORUMS: PRINCE GEORGE (2012), PRINCE RUPERT, KITIMAT (2013)

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Employers told IEC-BC that they want concrete solutions and outcomes – tools, resources and information – to help them attract, recruit and retain skilled immigrants. In response, we partnered with the Kitimat and Prince Rupert Chambers of Commerce to convene annual immigrant employment forums with employers, government groups and other stakeholders focused on identifying employer needs and developing best practices and strategies for accessing global talent. As a result of these forums, IEC-BC developed a suite of web-based tools and resources to help employers more effectively meet their immigrant talent needs.

## BC EMPLOYER CONSULTATION (2012)

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In 2012, IEC-BC commissioned the first comprehensive province-wide consultation of BC employers to obtain their perspectives on issues and solutions for attracting, recruiting and retaining skilled immigrant talent. More than 150 employers, business/industry organizations and regulatory bodies participated in the consultation program, which involved 15 focus groups in seven communities. The feedback we obtained was critical in helping IEC-BC set priorities and develop a targeted strategy needed to address the key workforce issues facing BC employers.

## FIRST ANNUAL LEADERS' SUMMIT (2012)

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IEC-BC hosted its first Summit for over 100 business, industry and government leaders from across BC to explore economic, labour market and global workforce trends and identify strategic immigrant workforce development policies and practices required to meet BC's current and future workforce needs.

## EMPLOYER INNOVATION FUND (2012-13)

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IEC-BC was contracted by the Province of BC to design, implement and manage a new funding initiative to assist BC employers, business associations, and industry and sectoral organizations to attract, hire and retain skilled new immigrants. The Employer Innovation Fund (EIF) was announced in November 2012 to support innovative projects that addressed immigrant talent hiring and retention challenges faced by BC employers. A total of \$1.4 million from the EIF was awarded to 11 employer-led projects and resulted in employers, industry and business associations developing initiatives and resources to integrate skilled immigrants into BC workplaces. Many of the resources emanating from EIF projects can be found in IEC-BC's online resource library.

# IECBC

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