

FORUM DIGEST



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 labour 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



As Canada refines its immigration approach to better align with labour market needs, the Immigrant Employment Councils of Canada (IECC) launched the Strengthening Employer Feedback Channels (SEFC) initiative to ensure employer perspectives inform system design and policy alignment.

SEFC convenes structured forums across regions to understand how immigration, settlement, and workforce systems function in practice. These forums surface barriers, identify opportunities, and generate actionable insights to improve how employers attract, hire, and retain internationally trained talent.

This digest reflects insights from a Feedback Forum with employers and workforce stakeholders from across North Vancouver Island, focused on regional recruitment, retention, workforce development, and immigration-related challenges and opportunities. Findings are grounded in survey responses and facilitator insights and should be interpreted as directional signals from engaged participants.

Canada



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et Citoyenneté Canada

FEEDBACK FORUM DIGEST



Participation and Response Rates

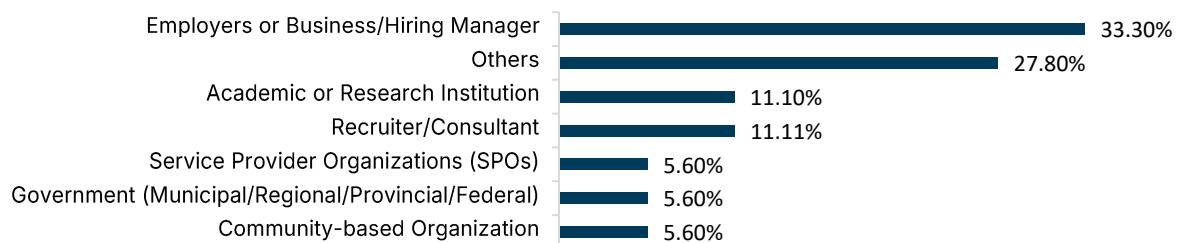
We extend sincere thanks to everyone from across North Vancouver Island who participated in this Feedback Forum and shared their insights and perspectives.

Total participants: 18

Survey response rates : Pre-forum survey: 72% | Post-forum survey: 50%

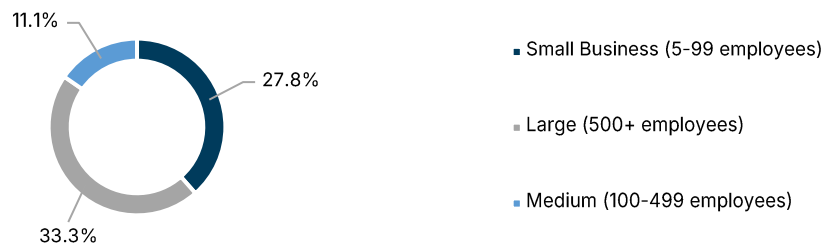


Who Shaped the Conversation



Employer Profile Snapshot

Based on pre-forum survey responses, participating employers represent a mix of organizational sizes:



Impact Snapshot: Employer Value Signal

The North Vancouver Island Feedback Forum demonstrated strong engagement and practical relevance.

Perceived Quality

Average experience rating: 4 out of 5 | 89% rated the session a 4 or higher.

Practical Relevance

Average experience rating: 4 out of 5 | 66.7% rated the session a 4 or higher.

Behavioural Intent

- 77.8% intended to apply the insights learned within their organization

- 77.8% would recommend participation
- 100% felt like the forum strengthened their connection with organizations addressing workforce issues

These results highlight the value of bringing employers and system actors together to explore practical ways to strengthen workforce retention across North Vancouver Island.

Here's what we heard

Regional Realities and Immigration Pathways Shape Recruitment Outcomes

Recruiting workers to North Vancouver Island remains challenging across sectors, particularly for entry-level, seasonal, specialized, and regulated positions. Smaller applicant pools, competition from larger communities, housing shortages, high living costs, transportation barriers, and limited access to services can make relocation and long-term retention difficult.

Seasonal or non-permanent employment and limited awareness of regional realities can further affect candidates' willingness or ability to relocate. Changing immigration policies, work permit non-renewals, inconsistent LMIA decisions, and permanent residence pathways that may encourage workers to change occupations or leave the region add further complexity.

Opportunities include immigration pathways that better reflect regional labour market needs, clearer and more consistent information on work permits, LMIAs, and permanent residence options, and relocation supports such as staff housing, living allowances, and tenure-based incentives.

Limited Training and Credential Pathways Constrain Local Workforce Pipelines

Labour shortages span entry-level, specialized, and regulated occupations across sectors including healthcare, education, hospitality, finance, marine transportation, and food processing.

Complex credential assessment, licensing, and certification processes can limit internationally trained professionals from advancing into in-demand roles, while limited local training pathways for residents, newcomers, students, and recent graduates may require people to leave the region to gain qualifications or experience. Misalignment between NOC classifications, job duties, and permanent residence applications creates further barriers.

Opportunities include expanding local bridging, certification, and occupation-specific training, enabling internationally trained professionals to work while completing Canadian requirements, and more flexibly recognizing transferable skills where licensing is not mandatory.

Stronger partnerships among employers, educational institutions, and service providers, alongside shared mentorship, co-op and work-integrated learning placements and funding, can help address employers' limited training capacity and build more sustainable local workforce pipelines.

Retention Requires Both Workplace and Community Fit

Long-term retention can be influenced before workers relocate. Candidates may accept positions without fully understanding the realities of living in North Vancouver Island, including housing availability, transportation limitations, distance from amenities, access to services, social and recreational opportunities, and the impact on spouses and families.

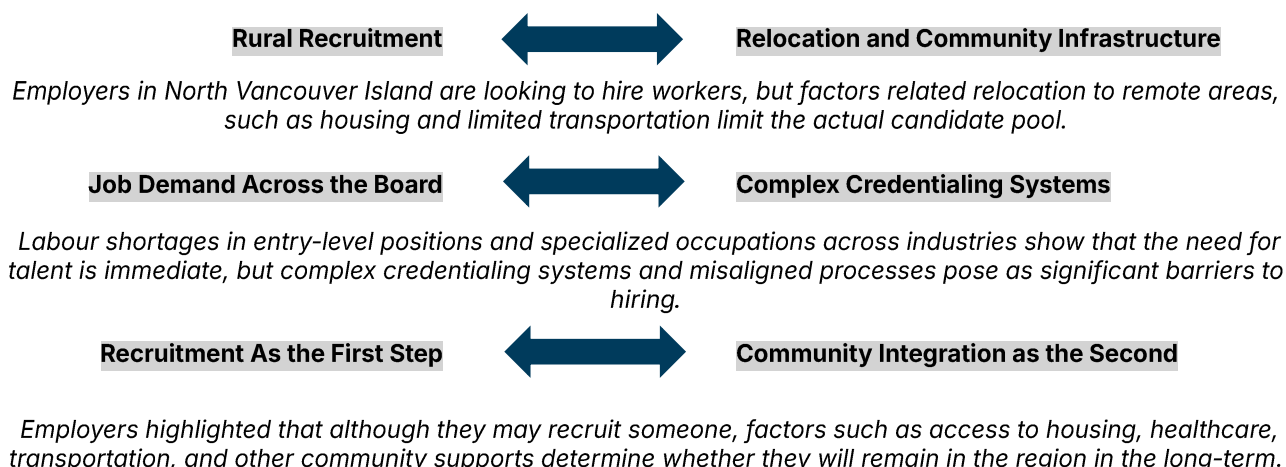
For newcomers, adjusting to life in Canada alongside a rural environment can create additional challenges. After arrival, access to healthcare, education, childcare, cultural, religious, and language-specific connections, as well as supportive workplace cultures and onboarding, can influence whether employees remain in the region. Higher wages and broader employment opportunities elsewhere can add further retention pressures.

Opportunities include setting realistic expectations about life in the region before relocation, increasing awareness of North Vancouver Island to attract workers aligned with the lifestyle, and strengthening connections to settlement and community services.

Culturally responsive onboarding, clearer referral pathways, staff or discounted housing, living allowances, improved wages and benefits, career pathways, mentorship, and stronger coordination among employers and community partners can help support successful relocation and longer-term retention.

Tensions and Trade-Offs

These structural tensions emerged:



Emerging Signals

- **Workforce challenges are deeply interconnected.** Housing, cost of living, remoteness, transportation, and limited access to services collectively influence whether workers can relocate to and remain in North Vancouver Island.
- **Recruitment and retention challenges extend beyond newcomer workers.** Similar challenges affect Canadian-born workers, reinforcing the importance of clearly communicating the realities of rural living and available supports to all prospective workers.
- **Developing and retaining local talent is becoming increasingly important.** More accessible local training and certification pathways could help people already living in rural communities advance into in-demand roles without having to leave the region.

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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