

# ANNUAL REPORT

2016-2017



## ABOUT IEC-BC

The Immigrant Employment Council of BC (IEC-BC) is a not-for-profit organization that provides BC employers with solutions, tools and resources they need to attract, hire and retain qualified immigrant talent. We believe that the successful integration of skilled newcomers into the BC workplace is critical to both their success and the province's long-term economic performance. We work with employers, government, and other partner stakeholders to ensure that BC employers can effectively integrate global talent.

## MISSION

Integrating immigrants into the labour market builds BC's economy.

## VISION

Newcomers to British Columbia are quickly integrated into our labour market at a level that uses their skills, training and education. Successful attachment to the labour market allows immigrants to fully contribute to our society and economy, and through their contributions BC prospers. By being able to tap into a labour pool of talented newcomers, BC employers are able to grow their business through using immigrants' skills.



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Immigration, Refugees  
and Citizenship Canada

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Immigration, Réfugiés  
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Canada



BRITISH  
COLUMBIA

The Employment Program of British Columbia  
is funded by the Government of Canada and  
the Province of British Columbia.

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

Last year, British Columbia welcomed 38,060 new permanent residents, who came to our province as part of the economic, family and refugee streams of immigration.<sup>1</sup> They brought diverse skills and unique experiences. They were managers in health, education, social services, construction, transportation, production and utilities. They were civil, electrical, electronic and software engineers, computer programmers, information systems analysts and consultants; and they were skilled tradespersons and early childhood educators.

This human capital ought to be able to bring in significant dividends for BC, especially since many of these occupations have been identified as critical to the province's economic performance.<sup>2</sup> In fact, a recent report from the Business Council of BC (BCBC) notes that "the degree to which BC is able to develop a workforce to enable our companies to grow and compete depends in large measure on our ability to attract skilled individuals from abroad."<sup>3</sup>

Over the past year, IEC-BC worked to empower BC businesses to succeed in attracting global talent and reaching new markets. We developed innovative tools, resources and nimble solutions – all with a view to maximizing these diversity

benefits. And we made sure that our programs and initiatives look at the whole continuum – from targeted pre-arrival supports, to effective ways of connecting employers to new Canadians once they land here.

It was an incredibly successful year. 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 funders, the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia, and we were very fortunate to benefit from the talents and commitment of IEC-BC's staff.

None of these successes would have been possible without the guidance of founding CEO Kelly Pollack, under whose leadership IEC-BC grew from an idea to what it is today. We would also like to thank outgoing Board Chair Philip Steenkamp for his many years of service to IEC-BC.

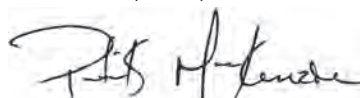
Through their involvement with IEC-BC, our friends and partners promote their vision for diverse and inclusive workplaces. These organizations and individuals are making a real difference, and we have captured some of their stories in this report.

We invite you to find out more about our journey, as well as the unique approaches and perspectives of those change-makers who help us achieve our vision of BC employers growing and prospering by fully using immigrant talent.



BEN HUME (L) AND PATRICK MACKENZIE (R)

  
Ben Hume, Chair, IEC-BC

  
Patrick MacKenzie, CEO, IEC-BC

1 IRCC, March 31, 2017.

2 British Columbia 2025 Labour Market Outlook.

3 Immigration in BC: A Complex Tapestry. *Human Capital Law and Policy*, Business Council of BC, March 2017.

# 2016–2017 KEY HIGHLIGHTS

**INNOVATION, COLLABORATION, LEADERSHIP – these are the words that best describe the guiding principles for our work over the past year.**

In support of its mandate to help BC employers effectively connect with immigrant talent and stay ahead of the curve, IEC-BC strengthened partnerships, championed customized solutions, developed innovative tools and resources, and brought the employer perspective to immigration policies and programs.

***As part of Canadians' outpouring of support for refugees, we developed innovative tools and resources to help employers access this untapped talent pool and build a diverse and inclusive workplace.***

- Our **BC Refugees JobConnect** online portal was created to help employers meet their hiring needs while enabling refugees to showcase their skills and experience, and find meaningful employment.
- The **Onboarding Refugees Toolkits** were produced to assist employers more effectively recruit, hire, onboard and retain a diverse workforce that includes refugees. This series of three publications includes tips, guidelines and best practices from employers who have successfully onboarded refugees.

We further developed the **FAST Program** – a suite of free, web-based services, which now targets 68 occupations in skilled trades, IT, biotech and life sciences. It gives individuals pre-approved to immigrate to Canada a head start even before they land here. Key features include occupation-specific competency assessments, resources, training on Canadian workplace culture and communications, and direct connections to BC employers.

Our **MentorConnect Program** continued to provide participating mentors with valuable professional development and leadership skills, while helping mentees gather local insights, access professional networks and enhance employment opportunities. We can count Combustion Solutions Inc., Design Group Ltd., District of Mission, Stantec, Schneider Electric, and Vancouver Public Library among our newest partners.

***Our signature events fostered dialogue among key stakeholders to advance the labour market integration of newcomers to Canada:***

- The **Tech Sector Networking Event**, co-hosted with the Vancouver Immigration Partnership and PeaceGeeks, was an opportunity for Vancouver's tech leaders to increase their awareness about the skilled immigrant talent in BC, while helping newcomers with international IT experience learn about the local industry and build professional connections.
- The **Technology and Innovation Employer Roundtable**, organized together with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), brought together Vancouver's leaders in the knowledge economy to look at the key features of the Global Skills Strategy – a new federal government program making it easier for Canadian businesses to attract international talent.



- The **Pluralism Project Employer Roundtable**, co-hosted with the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation, identified ways in which businesses can leverage diversity to gain a competitive edge and stimulate growth. It was part of a series of consultations with the business community conducted in seven cities across Canada, and it informed the findings of “Diversity Dividend: Canada’s Global Advantage”<sup>4</sup> report.
- **Tapping Into New Talent: Opportunities for BC Businesses** was a call to action for all employers to advance the labour market integration of all newcomers, including refugees. The event included a panel discussion of employers who have realized early enough that the refugee talent pool is an asset to their businesses, along with inspiring stories of new Canadians who came here as refugees.

*We continued to give voice to the employer perspective on the labour-market integration of immigrants and contributed to the public policy conversations on the topic:*

- Together with Urban Futures Inc., we participated in the **National Conversation on Immigration** and developed recommendations on effective ways to support Canada’s economic growth and innovation, fill in the country’s demographic needs, and strengthen its social fabric.

- In partnership with DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society, the Surrey Board of Trade, Abbotsford Community Services and Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce, we launched a **research project to identify the occupational skills and experience of refugees** who are currently based in Abbotsford and Surrey, and understand the labour needs of employers in these communities better.
- At the **2016 Top Employer Summit**, we shared our vision about the role of immigration for smart growth – of companies, provinces, and Canada as a whole.
- Our **thought leadership essays** were featured in *The Vancouver Sun* and *The Province*.



**This annual report highlights four case studies – examples of the effectiveness of IEC-BC’s programs for newcomers and employers alike. >>**

<sup>4</sup> “Diversity Dividend: Canada’s Global Advantage.” Special report by Bessma Momani and Gillian Stirk. Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation. Centre for International Governance Innovation. 2017 [https://www.cigionline.org/sites/default/files/documents/DiversitySpecial%20Report%20WEB\\_o.pdf](https://www.cigionline.org/sites/default/files/documents/DiversitySpecial%20Report%20WEB_o.pdf)

# FAST: GIVING NEWCOMERS A CAREER HEAD START

**IEC-BC's FAST is Canada's only pre-arrival project offering a comprehensive suite of online tools for occupation-specific assessment of competencies and skills, gap training, and connection to employers.**



**“FAST is giving newcomers a way to find their place in Canada.”**

SANJA BOSKOVIC, BCIT, PICTURED HERE WITH HER COLLEAGUE SERGIY YATLO

Paul Foers, a power engineer from the UK, has just moved to Canada. Prior to his arrival, he completed FAST, and thanks to this online program he has a head start preparing for a career here.

“It was very useful at giving an introduction to living and working in Canada,” Foers says. “And while there are a lot of similarities to the UK, the subtler aspects that were presented will prove important in my move to Canada.”

Foers notes that FAST is different than many other online modules.

“It enables you to test your knowledge first, and then it provides relevant information if your knowledge is lacking in a certain area,” he notes.

Developed in partnership with the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT), FAST uses robust competency frameworks to more directly assess the knowledge and skills of immigrants – as opposed to relying solely on credentials.

“The program determines their competency levels, builds their capacity, and fills in the gaps in their learning and skills wherever necessary,” says James Rout, BCIT's Associate Vice-President, Education Support and Innovation.

It also aims to ease the transition of every client from their jurisdiction to the Canadian workforce by embedding relevant legislative aspects.

“Through FAST, clients have an opportunity to showcase their pre-arrival knowledge and show how they are able to learn, which is essential for their success here,” says **Sergiy Yatlo**, instructor at BCIT's School of Energy.

Yatlo has been involved in FAST as a subject matter expert, and he has helped develop its competency-based assessment and gap training.

Together with Department Head **Sanja Boskovic**, he has been providing direct support to professionals like Paul Foers.

Boskovic also sees great value in FAST, and she firmly believes that this unique program gives immigrants a real head start in Canada.

“If I had this kind of tool that could help me evaluate my skills and knowledge, and give me a clear mapping of how to start in Canada when I arrived, my professional journey here could have been much faster,” says Boskovic who arrived in Canada as a refugee from Bosnia in the 1990s. “It took me a solid 6 years to find my way.”

Based on the strengths identified through the competencies assessment, FAST also helps immigrants map alternative careers in Canada.

“We have to find a way to put the knowledge, skills and abilities that people bring to Canada to good use as quickly as possible,” says Boskovic. “FAST is giving newcomers a way to find their place here.”

For James Rout, the program has huge potential to address the significant talent gaps of industry partners and can be expanded further to include more sectors.

“The system built to support FAST is an exceptional technology platform, allowing us to very quickly roll out new competency based frameworks to support additional industries, trades, and careers for incoming immigrants,” Rout says.

## **FAST AT A GLANCE**

- 1** FAST uses a competency-based model that assesses knowledge rather than credentials.
- 2** Unlike the traditional challenge pathway that often forces even experienced workers to start at the beginning, this approach allows individuals to focus on the specific components that they are missing.
- 3** Newcomers can assess their skills and competencies against industry/employer requirements, which often differ from the requirements for licensing.
- 4** Newcomers get customized e-books and content specific to their learning tasks as identified through the competency assessment.
- 5** Based on the results of competency assessment, newcomers receive suggestions for alternative career paths.

# MENTORCONNECT: BUILDING BETTER LEADERS

**IEC-BC's MentorConnect provides mentors with valuable professional development opportunities, while helping mentees gather local insights, access professional networks and enhance employment opportunities. The biggest testimonial for its value is the number of mentors and employer partners that renew their commitment to the program.**

By all accounts, **Raegan Paul's** journey in Canada has been both exciting and rewarding. Since he arrived here from India in 2007 to pursue an MBA at HEC Montreal, he has managed to build a successful career. Yet this journey has been far from easy.

"I thought things would be simpler," Raegan says. "But I realized how different the professional culture here is, how different the requirements of the employers are, and how many of them value Canadian experience."

To his disadvantage, this was something he did not have "in his pocket" at the time, and it took a lot of effort and persistence to find opportunities in the field that he was aspiring to be in, applying the skills he had built outside Canada. Raegan currently works as Senior Program Manager at TELUS Health.

Giving back to the community, and sharing the learnings and experience he had accumulated over the years "to make the journey of those who are new to Canada a little bit easier" was the natural next step.

When Raegan found out about IEC-BC's MentorConnect program through TELUS, he signed up as a mentor. In a span of just two years he has mentored seven skilled newcomers to Canada from half a dozen countries.

"For me it was about bringing a difference to the community one person at a time," he says. "I knew that each person that I was working with would probably multiply it into a bigger and better change."





According to Raegan, there is a huge difference in how mentees look at their careers and their own strengths after they go through the program and how they define their short-term and long-term career goals. They have a better sense of what the Canadian labour-market needs are, and a better grasp of what is different in the Canadian work environment compared to the professional culture that they come from. They are able to define their short-term and long-term career goals better, and they will have learned how to build their professional networks in Canada.

For Raegan, participating in MentorConnect was a chance to learn about different cultures. And it was also an opportunity to build his own skills – to listen and to coach people, and to see the goodness and strength in them – all very important in any professional environment.

And even though mentoring usually starts at a very “cellular” level, it is extremely valuable for organizations as a whole. It exposes them to the diversity of skill sets and the diversity of thought that mentees bring. Potentially, this is a new pool of talent that organizations can tap into.

Another important aspect is growth of people who are mentors. Organizations that encourage such programs are building better leaders.

“They are giving them the time and space to practise their people skills, build on those skills, and then bring those skills back into the organization,” Raegan says.

He believes that IEC-BC mentors become the program ambassadors, and this is one of the important ways for IEC-BC “to influence how companies are thinking about foreign talent and their own HR practices.”

#### SINCE THE INCEPTION OF MENTORCONNECT IN 2011:

- > **500+** mentors
- > Close to **2,000** immigrant participants
- > **75%** of mentees find employment in their field
- > **20** employer partners
- > **13** service provider partners

**“A mentor is someone who sees more talent and ability within you, than you see in yourself, and helps bring it out of you.”**

GEETANJALI ROHATGI, RAEGAN'S MENTEE, WHO CURRENTLY WORKS  
AT HSBC AS PROGRAM MANAGER, E-COMMERCE SOFTWARE DELIVERY

# BC REFUGEES JOBCONNECT: FINDING THE RIGHT SPIRIT, ENERGY AND ATTITUDE

**BC Refugees JobConnect is our free, easy-to-use online tool with a constantly updated pool of pre-screened candidates – helping employers tap into global talent.**

By 9 am on a week day, **Wayne Marsden** will have reviewed his emails, interviewed a few candidates for current openings, and met with site supervisors regarding their manpower needs. The high-energy Workforce Manager of PCL Constructors Westcoast Inc. is busy meeting potential hires for the company, and also making sure its current employees succeed.

And while skills are very important, what he is really looking for are spirit, energy and attitude – in a first-year carpentry apprentice, a foreign engineer, who is new to Canada, or someone who is taking the next step in his or her career within the industry.

Wayne believes that when starting at PCL, all employees need help learning about the 100-year old company's processes and procedures, and that with adequate supports they can all be successful.

Immigrants are one of the talent pools PCL has tapped into, and, most recently, Wayne has found new hires through IEC-BC's BC Refugees JobConnect portal. For him, the portal is a resource that is easy to work with, and it is better than a job board, where you have to sift through hundreds and hundreds of resumes.

Lack of Canadian experience or limited English skills have not been a deterrent.

"When someone starts here even with minimal English, it improves within a matter of weeks on the job," he says.

Wayne understands the hesitations of employers, especially those with limited or no HR resources, to hire people who are new to Canada. However, he firmly believes that there is a time investment in onboarding any new employee – Canadian born or not. If you approach it the right way, you are going to get an employee who is going to be involved with your organization for a long time.

## BC REFUGEES JOBCONNECT AT A GLANCE

- 1 Employer-facing and employer-driven search for candidates with specific skills – unlike traditional job boards.
- 2 A unique platform for clients to showcase their skills and experience to employers.
- 3 A language-ability section allowing clients to self-assess against established Canadian benchmarks.
- 4 Partnerships with multiple immigrant serving organizations and others, providing employers access to a larger talent pool.
- 5 Ability to gather and report out on analytics – candidate demographics and skills profiles, employer profiles, and history of candidate requests.

“Ten years ago, when Indonesia had the tsunami, there were a lot of refugees that came, and many of them are still working for us – good, dedicated people,” he notes.

Wayne notes that for years “lack of experience” used to be a problem for first-year apprentices as well.

“Now it’s changing,” he says. “There are no apprentices left, they all got jobs because employers realized that the spirit, energy and attitude are a huge benefit.”

The immigrants in trades that Wayne has worked with have been dedicated to their families, their work, and their new country. They have also provided new perspectives, and had exciting stories to share.

“It makes my mind travel to where they have lived and what they have experienced,” says Wayne, who got the “travel bug” as a young boy while his father worked for an airline and traveled across the world with his family.

“People are amazing wherever you go, and when they come to this country, they bring their culture, new ways of thinking and lots of other things we could tie into – both personally and on behalf of the company,” he says.” And this is what has made Canada the success that it is.”

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*In August 2017, BC Refugees JobConnect was expanded to include all landed immigrants, as well as individuals who have been pre-approved to immigrate to Canada but have not yet arrived here. These changes are reflected in the portal’s new name **BCJobConnect**.*



**“... they all got jobs because employers realized that the spirit, energy and attitude are a huge benefit.”**

WAYNE MARSDEN, PCL CONSTRUCTORS WESTCOAST INC.

# IEC-BC IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE – TO BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITY AT LARGE

“Passionate” is a word **Giuliana Loza** uses a lot. The Global Talent Acquisition Specialist at Stantec’s Vancouver office is passionate about her work and about making a difference in people’s lives, and she is very passionate about her involvement with IEC-BC.

“I want to do something for my community, and I know the challenges that a newcomer to Canada goes through,” she says.

Getting involved with IEC-BC – first as a mentor and, most recently, as a member of the newly created Employer Advisory Group – was a natural fit.

As a recruitment professional, Giuliana often finds it challenging to find the right talent for certain positions that are very specialized. And this can have a snowball effect – on the success of a project and even on the wellness of the team carrying it out.

“If you are able to find talent with the very specific skills because you have tapped into a different pool of candidates, your whole staff has more of a life-work balance and can complete projects on time,” she says.

“And when you hire a new immigrant, they bring not only skills but also a different perspective, and you need those fresh ideas to make progress happen,” she adds.


According to Giuliana, there is also a huge reputational return on investment for companies that hire newcomers thus helping them integrate in local communities.

“You put your name out there as an organization that is involved in the community, and other businesses start to learn more about you. And good reputation can bring new business.”

For Giuliana, it’s all about raising employer awareness about the benefits of hiring new immigrants, and it’s also about shifting perspectives – one success story at a time.

She is very excited about continuing her involvement with IEC-BC in the coming years – both on a personal level and as a member of the Stantec team, one of IEC-BC’s newer employer partners.

“I strongly believe in what your organization does, and I would like IEC-BC to grow bigger,” she says. “You are making a difference – both to the businesses and the community at large.”



**“When you hire a new immigrant, they bring not only skills but also a different perspective, and you need those fresh ideas to make progress happen.”**

GIULIANA LOZA, STANTEC



# THE ROAD AHEAD

IEC-BC emerged from the 2008 Metro Vancouver Leaders Summit on Immigrant Employment. Given the importance of immigrants to the workforce and overall Canadian economy, the summit identified a critical need for effective ways that would help employers take full advantage of newcomers' skills, knowledge and experience and help advance BC's economy.

While progress has been made, more needs to be done. As we approach our 10-year anniversary with a view to the future, we are committed to helping BC employers grow and prosper through accessing, hiring and retaining immigrants.

Our goals are:

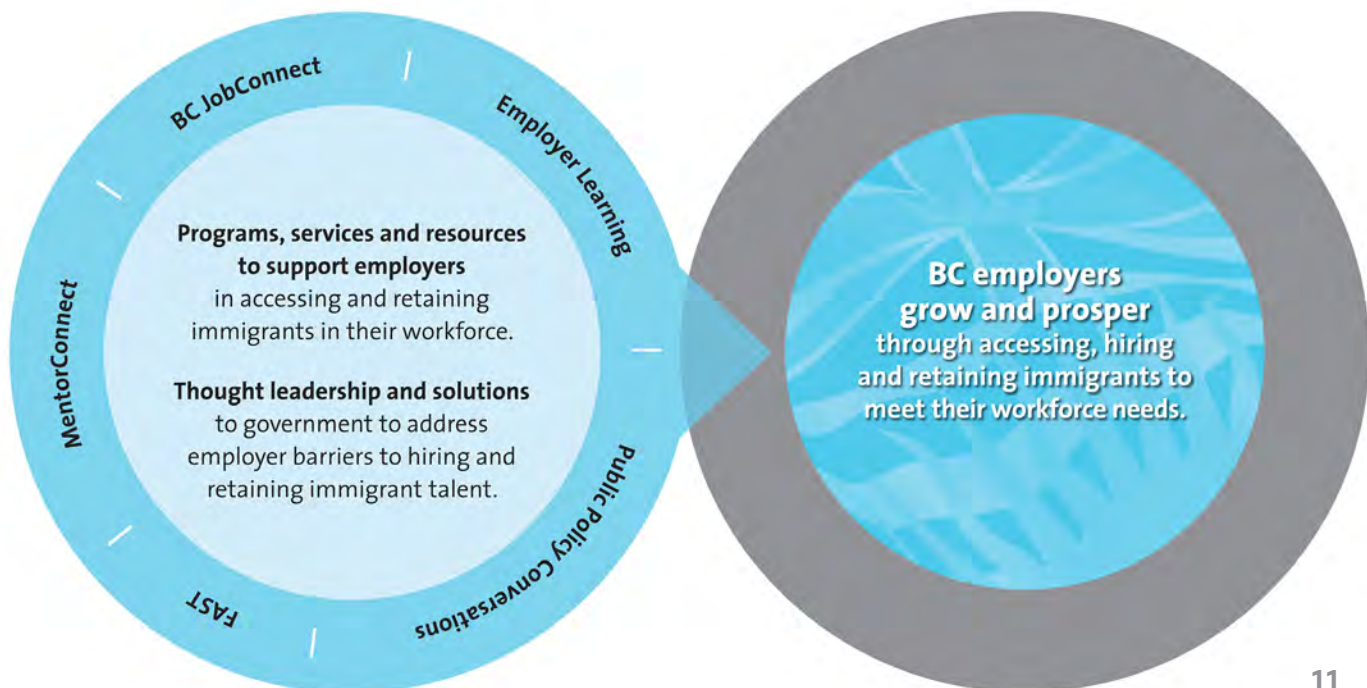
- to equip employers with the knowledge and skills needed to access and effectively integrate immigrants into the workplace;
- to ensure that business and industry associations have the necessary capacity, tools and resources to support their employer members in effectively using immigrant talent;

- to assist all levels of Government in establishing effective policies and strategies that help employers make the best use of immigrant talent.

To this end, IEC-BC will continue to champion employer solutions, forge partnerships, and bring employer perspective to immigration policies and programs. We will build on the success of our core programs, and we will expand our offerings, such as BC JobConnect and FAST. We will also continue to provide thought leadership to address employer barriers to hiring and retaining immigrant talent.

Our newly created Employer Advisory Group will help inform the future development of IEC-BC and will promote promising practices and strategies to create more immigrant-inclusive workplaces.

This will strengthen the continuum of pre- and post-arrival services offered by IEC-BC – equipping employers with the solutions, tools and resources they need to fully benefit from immigrant talent, and improving immigrants' short-term and long-term outcomes in their new homeland.





## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*The IEC-BC Board is currently chaired by Ben Hume, Past President, Sheppards Building Materials Inc., and consists of influential BC leaders in business, labour, and immigrant service organizations.*

**Ben Hume**

*Chair*

Past President, Sheppards Building Materials Inc.

**Philip Steenkamp**

*Outgoing Chair*

Vice-President, External Relations and Communications, UBC

**Neelam Sahota**

*Secretary/Treasurer*

CEO, DIVERSEcity

**Queenie Choo**

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

**Taj Kassam**

President/COO, Sandman Hotel Group

**David Keane**

President, BC LNG Alliance

**Fiona Macfarlane**

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

**Rob Mingay**

Assistant Deputy Minister, Workforce Development and  
Immigration Division, Ministry of Jobs, Trade and Technology

**Tom Sigurdson**

Executive Director, Building and Construction Trades Council

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EMPLOYMENT  
COUNCIL OF BC **IECBC**

Connecting Employers  
to Immigrant Talent

*Contact us:*

**Immigrant Employment Council of BC**

720-750 West Pender Street  
Vancouver, BC V6C 2T7  
T. 604-629-5364  
E. [info@iecbc.ca](mailto:info@iecbc.ca)

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



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