

Strengthening Employer Feedback Channels

FORUM DIGESTS



ABOUT IMMIGRANT EMPLOYMENT COUNCIL OF BC

The Immigrant Employment Council of BC (IEC-BC) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to empowering BC employers with the solutions, tools, and resources needed to effectively attract, hire, and retain skilled immigrant talent. We understand that the successful integration of skilled newcomers into BC's labor force is essential to both their success and the province's long-term economic performance. By collaborating with employers, government, and other partner stakeholders, we ensure that BC employers can effectively integrate global talent.

ABOUT THIS PROJECT

In response to Canada's ambitious goal of welcoming up to 500,000 immigrants by 2025 and the employment disparities faced by newcomers highlighted by Statistics Canada, the Immigrant Employment Councils of Canada (IECC) has launched the National Employer Feedback Forums Project. This crucial initiative shifts the focus to employers' perspectives by establishing a structured feedback mechanism designed to inform both government and organizational strategies on immigration. By gathering insights from employers, local business leaders, and community service providers nationwide, the project aims to refine immigration policies and foster a collaborative environment for sharing best practices. The forums, hosted across nine regions in Canada, promote vigorous discussions on strategies to align immigration efforts with labor market needs and improve the integration and inclusion of immigrant talent in the Canadian workforce. This project underscores the critical role of empowering employers with the necessary tools and voice to effectively recruit and integrate top immigrant talent, ultimately bolstering Canada's economic success.

This digest reflects the local discussions hosted in British Columbia. Following each forum, a digest is produced to summarize key discussion points, themes, and findings from pre- and post-forum surveys.



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Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada

FEEDBACK FORUM DIGEST

A Heartfelt Thank You to Our Participants

We extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who participated in our Feedback Forum on December 4, 2024, in Prince George. Your insights and contributions were invaluable and have made a significant impact. The thoughtful discussions and diverse perspectives shared during the forum have been carefully documented and will be shared with policymakers and program partners. Together, we are shaping Canada’s immigration programs and policies to build communities where every newcomer feels welcomed and valued.

Our forum brought together a diverse group of attendees, including employers, immigrant service providers, community-based organizations, and academics. Each of you brought unique perspectives, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for newcomers across Canada.

Here’s what we heard

Forum participants identified several interconnected challenges affecting economic growth and newcomer integration in Prince George. Labor shortages in critical sectors, limited professional development opportunities, and reliance on specific industries drive skilled workers to seek better opportunities elsewhere. These economic challenges are compounded by cultural and social barriers, including limited organizational capacity to support newcomers, workplace stereotypes, and difficulties adapting to the local culture and climate. Housing instability, driven by tenant exploitation, housing shortages, and inadequate public transit, further complicates settlement efforts. Moreover, the absence of a local IRCC (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada) office limits access to essential immigration services, emphasizing the need for localized support and improved service delivery. Addressing these issues through targeted policies, community-driven initiatives, and strengthened partnerships is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and resilient community.

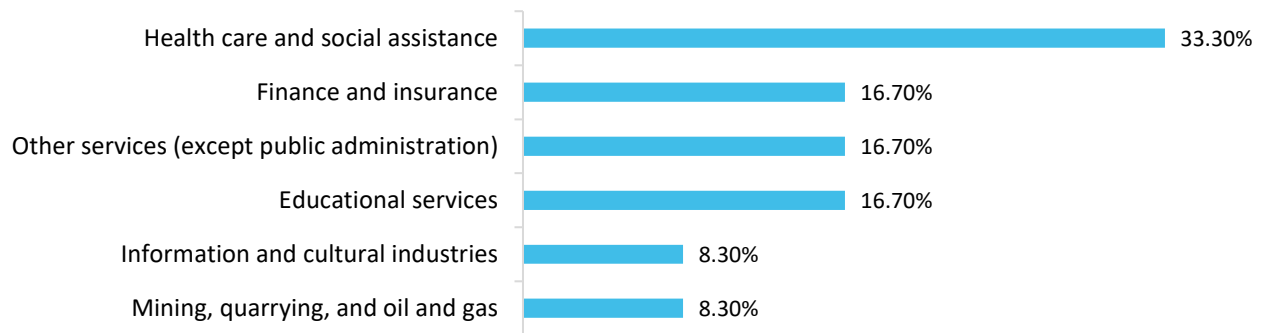
Good to know

Baseline insights were collected from 12 forum participants.

Who shaped the conversation in the forum?



What are the industries represented?



Non-employers' perspectives on system challenges

Insights were gathered from individuals outside of employer representation, including service provider organizations, community-based groups, and academic institutions, to better understand system challenges from their perspective. Language barriers emerged as the most frequently cited issue, highlighting a significant constraint to the successful integration of newcomer talent into Canadian workplaces.

Among all participating system actor representatives,

50% indicated that employers are **moderately involved and engaged** in newcomer hiring, while the same percentage noted that employers are **moderately ready** to adopt inclusive hiring practices.

37.5% indicated that employers are **slightly ready** to incorporate inclusion in their hiring practices.

Common Themes and Key Insights

Forum participants identified sector-specific challenges affecting newcomer integration into the labor market, particularly in education, resource development, healthcare, and banking. These discussions centered around key themes drawn from an extensive consultation and review of Canada's immigration system, as outlined in [An Immigration System for Canada's Future](#).

Bridging talent gaps amid economic growth

Prince George has experienced strong economic growth but faces persistent challenges in attracting and retaining talent. A key barrier is the requirement for credentials such as driver's licenses, which can deter skilled individuals from settling in the community. Despite its family-friendly environment, many residents leave in search of career advancement opportunities, often returning only when they are ready to settle down.

While the city draws students to its universities and colleges, opportunities for professional growth remain limited. Prince George's economy relies heavily on the forestry industry and struggles with labor shortages

in critical sectors, including healthcare, skilled trades, human resources, education, medicine, and engineering.



Cultivating belonging by addressing cultural and social gaps

Prince George has a vibrant, close-knit community with a diverse population that celebrates cultural traditions. However, a noticeable gap exists between residents and newcomers, as local organizations often struggle to address immigrants' varied needs. This contributes to cultural barriers, racism, and stereotypes in workplaces and the broader community, diminishing newcomers' sense of belonging.

Challenges such as understanding Indigenous culture, adapting to workplace language, and coping with winter conditions further complicate the integration process. Limited winter events and unmet expectations about urban life similar to cities like Vancouver can intensify feelings of isolation. Promoting newcomer integration calls for intentional efforts to foster inclusivity, combat discrimination, and build a more welcoming community.



Addressing housing and mobility barriers for a more inclusive community

Despite offering more affordable housing than many other cities in British Columbia, several challenges persist, including landlord exploitation of international students and newcomers due to limited awareness of tenant rights, stereotypes against renting to students, and housing shortages that lead to overcrowded accommodations. Navigating the city without a car also proves difficult due to limited public transportation options.

Additionally, socioeconomic challenges such as poverty, housing insecurity, and a higher crime rate further deter potential residents. Addressing these barriers through educational initiatives and community-driven efforts is essential to fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment.



Enhancing service access through localized immigration support

The absence of an IRCC office in Prince George or anywhere in Northern British Columbia presents a significant barrier to accessing essential services and support for immigrants and newcomers in the region. This gap limits in-person assistance for critical needs, complicating the integration process. Establishing a local IRCC office would improve service accessibility and provide timely support for those settling in the region.

Actions and Proposed Solutions

- **Recruiting remote workers from other communities** offers a valuable opportunity to fill gaps in critical sectors. This approach ensures that essential industries remain supported, even when local labor supply is limited.
- **Assistance from different levels of government** is essential to advance immigrant integration and support economic growth. This includes funding for settlement programs, job training initiatives,

and language support services tailored to newcomers. Policy reforms that streamline credential recognition and enhance access to immigration services can further facilitate integration. A coordinated approach ensures that immigrants can fully participate in the economy, contributing to long-term regional development.

- **Exploring opportunities to become a transportation hub** can drive economic development by leveraging existing resources to establish a transportation headquarters. This initiative can also support immigrant integration by generating diverse employment opportunities in sectors such as logistics, supply chain management, and transportation services. Improved transportation infrastructure would further enhance mobility, providing better access to jobs, education, and community services, ultimately fostering both social and economic inclusion.
- **Providing targeted training, education, and programming** can strengthen newcomer integration and community development. Initiatives could focus on rural attraction and retention strategies, enhancing employers' understanding of the immigration system, and helping newcomers build resumes and adapt to workplace culture. Additionally, educating individuals about Indigenous communities and informing students and newcomers about their legal rights as tenants would promote cultural understanding and social stability, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment.
- **Hosting community events** can strengthen social connections and foster a sense of belonging for newcomers. These events could include welcome gatherings, cultural celebrations, and networking activities organized in partnership with organizations like the Immigrant and Multicultural Services Society. Such initiatives promote cultural exchange, build relationships, and create a supportive environment that encourages long-term community engagement.



Our insights

Prince George faces interconnected challenges in attracting and retaining talent, driven by labor shortages, cultural barriers, housing instability, and limited access to essential immigration services. Addressing these issues requires a coordinated approach involving government support, community engagement, and strategic economic initiatives. Recruiting remote workers and establishing a transportation hub can create diverse job opportunities and support economic growth. Enhancing service access through a local IRCC office, combined with policy reforms, would streamline immigration processes and support newcomer integration. Community-based efforts such as cultural awareness training, tenant rights education, and welcoming events can foster social inclusion and reduce isolation.

By strengthening collaboration among stakeholders, the city can build a more inclusive, resilient, and economically vibrant community.



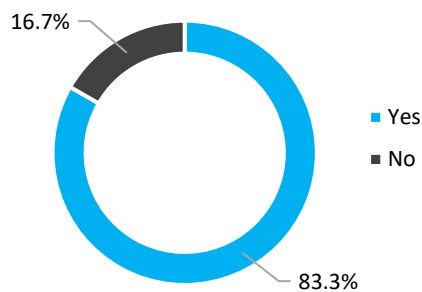
The impact is clear.

Integrating immigrant talent into the workforce is a shared responsibility, and our recent forum has been instrumental in equipping participants with the knowledge and confidence to navigate this complex landscape.

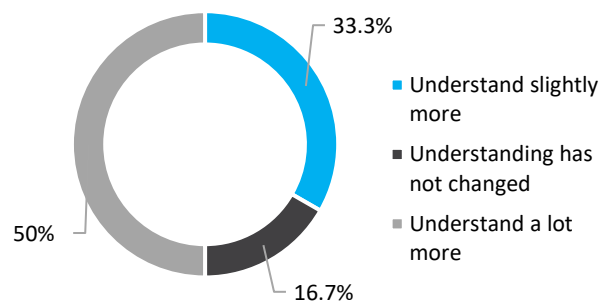
The post-survey results are compelling, highlighting the significant impact of the session and the progress we've made together.

Follow-up insights were collected from six forum participants.

Did participants feel better equipped to tackle the challenges of integrating immigrant talent into their workforce?



How has participants' knowledge of the immigration system changed?



We value your feedback! If you have any questions or insights, reach out to us at communications@iecbc.ca.

If you're interested in participating in our Feedback Forums, register now to receive exclusive invites, updates, and access to valuable resources. **Join the conversation in shaping our future initiatives!**

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