

***What Works: Labour Market Integration  
Initiatives for Skilled Immigrants  
in Canada***

**Final Report**

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## *Abstract*

The underutilization of skilled immigrants in the labour market has become a subject of considerable concern. Over the past two decades, newcomers to Canada have become more economically marginalized relative to the general population despite their high levels of education, skills and previous work experience. This paper presents the results of a literature review on Canadian public policies and practices that directly work toward skilled immigrant labour market integration. The review encompasses policy research and integration initiatives that were conducted between the years 2000 and 2006 for employment support, skills development, and essential skills enhancement. Information was collected primarily from electronic sources of federal and provincial departments, policy research institutes, research journals, public forums, education institutions, professional associations and community service organizations. Some information was also collected from key informants in government and community service organizations.

Labour market integration initiatives for skilled immigrants have been developing steadily over the past six years. Senior governments have begun to approach immigrant integration more broadly; resulting in an array of services across the country specifically for skilled immigrants. Moreover, numerous training and employment related services have been integrated to address the range of barriers experienced by immigrants.

Initiatives that were found to work well responded to both employer and immigrant needs; addressed multiple employment and skills related barriers through integrated services; enabled program flexibility; carefully selected and prepared program participants; utilized partnerships to increase capacities and resources; and emphasized immigrants' strengths and assets. In addition, employment and social integration was facilitated by cross cultural and communication training, as well as mentoring and networking opportunities.

Despite these significant efforts, numerous service gaps still exist. Policies and programs for matching skilled immigrants to labour market needs do not appear to be as strategic as they could be. The literature review highlighted some considerations to improve future initiatives, including: re-examining issues and operating assumptions; expanding cultural literacy, and communication training and mentoring services; addressing common barriers across different occupations; expanding services outside metropolitan areas; creating rural-urban labour market linkages; and bringing more immigrant integration programs into the workplace.



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# *Executive Summary*

“What Works: Labour Market Integration Initiatives for Skilled Immigrants in Canada” is one in a series of research papers commissioned by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). The purpose of this paper is to contribute toward understanding what types of policy and program initiatives directly work to integrate skilled immigrants into the Canadian labour market. This paper presents the results of a literature review of Canadian employment support, skills development and essential skills enhancement initiatives conducted between the years 2000 and 2006. The review included initiatives within British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec based on the concentration of immigrant communities and skilled immigrant integration policies, programs and instruments within Canada. This paper also includes an overview of the Canadian labour market, a socio-demographic profile of skilled immigrants and barriers to labour market integration as the background context for understanding labour market integration initiatives.

## **Background**

Some specific occupations and sectors are currently experiencing labour shortages as a result of attrition rates and labour market demand. Widespread shortages are estimated to occur in the next 5 to 8 years (Statistics Canada 2003b; Ramlo and Berlin 2006). However, matching skilled workers to suitable jobs is a challenge due to difficulties in predicting labour market demands at the local level.

The significance of immigration as a contributor to Canada’s population and labour market growth is widely recognized. Immigrants have recently contributed close to 70% of the growth in the labour market on average; and estimates project that 80% to 100% of Canada’s labour market growth will be created through immigration over the next five to ten years. However, landed immigrants of prime working age between 25 and 44 have consistently experienced comparatively higher rates of unemployment and lower income levels than their Canadian-born counterparts in the last 15 years. Furthermore, over half of the skilled immigrants in Canada experience difficulties securing jobs within their occupational fields despite their high levels of education, skills and previous work experience.

The scale and complexity of immigrant integration challenges have increased over the past 10 to 15 years. One explanation for low employment rates among skilled immigrants has been a decreasing level of English language proficiency. However, other factors have also been shown to affect employability, including: communication skills, acceptance of academic and professional credentials, ability to establish networks, social isolation, discrimination, cultural differences and transferability of work experience. Although employers’ actual experiences with skilled immigrants range from mixed to generally positive, the research literature indicates that business, labour and public sector leaders do not view immigrants as having the skills that employers are looking for.

Governments and service organizations across Canada have responded significantly to issues of labour market barriers experienced by skilled immigrants. Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) work closely with provinces, territories and non government organizations to address labour market priorities and skill shortages, international credential assessment and recognition, enhanced language training, employment support services and reduction of other barriers. HRSDC is the lead agency for the Foreign Credential Recognition program which supports research and development activities to improve the processes of credential assessment and recognition. The HRSDC Essential Skills and Workplace Literacy Initiative helps to increase basic work, learning and life skill levels of people entering or already in the workforce. This initiative has supported four essential skills application projects to address skilled immigrant integration issues. HRSDC regional offices also provide funding support for employment assistance services and employment related projects for immigrants in general. Other federal government programs and activities that specifically address barriers for skilled immigrants include the Labour Market Information and Integration of Internationally Trained Health Professionals initiatives.

Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec receive the vast majority of immigrants at 53.6%, 17.1% and 16.5% respectively (CIC 2005g). Alberta and Manitoba follow as the fourth and fifth most popular destinations. Government and non government organizations in these provinces have taken active leadership roles to identify issues and develop programs and tools to support the integration of skilled immigrants. While many projects, services and tools are similar, priorities vary according to regional socio-economic conditions.

Some community and regional initiatives are actively engaging local stakeholders to attract and integrate immigrants, while others are collaborating to mitigate low employment and wage levels among existing immigrant residents. Community and regional initiatives are briefly described in this paper for Greater Vancouver, Greater Toronto, Montréal, Waterloo Region, Winkler, Ottawa, Calgary and Prince George as examples of local initiatives engaged in developing policy forums, professional learning networks, action plans, recruitment activities, and direct services and resources for immigrants.

## **Skilled Immigrant Initiatives That Work**

This paper highlights a selection of program delivery services and tools that address labour market needs and the diverse needs of skilled immigrants. The literature review revealed that labour market needs are being addressed by focussing on occupational shortages, regional shortages, and employers' recruitment and retention needs. The review also showed that diverse needs of immigrants are being addressed by responding to highly specialized needs, designing flexible programs and services, and developing core skills.

Eleven skilled immigrant services and tools were chosen to develop insights into what works, based on responses to labour market issues and skilled immigrant barriers. The sample of initiatives illustrates the importance of careful program design with respect to:

- Responding to both employers' and immigrants' needs;
- Providing integrated services that fulfill diverse needs;

- Enabling flexibility and responsiveness to changing needs;
- Ensuring program participants are well prepared to enter a program;
- Accessing a sufficient number of employer and skilled immigrant participants through partnerships to sustain the program; and
- Designing a program that builds on immigrants' strengths and assets.

The sample of initiatives fosters the development of cross cultural understanding and communication as core skills. Additionally, the sample of occupational training and work experience services incorporate mentoring or networking as best practices.

### **Limitations of the Literature**

Skilled immigrant labour market integration is a very broad topic covering several issues across a range of disciplines and mandates. Close to 60 primary information sources were searched in this study from federal government departments, provincial ministries, municipal and regional governments, journals, foundations, and research and policy institutes. Additional service descriptions and reports from specific education and community organizations were then followed up for review.

As a general observation, the multi-dimensional nature of immigrant integration issues does not appear to be well documented. Few reports were found to comprehensively portray the range of conditions and variables that influence skilled immigrant integration. Moreover, in defining policy and program development issues, policy makers and service providers often made assumptions regarding barriers to the labour market and drew conclusions on the basis of relatively limited data. For example, human capital theory is widely applied; yet this conceptual model has been criticized for its inadequate explanation of labour market outcomes within the cross-cultural context of newcomers to Canada. An earlier literature review found that empirical studies were embedded with normative standards, in which immigrants' successes were measured by Canadian economic values rather than immigrants' values. This biased perspective toward immigrant success does not appear to have changed in the last decade and has since been criticized by other researchers.

Some specific limitations of the literature include superficial and narrow perspectives on skilled immigrant barriers, particularly among studies based on statistical data. While statistical information identifies problems and symptoms, relatively little knowledge has been generated from quantitative studies to understand causal factors that underlie barriers to labour market integration. For example, discrimination was identified in several studies as a major barrier for skilled immigrants based on demographic statistics. However, little evidence was used to support this conclusion.

Qualitative research has contributed some valuable insights on barriers experienced by skilled immigrants. However, research findings do not appear to have been tested for validity, consistency or bias. Research highlighting experiences of skilled immigrants has provided limited perspectives on issues such as credential recognition, Canadian work

experience and the effects of cultural differences. While some research exists with respect to the effects of culture on immigrant labour market outcomes, relevant issues such as perceptions and beliefs, adaptation and change, cross-cultural pollination, Canadian corporate culture, regional perspectives and other related topics are under represented in the literature. In addition, relatively little is known about newcomers who have been successful in overcoming challenges and re-establishing their careers in Canada. This information gap highlights disproportionate knowledge with respect to understanding the nature and scale of labour market integration for skilled immigrants.

Promising practices that appear to be well supported by stakeholders and reported in the literature include: integrated programs, mentoring, paid work experience at market levels, inter-cultural understanding, communication skills, personal coaching, and opportunities to develop networks. However, the question of what works in terms of program effectiveness has not been addressed in the literature to the same extent as the identification of promising practices.

Information on the effectiveness of integration initiatives with regard to service quality and program results was generally unavailable for review. Few evaluations of integration services were found in the literature and those reviews that were found were more descriptive than evaluative. Several reasons may explain the lack of information on service quality and program results. Most notably, the integration process takes several years and many of the initiatives for skilled immigrants are either short-term projects or new programs. Initiatives such as ELT and bridging programs are showing very positive early results in terms of improved skills and acceptance into the professions and workforce. However, it is too early to know the extent to which skilled immigrants are securing suitable work over the long term or seeing steady improvements in earnings and living conditions as a result of these programs.

## **Implications for Future Policies and Programs**

Labour market integration initiatives for skilled immigrants have been developing steadily over the past six years. Federal and provincial governments responsible for immigrant and multicultural services, advanced education, human resources, labour and economic development are now approaching immigrant integration more broadly; resulting in an array of services across the country specifically for skilled immigrants. Moreover, numerous training and employment related services have been integrated to address the range of barriers. Efforts have also increased to expand immigrant labour market programs beyond the major destination cities into regional centres and smaller communities. However, despite these significant efforts, numerous program and service gaps still exist in terms of addressing occupation-specific skills shortages, regional skills shortages, immigrants' barriers, and employers' needs.

This study confirms the importance of developing integrated and flexible programming to respond to the multiple barriers facing skilled immigrants today. Yet, priorities for matching skilled immigrants to labour market needs do not appear to be as strategic as they could be.

- A significant number of skilled immigrants and employers are not well served by immigrant integration programs, including: skilled newcomers who have difficulty navigating through a credentialing system or who have poor communication skills, working immigrants, and small businesses. The dissonance between high expectations for success and disappointing realities suggests a need to review issue definitions and operating assumptions in future policies and programs.
- Services and tools that enhance communication skills and enable skilled immigrants to navigate the Canadian work environment establish a foundation for economic integration. An expansion of cultural literacy, communication and mentoring services will be particularly critical for recent skilled immigrants from the major source countries and those with limited work experience in the Canadian socio-economic context.
- Initiatives that address common barriers across different occupations are particularly well suited to regions outside the metropolitan areas where highly specialized bridging programs are not as feasible to develop. Stronger rural-urban linkages that connect the skilled immigrant job seekers living in urban centres with employers outside those centres could also help connect labour market supply and demand; as well as expand organizational capacities to support skilled immigrants and employers in smaller communities.
- Given the estimated timing and scale of extensive skills shortages, integration programs that emphasize credential recognition or training without creating better opportunities for employment could fall short of meeting labour market needs. Initiatives that bring immigrant integration programs into the workplace have the potential to be more efficient and effective.

There are many excellent examples of high quality labour market services for skilled immigrant integration. Existing initiatives are demonstrating their value in working toward successful labour market integration. More importantly, they are also demonstrating a critical need to expand service priorities in future.



# *1. Introduction*

Canada has become increasingly dependent on a steady flow of immigrant workers to maintain its labour force. However, the underutilization of skilled immigrants' talents and occupational skills has become a topic of considerable concern. Statistical data over the past two decades have shown that newcomers to the country are more economically marginalized relative to the general population despite their high levels of education, skills and previous work experience.

Immigrant labour market research and development has been very active in Canada in establishing policies to support the economic integration of new immigrants.<sup>1</sup> However, barriers to employment are complex and not easily resolved. After several years of effort and investment, this is a good time to reflect on what is and is not working with immigrant labour integration initiatives.

## **1.1 Purpose and Objectives**

The Department of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) has a mandate to support the development of human capital and labour markets as contributing resources to our economy. HRSDC commissioned a "What Works" research series to better understand how to integrate four vulnerable populations into the labour market: Aboriginal peoples, immigrants, the homeless and people with low levels of literacy. "What Works: Labour Market Initiatives for Skilled Immigrants in Canada" is one of two independent literature reviews that focussed on the immigrant population. The purpose of this paper is to contribute toward understanding what types of policy and program initiatives directly work to integrate skilled immigrants into the Canadian labour market.<sup>2</sup> Specific objectives for this study were:

1. To describe the relevance of federal, provincial and local policies, programs and instruments specific to skilled immigrant labour market integration within the current Canadian socio-demographic and economic context;
2. To assess the benefits and limitations of these initiatives;
3. To conduct a gap analysis of knowledge related to their effectiveness; and
4. To provide examples of services and tools that work in addressing the diverse needs and challenges experienced by skilled immigrants.

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<sup>1</sup> The Metropolis Project, with five university-based research institutes, is one example of active policy research on immigrant integration in Canada. Several federal and provincial government departments have also been very active in developing policies and programs.

<sup>2</sup> The term "initiatives" is used throughout this paper to refer generally to the policies, programs and instruments under review. The term "skilled immigrant" refers to a landed immigrant in Canada with qualifications from another country in a profession, trade or high skill occupation. Skilled immigrants are primarily identified as immigrants under Citizenship and Immigration Canada's "skilled worker" category. However, people who have landed as refugees, family members, business and other categories of immigrants may also be skilled and are included when referring to skilled immigrants in this paper.

## 1.2 Scope of the Study

Immigrant labour market integration initiatives encompass a wide range of experiences from pre-immigration to full integration into skilled positions. This literature review focused specifically on initiatives that respond to a range of individual barriers experienced by skilled immigrants. The scope of this study was guided by three areas of interest within the HRSDC mandate, with attention given to the following types of activities.

- Employment related activities - Work experience, mentoring/job shadowing, pre-employment job preparation, retraining, and employment bridging;
- Skills development activities - Workshops and courses in language, communication, inter-cultural understanding, and skills and credentials bridging; and
- Essential skills activities – Occupation-related language profiling, and other occupational skills upgrading.

The research findings were constrained by the quality and availability of documents. Although other labour market related activities are part of an overall effort to integrate skilled immigrants, this study does not examine initiatives that provide support or indirect services.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.3 Methodology

### Literature Selection Criteria

Literature produced between the years 2000 and 2006 was the focus of this review. First priority was given to examining the literature on government policies, programs and instruments for skilled immigrant labour market integration from the following sources:

- Government of Canada;
- The provincial governments of British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, Alberta and Manitoba; and
- Third party organizations delivering programs and instruments under contract to federal and/or selected provincial governments.

Federal and provincial government initiatives were prioritized to meet the research contract requirements.<sup>4</sup> The above-named provinces were selected for this review, based on the location of major immigrant communities and jurisdictions where a high concentration of policies, programs and instruments have been established.

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<sup>3</sup> Examples of initiatives not included in this review are loan programs, pre-migration information, generic job search tools and services, accreditation procedures, professional licensure policy development, and immigration policies.

<sup>4</sup> Government initiatives are often delivered under contract through third party services rather than through government service offices and were also prioritized in this study.

Second priority was given to identifying policies, programs and instruments delivered in local communities where high concentrations of immigrants reside or immigrant labour market services have been well established. Communities identified from the literature for review included but were not limited to: Greater Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, Calgary, Ottawa, and Winnipeg. Selection of these communities was based on the degree to which local initiatives have been established and the involvement of stakeholders representing different interests and sectors. Regional and local government information sources were searched as well as a range of community-based sources (i.e. non-profit and educational organizations).

International resources were not included in this study because of limitations in assessing the applicability of policies, programs and instruments across jurisdictional, social, cultural and economic differences.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Information was collected primarily from electronic sources of federal and provincial departments, policy research institutes, research journals, and public forums with interests in immigration, labour, human resources and skills development (see Appendix A). These resources were reviewed for issue identification and policy analysis as well as for specific program and instrument references. Material developed by service delivery organizations such as community non-government and education organizations was then reviewed for information on specific services and tools.

Some information was also collected from key informants in government and community service organizations (see Appendix B). Initial contact was made at the 2006 Metropolis conference with academics, practitioners and government personnel in the fields of immigrant policy, curriculum development, education and program service delivery. These contacts were asked to identify or recommend policies, programs and instruments for review. Some additional contacts were also made with community service providers, educators and government personnel in British Columbia to request documents and recommendations for this review.

Subject to the terms of reference for this study, the following key research questions were developed to focus the data collection and analysis of ‘what works for skilled immigrants’:

- What kinds of challenges and barriers do skilled immigrants face in attempting to integrate into the labour market?
- What types of services and support do skilled immigrants need?
- What kinds of challenges do employers face in recruiting and hiring skilled immigrants?
- What types of services and support do employers require to fulfill labour needs?
- How are policies, programs and instruments addressing diverse immigrant needs and challenges? How effective are they?

- What types of limitations are there in creating benefits and opportunities for skilled immigrants through the policies, programs and instruments?
- Are there any significant knowledge gaps, inconsistencies or biases in the literature that may have an affect on the quality or interpretation of information gathered?
- Of what relevance are the reviewed policies, programs and instruments to the socio-demographic and economic context in Canada?

Due to the exploratory nature of the research question, this paper did not define benchmarks or measures for determining what works. Specific initiatives were analyzed in consideration of approaches taken to address labour market demand, integration barriers, and the diverse needs of skilled immigrants. Research findings were analyzed for emergent patterns and themes.

### **Research Constraints**

The proposed methodology for this literature review included the use of key informants with experience in immigrant labour market attachment. The B.C. government immigrant policy library was also identified as a resource for data collection and verification. Unfortunately, many of these resources were unavailable during the data collection phase for this paper.<sup>5</sup> Although some references and materials were gathered from contacts, the data collection was much less extensive than anticipated. The planned utilization of key informants as reviewers of the initiatives covered in this paper was pre-empted by timing constraints due to unanticipated requirements for additional research and writing. The application of a Microsoft ACCESS database was initially planned to help document, organize and analyze the literature. However, use of the database for analytical purposes was also limited as a result of timing constraints. The database framework and contents were submitted to HRSDC for possible future applications (see Appendix C).

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<sup>5</sup> The library is located in the B.C. Ministry of Economic Development International Qualification Unit. At the time of contact, the library was being moved from the Vancouver office to a new location in Victoria. Key contacts with CIC and the B.C. ministry had left their positions. Electronic files of the International Qualifications Unit were accessed with little success in finding reports or detailed program and service information for B.C. and other jurisdictions.

## ***2. Background Context***

Several external and internal factors influence immigrant labour market integration outcomes. Labour market demand, socio-demographic profiles of skilled immigrant labour, and the barriers they experience provide the context to examine labour market integration initiatives for the skilled immigrant population in Canada.

### **2.1 Labour Market Demand**

Although Canada's domestic population is aging and not producing enough offspring to replace its existing labour supply, opinions vary on the degree to which new immigrants will be able to fill labour market needs and alleviate the skills shortage. Two issues are particularly relevant to the discussion on skilled immigrant integration into the labour market: the scale of labour market demand and skills in demand.

#### **The Scale of Labour Market Demand**

Serious nationwide labour and skills shortages are estimated to begin as early as 2011 (Statistics Canada 2003b).<sup>6</sup> Based on comparisons between labour force growth and population growth, these shortages are likely to continue for several decades (Ramlo and Berlin 2006).<sup>7</sup> However, questions have arisen regarding the pervasiveness of anticipated labour shortages by sector and location.

Some occupational sectors are already experiencing significant shortages across the country. Occupations-at-risk identified in the 2001 Census include a wide array of positions in the health sector, education sector, and skilled trades in the construction sector as a result of attrition rates and demand for these services (Statistics Canada 2003b). McMullen, et al (2004) among others have argued that shortages will be localized and will vary according to regional and industry-specific conditions.<sup>8</sup> Labour market demand within sector and occupation groups typically vary, depending on conditions such as: demographic characteristics of local labour, production processes, wages, industry growth, job requirements, availability of education and training, job appeal, availability of certain skills and workers, labour mobility and many other influences. These influential conditions make it difficult to accurately predict labour market demand at the local or regional levels because socio-economic conditions are constantly changing. This situation poses a significant challenge for developing regional policies, programs and services that respond to specific labour market needs in a timely manner.

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<sup>6</sup> The Conference Board of Canada, The Urban Futures Institute, Business Council of British Columbia, Statistics Canada and many other government and non-government organizations have reported on labour market shortages.

<sup>7</sup> Ramlo and Berlin's projections are based on trends over the past fifty years which reflect a constant birth rate, increasing life expectancies, increasing levels of immigration and emigration, and increased labour participation including participation of more workers aged 65 and older.

<sup>8</sup> For example, an analysis of attrition indices for occupation groups in Prince George, B.C. resulted in identification of labour shortage potential in twenty-one occupations (Walker 2005a).

## The Demand for Skills

The report of the Expert Panel on Skills to the Advisory Council on Science and Technology (2000) argued in favour of the need to focus attention on skills rather than occupations because skills, or abilities to perform a task, were viewed as a better indication of what employers are looking for.<sup>9</sup> The level and types of skills in demand have changed significantly over the past 20 years. The 2001 Census illustrated an increasing demand for skilled workers with university and college level education, relative to those with high school education or less, to meet the demands of a knowledge-based economy (Industry Canada 2002; Statistics Canada 2003b). Workforce productivity has also been identified as a critical factor in the demand for skilled labour.<sup>10</sup>

Five technology sectors were reviewed by the Expert Panel. All five sectors were characterized by a high pace of change that requires flexible management systems and increasingly skilled workers. The Panel's examination of labour market challenges resulted in the identification of consistent demands for management and essential skills, particularly as they related to teamwork, and oral and written communications. Technical skills were not found to be in critical shortage. However, workers possessing a combination of technical skills with management and essential skills were reported by employers to be consistently difficult to find.

Interpersonal and teamwork skills, willingness to learn, and written communication skills were identified as critical skills in demand for junior positions. For senior positions, the following specific qualities among the management, problem-solving and communication skill-sets were reported to be in short supply:

- Strategic planning, budgeting, cost-control and other project management skills;
- Business writing skills;
- Personnel management and supervisory skills;
- Multidisciplinary scientific, technical and business expertise in product development, investor relations and other related skills;
- Familiarity with domestic and foreign regulatory requirements; and
- Conflict resolution and negotiation skills.

Subsequent research has verified a continuing demand for a high level of combined technical, management, problem solving, leadership, communication, teamwork and interpersonal skills in the professions and skilled trades (Hayes and Lochhead 2006; Canadian Taskforce on Licensure of International Medical Graduates 2004; Kim Walker Community and Environment 2003; JobStart and Skills for Change 2001; Global Frameworks Ltd. and EnCompass Consultants Inc. 2004).

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<sup>9</sup> The most highly valued skills identified by employers in this and other reports are not occupation-specific.

<sup>10</sup> For example, see Ramlo and Berlin 2006; The Conference Board of Canada 2006; Bloom and Grant 2001; Finlayson 2001.

Knowledge, attitudes and behaviours have been identified to be as important as skills in the demand for labour. For example the licenced professions place a high level of importance on understanding ethical and legal considerations, decision making capability and accountability (Canadian Taskforce on Licensure of International Medical Graduates 2004; Success Development Group 2003). Attitudes and behaviours such as a positive outlook, a strong work ethic, flexibility, and adaptability are highly valued attributes among employers (The Conference Board of Canada 2000; McNichol and Dachsel 2004). Diplomacy, tact, good listening skills and confidence are also important attributes, particularly for people working in management positions (Centre for Intercultural Learning 2006).

## **2.2 Profiles of Skilled Immigrant Labour**

The significance of immigration as a contributor to Canada's population and net labour market growth is widely recognized.<sup>11</sup> The 1990s saw a major increase in immigration over previous decades. In 2001, residents born outside Canada comprised 18% of the total population – the highest since the early 1900s (Statistics Canada 2003a). Immigration levels have continued with 227,500 to 250,600 immigrants landing in each of the past five years (CIC and MCAWS 2005; CIC 2006b).

Labour market growth rates are possibly the most frequently used statistics to demonstrate the current impact of immigration in Canada. Immigrants have recently contributed close to 70% of the growth in the labour market on average; and estimates project that 80% to 100% of Canada's labour market growth will be created through immigration over the next five to ten years (HRDC 2002; Melnyk 2006; Ramlo and Berlin 2006; Statistics Canada 2003b). In both Toronto and Vancouver, approximately 20% of the current working age population are immigrants.

### **Major Source Countries and Settlement Destinations**

Immigration trends demonstrate Canada's deliberative policies and actions to bring newcomers into the country (CIC 2000b). However, two policies introduced in the 1960s are particularly notable in terms of their influence in the demographic profiles of immigrants:

The changes set in motion by the abolition of Canada's racist immigration policy and the introduction of the points system did not take long to become apparent. In 1966, 87% of Canada's immigrants had been of European origin, while only four years later 50% came from quite different regions of the world: the West Indies, Guyana, Haiti, Hong Kong, India, the Philippines, and Indochina. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, newcomers would more often than not have emigrated from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, or Latin America; and they would settle in

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<sup>11</sup> Canada's dependence on immigration to supply skilled workers is recognized in numerous publications and reports by Metropolis Project researchers; federal and provincial statistics, human resource and immigration departments; the Conference Board of Canada, British Columbia Business Council; The Urban Futures Institute; and Canada West Foundation among others.

disproportionate numbers in the lower Fraser Valley (the heavily populated area extending from Hope, British Columbia, to Vancouver), the Toronto area, and the greater Montréal region. To even the casual observer, it was obvious that visible ethnic and racial minorities were becoming a significant part of Canada's social fabric. By contrast, other parts of the country, such as the four Atlantic provinces, remained virtually untouched by this immigration. (CIC 2000a).

The 1991 to 2001 immigrant cohort was comprised of 58% from Asia and the Middle East, 20% from Europe, 11% from the Caribbean, Central and South America, 8% from Africa, and 3% from the United States. Prior to 1961 and changes to the immigration policy, only 3% of immigrants were from Asia. Today, the top immigrant source countries are China, India, Philippines and Pakistan (Statistics Canada 2003a; CIC 2005a).

Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec receive the vast majority of immigrants at 53.6%, 17.1% and 16.5% respectively (CIC 2005g). Alberta and Manitoba follow as the fourth and fifth most popular destinations. A high majority of immigrants settle in the five largest urban communities: Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, Calgary and Ottawa.

Some implications of this significant shift have pointed toward settlement and integration issues related to language, culture, and recognition of prior education and work experience (Azmier 2005). For example, in British Columbia approximately 50% of the immigrants who arrived in the 1990s did not speak, read or write in English (BC Stats 2002). Of that group, more than two-thirds were from India, Hong Kong, China or Taiwan.

## **Economic Immigrants**

Coincident with the changing faces of immigrants in Canada, there has also been an increasing emphasis toward attracting immigrants to support economies and labour markets at national, provincial and local levels.<sup>12</sup> In 1991, over one-third of the total number of immigrants arrived for economic reasons.<sup>13</sup> Since 1995, the proportion of economic immigrants and their families entering Canada has been more than 50% (CIC 2005b).

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<sup>12</sup> Some communities such as Winkler, Manitoba are known for their purposeful recruitment of immigrant labour (Silvius 2005). The Canada/BC Regional Immigration Initiative, the Provincial Nominee Program and many other recent initiatives are examples of this emphasis.

<sup>13</sup> Economic immigrants include skilled workers, entrepreneurs, self-employed, investors, provincial nomination, and live-in caregivers (CIC 2006a). Refer to CIC's website for further details: [www.cic.gc.ca](http://www.cic.gc.ca).

Immigration applicants for permanent residence fit into five classifications.<sup>14</sup> Immigrants within the skilled worker class have been given considerable attention because of their numbers, as well as expectations for their successful integration into skilled occupations and professions based on a points system of indicators.<sup>15</sup> For example, new immigrants tend to have higher levels of education on average compared to the overall Canadian population, particularly among those chosen to come as skilled workers (Statistics Canada 2003b and 2003c). Fully two-thirds of the 2004 principal applicants in the skilled worker class indicated their intent to work at a professional skill level (CIC 2005d).

Language skills are highlighted as an important selection criterion for skilled workers. However, statistical data show a declining level of official language proficiency among immigrants in the skilled worker category. Skilled immigrants also have lower levels of English language proficiency compared to earlier cohorts.<sup>16</sup> Although language is one of the criteria for acceptance of skilled workers under the point system, half of the principal applicants who came to Canada in 2004 did not possess language abilities in either French or English (CIC 2005c).

## **Employment and Earnings**

Immigrants lost ground when the economy took a downturn during the early 1990s. Although employment rates increased by 2001, the national immigrant employment rate lagged behind Canadian born workers by 16% (Statistics Canada 2003b, 2003c and 2003d). Between 2001 and 2003, the employment rate for immigrants in the skilled worker principal applicant category appears to have improved. The Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) results show that after two years of residency, skilled immigrant employment rates were only 8% below the national average from 20% after 6 months of residency (Statistics Canada 2005). Half of those skilled immigrants found work within their desired occupational area between 2001 and 2003 (Statistics Canada 2005).

## **2.3 Barriers to Labour Market Integration of skilled Immigrants**

Skilled immigrants have generally been described as people with post secondary education and several years of work experience. It is not uncommon for skilled immigrants to have enjoyed privileged lives prior to their arrival, particularly among those who arrive as skilled workers or entrepreneurs (Burnaby School District 41 2004; Bauder and Cameron 2002). They come to Canada with high hopes and motivation to

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<sup>14</sup> These classifications are: skilled worker, business, provincial nomination, family, and international adoption. Immigrants wishing to move to Quebec apply directly to the province under a federal provincial agreement.

<sup>15</sup> Skilled worker immigration applicants are accepted on the basis of 6 eligibility criteria that indicate their chances for becoming established in Canada. The criteria are: language ability, education level, work experience, offer of employment, age and adaptability (CIC 2005f). See details on the CIC criteria at <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/skilled/qual-5.html> for further details.

<sup>16</sup> For example, over the period from 1996 to 2000, the level of English language ability decreased from 95% to 62% for engineers who landed in British Columbia (B.C. Ministry of Finance and Corporate Relations 2001).

succeed in their new home. However, both the scale and complexity of immigrant integration challenges have increased over the past 10 to 15 years.

Barriers to skilled jobs have been acknowledged as common experiences among immigrants, with language skill levels and lack of recognition for credentials among the most often cited.<sup>17</sup> However, many other inter-related barriers and challenges also influence the degree to which skilled immigrants are able to integrate into the labour market.<sup>18</sup> Although the literature documents both systemic and individual barriers, this paper focuses the contextual discussion at the individual level in order to review initiatives that work directly to integrate skilled immigrants into the labour market.

## **Language and Communication Skills**

An inadequate level of competency in the official languages has often been identified as the most difficult challenge for new immigrants to overcome (Burnaby School District 41 2004; Global Frameworks Ltd. and EnCompass Consultants Inc. 2004; Creighton-Kelly and Dachsel 2004; CCPE 2003). Low levels of language proficiency have been linked to both lower employment and lower income levels (CIC and MCAWS 2005; Statistics Canada 2003c and 2004).

Basic language skills include speaking, listening, reading and writing. However, communication skills are also critical to successful integration and form significant barriers for skilled immigrants. Communication occurs within the broader socio-cultural context and one's ability to communicate encompasses more than acquiring the basic language skills. Communication combines language with cultural reference points that influence the meaning of messages, communication styles and behaviours (Simon Fraser University 2004-2005).

People moving into a very different culture from their own are additionally challenged by communication protocols, interpersonal communication styles, body language and other culturally-influenced communication.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, the importance of language and communication competency is significantly underestimated by immigrants as well as by immigrant serving agencies that support and facilitate integration of immigrants into the labour market. For example, foreign-trained IT professionals in one study identified the lack of adequate language skills as one of the two most common barriers but attributed this problem to an employer recruiting and selection issue (JobStart and Skills for Change2001).<sup>20</sup> In another example, a study by the Hecate Strait Employment Development

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<sup>17</sup> Several studies have identified barriers from interviews, focus groups and surveys conducted with immigrants and service providers. Examples include: Abbotsford Community Services and CFDC of South Fraser 2005; AMSSA 2000; Basran and Zong 1999; Bloom and Grant 2001; Brouwer 1999; Burnaby School District 41 2004; Grant and Nadin 2005; Hecate Strait Employment Development Society 2004; JobStart 2001; Kim Walker Community and Environment 2003; Statistics Canada 2005).

<sup>18</sup> See Employment Services @ ISS (n.d.) for further details on multiple barriers experienced by skilled immigrants.

<sup>19</sup> The Canadian Taskforce on Licensure of International Medical Graduates (2004) provides a good illustration of the importance of culturally relevant communication in professional practice. Patient/physician communication, teamwork, and critical communication are offered as examples.

<sup>20</sup> In another example, half of the participants in the B.C. Pilot Project for Internationally Trained Engineers did not perceive a need to improve their listening skills and several did not see the need to improve their general language or communication skills. Yet, only three participants scored high enough to qualify for entry into university-level courses (Kim Walker Community and Environment 2003).

Society (2004) found that local service agency staff ranked English proficiency below recognized credentials and job search documents as hiring considerations. In this same study, employers ranked language skills as their most important consideration. Although language and communication skills generally improve over time, findings from surveys conducted by the Burnaby School District 41 (2004) concluded that skilled immigrants will often prioritize their job search over English classes.

A variety of language and communication competency requirements that form employment-related barriers for skilled immigrants include:<sup>21</sup>

- Listening and reading comprehension;
- Business and technical writing;
- Rapport and interpersonal skills;
- Terminology and communicating technical information to non-technical recipients;
- Presentation skills and pronunciation;
- Understanding occupation-specific language and communication styles; and
- Non-verbal communication.

## **Recognition of Formal Education and Work Experience**

The lack of recognition for post-secondary education and work experience obtained outside Canada has also been widely documented as a significant barrier for skilled immigrants, particularly for those who intend to work in a regulated profession or trade (Basran and Zong 1999; Bloom and Grant 2001; Grant and Nadin 2005). To practice a licenced profession in Canada, one must obtain formal recognition by a regulatory body in the form of a licence, registration or certification. Professional recognition is based on a combination of demonstrated completion of a credentialed education program, confirmatory exams and supervised work experience (CICIC 2002). Additional recognition requirements for several regulated professions include language competency and accountability (CCPE 2003).

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<sup>21</sup> For example, see JobStart 2001; Burnaby School District 41 2004; Global Frameworks Ltd. and EnCompass Consultants Inc. 2004; Creighton-Kelly and Dachsel 2004; Kim Walker Community and Environment 2003; and CCPE 2003.

The Canadian system of regulated professions is unfamiliar to many immigrants who come from a country where professions are not regulated and qualifications are thought of as academic credentials.<sup>22</sup> Some of the challenges that skilled immigrants experience in relation to their efforts to gain recognition include (CCPE 2003; Bauder and Cameron 2002; Creighton-Kelly and Dachsel 2004):

- Not knowing the requirements and options for gaining recognition from professional licencing authorities;
- Difficulties obtaining official records such as academic transcripts from their post secondary institutions;
- Difficulties obtaining acceptable work experience;
- Length of time and level of expense involved in becoming a licenced professional; and
- The time and expense involved to supplement or update their skills and knowledge.

### **Employer Expectations and Canadian Workplace Practices**

Obtaining work in a chosen occupation has become a major challenge for skilled immigrants, particularly in regulated professions and most particularly for those wanting positions commensurate with their pre-landing experience (Statistics Canada 2005). The lack of Canadian work experience has become a barrier to entering the skilled labour market, due to employer expectations and lack of familiarity with Canadian workplace practices and occupation-specific terminology.

The demand for skills discussed in Section 2.1 underscores the high standards and expectations of employers for multi-talented people with proven capabilities to address complex and demanding work conditions. Two surveys of more than 1,100 business, labour and public sector leaders illustrated an increasing recognition of skills shortages as a serious problem (Hayes and Lochhead 2006; CLBC 2002)<sup>23</sup> However, between 48% and 56% of the respondents did not believe that hiring new immigrants is an important solution to the skills shortage issue. Of the possible reasons for these responses, the survey results indicated that the respondents do not view immigrants as having the skills that employers are looking for.

Other researchers have reported that employers' actual experiences with skilled immigrants range from mixed to generally positive, although not without the kinds of challenges identified in the Canadian Labour and Business Centre surveys (McNichol and Dachsel 2004; CCPE 2003; Success Development Group 2003). For example, one study found that international engineering graduates who have been hired had equivalent knowledge to Canadian-trained engineers although their applied engineering experiences

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<sup>22</sup> Most licenced professions and certified trades are regulated under provincial government jurisdictions.

<sup>23</sup> The 2005 survey results show skilled labour shortages as the top ranking issue among public sector managers and the third highest issue among private sector managers. In British Columbia and Alberta, private sector managers identified skill shortages as their #1 and #2 issues respectively (Hayes and Lochhead 2006).

were generally weaker (CCPE 2003)<sup>24</sup> Most of the employers surveyed in the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers study estimated that it takes up to two years for an international engineering graduate with no previous North American experience to understand business practices such as contract related tasks, business development, client relations and regulatory compliance.

Canadian workplace practices that have been identified as being difficult for skilled immigrants to understand and adjust to, include:<sup>25</sup>

- The demand for multiple skills and ability to work in a fast paced and constantly changing work environment;
- Competitive, performance-based hiring and promotion practices;
- A greater range of individual work responsibilities, and administrative and management related activities;
- Flatter organizations and management systems that emphasize team-oriented approaches to work assignments;
- Consultative decision making and a high degree of inter- and intra-organizational communication;
- High workloads with the expectation that people working at a professional or management level will work extra hours;
- High expectations for individual initiative toward continuous professional development;
- Highly competitive and cost conscious economic conditions;
- Goals and results-driven organizations with stringent accountability and auditing requirements; and
- Conducting business through networks and connections related to individual credibility, reputations and relationships.

### **Expectations for Success**

Immigrants who come to Canada under the skilled worker category have high expectations for economic success. However, recent immigrants are often shocked when they discover how different the job search and hiring process is in Canada (Grant and Nadin 2005; Creighton-Kelly and Dachsel 2004). It can take months or years for skilled immigrants to begin to understand why they are not being hired in the jobs they seek (Burnaby School District 41 2004; Success Development Group 2003). In the meantime, the psychological adjustment from a previous position of privilege and relative economic

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<sup>24</sup> Applied engineering experience was described as experience with solving engineering problems, particularly those requiring creativity and innovation but also involving knowledge of technical specifications.

<sup>25</sup> See Bates 2004; Business Council of British Columbia 2004; Centre for Intercultural Learning 2006; Creighton-Kelly and Dachsel 2004; Laroche 2003; Success Development Group 2003; Kim Walker Community and Environment 2003.

comfort to being unemployed or underemployed is a very difficult process for many skilled immigrants (Creighton-Kelly and Dachsel 2004; Bauder and Cameron 2002). The resulting emotional setbacks can have significant and sometimes long term effects on successful integration (Grant and Nadin 2005).

For skilled immigrants who come from a culture with a strong hierarchical social order, the inability to continue working in their chosen occupation at a comparable level to their pre-immigration position can have a very significant emotional effect on self worth and morale (Burnaby School District 41 2004; Success Development Group 2003; JobStart and Skills for Change 2001; ). Some of the deeper emotional difficulties that have been reported by skilled immigrants and observed by immigrant service providers have been expressed through anger, loss of confidence, negative attitudes, low motivation and depression. These emotional situations can create significant damage (Robinson 2004).

### **Discrimination and Social Isolation**

The high value that employers place on Canadian work experience has commonly been interpreted by immigrants and immigrant-service employment counsellors as a veil for racist or discriminatory treatment (Bauder and Cameron 2003; Metropolis 2003). Immigrants often believe that they are not hired because of their accent, their poor language skills, discounting of their previous experience or credentials, ethnicity and other characteristics that differentiate them from Canadian-born job seekers. Hiring practices based on these factors have been viewed by immigrants and many others as unfair discrimination, although these opinions are not unanimously accepted (Metropolis 2003; JobStart and Skills for Change 2001; Walters, et al 2006).<sup>26</sup> The sense of discrimination creates an added barrier of feeling like an outsider. Distinctions such as “foreign-trained” vs. “Canadian-trained” can create a “them vs. us” perspective which Goldberg argues enhances negative identities (2006). One research result from a study conducted by Grant and Nadin (2005) showed that when immigrants feel that they are being marginalized their interest in integrating into mainstream society decreases.

In contrast, having a network within a broader society creates a sense of belonging in addition to increasing opportunities for successful integration into the labour market. Creighton-Kelly and Dachsel (2004) found that skilled immigrants who have been successful in overcoming challenges to labour market integration have used networking as the best way to obtain work in their field. However, skilled immigrants often have difficulty establishing a network which would help them to be accepted and give them valuable connections within the labour market (Success Development Group 2003; JobStart and Skills for Change 2001; Burnaby School District 41 2004).

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<sup>26</sup> For example, Walters, et al (2006) concluded that unfair discrimination has largely been assumed in the academic literature.

## Cultural Differences

Cultural differences are the least well documented of all the barriers experienced by skilled immigrants.<sup>27</sup> Bauder and Cameron (2002) conducted a survey to examine how culture affects the employment and income conditions of immigrants in Vancouver from former Yugoslavia and South Asia. Survey results showed a relationship between labour market integration and cultural factors such as meanings attached to work, cultural awareness, culturally differentiated labour market practices and job search patterns, and language. Walters, et al (2006) further found that behavioural characteristics related to identity, trust and cultural attachment are important predictors of wage gaps.

Skilled immigrants have acknowledged that cultural differences pose significant challenges in obtaining satisfying work (Creighton-Kelly and Dachsel 2004; JobStart and Skills for Change 2001). However, skilled immigrants often do not place inter-cultural understanding or the need to understand Canadian culture high on their list of important factors in securing a job. Not only is there a gap between employers and immigrants in their respective cultural reference points, there is also a gap in recognizing the role that culture plays in the workplace (Burnaby School District 41 2004). Examples of culturally-related barriers to employment include (Employment Services @ ISS n.d.; Success Development Group 2003; Bauder and Cameron 2002; Global Frameworks Ltd. and EnCompass Consultants Inc. 2004; Laroche 2003):

- Difficulties in self marketing due to lack of familiarity with Canadian customs and a belief that self-promotion is unprofessional;
- Difficulty demonstrating personal motivation;
- Difficulty demonstrating essential skills related to comprehension, communication, working with others and critical thinking skills;
- Difficulty accepting jobs that are perceived to be of a lower status;
- Difficulty with interpersonal relationships and communicating with people in the workplace as a result of beliefs regarding gender roles and authority models; and
- Difficulty working in a highly demanding job that may affect highly valued family and social time.

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<sup>27</sup> An individual's cultural context and sense of proper behaviour are like an internal compass. Cultural characteristics are understood along several behavioural and value dimensions, such as: human-time relationships, power distance, space, rationalization of thought, individualism-collectivism, the importance of context (implicit/explicit), masculine-feminine roles, uncertainty avoidance, long term orientation, emotional expression (Dahl 2004; Schaubert 2002). Moreover, cultural bonds can be developed among groups characterized by occupation, workplace, age, gender, social class, education, ethnic background and many other factors.

## 2.4 Summary

At the national and provincial levels, landed immigrants of prime working age between 25 and 44 in the last 15 years have consistently experienced comparatively higher rates of unemployment and lower income levels compared with their Canadian-born counterparts. Skilled immigrants with higher education levels obtain work more quickly than the overall immigrant population (Statistics Canada 2005). Yet, more than half of this immigrant cohort is unable to secure jobs quickly within their occupational fields. Faced with a variety of barriers, a high number of skilled immigrants take jobs that do not utilize their training and experience. Moreover, they are likely to continue to be underemployed for several years (Statistics Canada 2006). The gap in labour market conditions between new immigrants and Canadian-born citizens decreases with longer periods of residency, although immigrants still continue to experience significant barriers to skilled jobs in times of economic growth and public policy and program investments (Statistics Canada 2005; Statistics Canada 2003b).

## ***3. Policy Approaches to Integrate Skilled Immigrants***

Governments and other organizations across Canada have responded significantly to the issues of labour market barriers experienced by skilled immigrants. Policies, special projects, services, and support tools have evolved from a number of initiatives both cooperatively and along parallel channels. This section highlights a sample of public policy and program approaches that have been developed at federal, provincial and community levels.

### **3.1 Federal Initiatives**

The Government of Canada has established several immigrant labour market integration policy and program initiatives over the past six years. Current priorities of the federal government include the Foreign Credential Recognition Program (Charette 2006; Solberg 2006).<sup>28</sup> However, the federal government has also established the Enhanced Language Training, Labour Market Information, and Integration of Internationally Trained Health Professionals initiatives.<sup>29</sup>

Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) is the lead agency for the Foreign Credential Recognition program (HRSDC 2005b). Initiated in 2003, HRSDC funds provincial and territorial governments, licencing regulatory bodies, professional associations, sector councils, educational institutions, unions, employers and others to improve credential assessment and recognition processes. The Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) program covers regulated and non-regulated occupations with initial activities focussed on physicians, nurses, and other health care professionals; engineers; and aviation maintenance and tourism occupations. Program funding supports information distribution services as well as systemic improvements in the form of research, development and application of credential recognition tools.

The Enhanced Language Training (ELT) initiative has been operational since 2003 (HRSDC 2005c). Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) funded 66 projects between 2003 and 2005, either directly or through administration and cost sharing agreements with provinces and territories. British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Nova Scotia have agreements to provincially administer ELT funded projects. The Enhanced Language Training initiative supports job-specific language training as well as more general courses to help immigrants adapt more quickly into business and professional workplaces. In addition to language training, ELT service delivery projects are also required to include bridge-to-work

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<sup>28</sup> Other current immigration priorities of the federal government include the reduction of permanent resident fees and policies that improve the process of citizenship for children adopted from outside the country.

<sup>29</sup> In 2005, the previous federal government coordinated immigrant labour market integration policies, programs and initiatives under the umbrella of the Internationally Trained Workers Initiative (CIC 2005e). The federal Action Plan Against Racism, Workplace Skills Strategy and New Deal for Cities and Communities initiatives were identified as relevant to immigrant labour market integration activities (HRSDC 2005a).

activities such as internships, work placements, mentorships and assistance for job searches and licence application processes (HRSDC 2005c; Integration-Net n.d.). Some ELT projects have also been funded to develop tools and resources for enhanced language training.

The Labour Market Information initiative has focused efforts to develop the Going to Canada Immigration Portal (HRSDC 2005d). The portal brings together a variety of information for immigrants and prospective immigrants from several government and non-government sources. It is managed by CIC in partnership with HRSDC, Health Canada, Industry Canada, and Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada.

The Integration of Internationally Trained Health Professionals initiative is led by Health Canada (HRSDC 2005e). The objective of this initiative is to address shortages of health-care professionals over the next five years, including: physicians, nurses, pharmacists, occupational therapists, technicians and others according to provincial priorities. Supported activities include credential assessment, work experience and integration into the workplace.

Federal departments also support immigrant labour market integration services independent of these specific initiatives:

- Citizenship and Immigration Canada is the lead agency responsible for immigration and settlement policies. CIC works closely with provinces/territories through co-operative agreements as well as with other organizations to provide information and support, community bridging, language and other settlement-related services for all immigrants and refugees. Federal/provincial/territorial agreements also include more specific measures to address labour market priorities and skill shortages, international credential assessment and recognition, enhanced language training, employment support services and barriers to labour market integration.
- HRSDC regional offices provide funding support for employment assistance services and employment related projects for immigrants in general. However, these services are typically not designed for skilled immigrants' needs. HRSDC also leads the Essential Skills and Workplace Literacy Initiative to help increase basic work, learning and life skill levels of people entering or already in the workforce.<sup>30</sup> Four Essential Skills application projects were identified from the literature in relation to skilled immigrant issues: two projects conducted by the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (n.d.), one project by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges, and one by the B.C. Construction Industry Skills Improvement (SkillPlan).
- Western Economic Development Canada (WED) has supported projects to help develop business and entrepreneurial skills in immigrant communities. Projects supported by WED include Gateway to Asia (WED 2004a) and Business Links for New Immigrants (WED 2005a) that were conducted by the United Chinese Community Enrichment Services Society (SUCCESS); a website managed by the Canada/Manitoba Business Service Centre and Success Skills Centre Inc. (WED 2005b); and a Vietnamese Work & Business Orientation Project in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside neighbourhood (WED 2004b).

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<sup>30</sup> The nine Essential Skills are: Reading Text, Document Use, Numeracy, Writing, Oral Communication, Working with Others, Continuous Learning, Thinking Skills, and Computer Use (HRSDC 2006).

## 3.2 Provincial Initiatives

Several provinces have taken active leadership roles in identifying issues, and developing policies and programs to support the integration of skilled immigrants. While many of the resulting initiatives are similar, priorities vary according to regional socio-economic conditions.

### British Columbia

The International Qualifications Unit (IQU) in the Ministry of Economic Development works with government and non-government agencies in addressing barriers to the integration of skilled immigrants within the B.C. economy.<sup>31</sup> The IQU has funded services and activities through two main programs.

- The International Qualifications Program supports work that increases institutional, sectoral, and regional capacities.
- The Skills Connect for Immigrants Program supports the delivery of career assessment and planning services, pre-employment skill enhancement services, and workplace orientation and practice services that target foreign-trained professionals, trades persons and other high skill workers.

British Columbia addresses barriers experienced by skilled immigrants through a variety of community-led projects that build the capacities of service providers and immigrants; improve access to information; and create strategic partnerships across interests (B.C. Ministry of Economic Development n.d.(a)). The EASI Initiative (Employment Access for Skilled Immigrants) is one example of this approach (Susan Simosko Associates Inc. 2003). Another was the Pilot Project for Internationally Trained Engineers (Kim Walker Community and Environment 2003).

Over the last five years British Columbia has commissioned more than 50 specialized research, planning and development projects related to the integration of skilled immigrants (B.C. Ministry of Economic Development n.d.(a) and n.d.(c)). Projects and initiatives have been developed in partnership with federal departments and delivered by a variety of community services, professional and educational organizations (B.C. Ministry of Economic Development n.d.(b) and n.d.(d)).

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<sup>31</sup> The IQU was moved from the Ministry of Community Services during the 2005 government reorganization. The Provincial Nominee Program is also located in the Ministry of Economic Development. The Ministry of the Attorney General is responsible for immigration policy, intergovernmental relations, multiculturalism and settlement programs and the regional immigration initiative.

From 2001 to 2004, the provincial government funded 19 special pilot projects and initiatives that conducted action research, needs assessments, multi-stakeholder strategic planning, tools for specific occupations or professions, and information guides for skilled immigrants and employers (B.C. Ministry of Economic Development n.d.(c)):

- Medical professions were prioritized among the occupation-specific projects. Projects were also developed to address integration needs for immigrants with backgrounds in engineering, teaching, skilled trades and accounting. Specific tools and services that were developed or tested include: work experience and practice services, cultural orientation for professional credential exams, professional licencing policies and procedure review, language and credential recognition assessments, and training curriculum.
- Information services and guides that were developed include: resource guides for skilled immigrants, employers and service providers; occupation-specific resource guides; and a job search guide offered in seven languages.
- An immigrant loan program was also developed and tested as a special pilot project in partnership with VanCity Savings Credit Union, VanCity Community Foundation and MOSAIC.

Beginning in 2004, sixteen additional developmental projects were funded to explore a range of interests and needs related to immigrant labour market integration (B.C. Ministry of Economic Development n.d.(d)). At this time, the B.C. government began to pay significant attention to the location of skilled immigrants relative to local labour market demand and skills shortages. Five of these projects involved research for specific communities across the province. The remaining eleven projects assessed employer and industry perspectives, as well as promising practices in the areas of career planning services, English language instruction, bridging programs, workplace practices, and assessment tools.

In collaboration with CIC, Western Economic Diversification Canada, Canadian Rural Partnership Rural B.C. Team and the Community Futures Development Association of B.C., the province commissioned eight Regional Immigration Initiatives in 2004-05 (CIC and MCAWS 2005; Walker 2005a). The objectives of these projects were to support regional and community economic development and build organizational capacities outside the Greater Vancouver area to attract and retain skilled immigrants.

The province's new B.C. Skills Connect for Immigrants Program is funding six projects that began in the spring of 2006 (B.C. Ministry of Economic Development 2006a). These projects are part of a three year initiative to develop ongoing, integrated services for new immigrants to overcome barriers to employment. The purpose of B.C. Skills Connect is to assist skilled immigrants in securing employment commensurate with their pre-landing skills and experience. The program has prioritized five industry sectors: construction, transportation, tourism/hospitality, health and energy. Program services include: career assessment and planning, pre-employment skill enhancement including language upgrading, and workplace orientation and practice activities (e.g. mentorships, internships).

The Ministry of Economic Development's International Qualifications Unit has also recently received financial support from HRSDC toward capacity building strategies related to regional service development, information sharing and collaboration, development and analysis of technology-based tools to support career assessment, planning and employment bridging services, and development of a one-stop employment information and referral centre in the Greater Vancouver Regional District (B.C. Ministry of Economic Development 2006b). The priority groups for information sharing and collaboration are: small-medium sized enterprises, human resource practitioners, regulatory bodies and professional associations, and the five industry sector groups identified under the Skills Connect Program.

## **Alberta**

The province of Alberta has recently developed a strategy and a supporting policy framework to integrate skilled immigrants into the economy as part of a broader strategy to address skills shortages (Alberta 2004; Alberta 2005). This new government-wide priority was prompted by a growing recognition by employers and other stakeholders of the potential role for skilled immigrants in Alberta's labour market. *Integrating Skilled Immigrants into the Alberta Economy* is comprised of six activity areas:

- Occupation-specific information;
- Skills, experience and credential assessments;
- Advice and counselling for practitioners and organizations that deal with skilled immigrants;
- Integrated occupation-specific bridging programs;
- Encouraging welcoming workplaces; and
- Coordinating with stakeholders.

The policy framework was developed to coordinate efforts across government ministries. The framework also sets the tone for immigrant integration initiatives to be community-based, collaborative, fair and inclusive, holistic, sustainable and accountable. Recognizing the different contributions that newcomers bring, the policy framework provides direction for four strategic actions to: a) support welcoming and inclusive communities, b) attract immigrants to Alberta, c) expand programs and services that integrate immigrants, and their families, into daily life and work, and d) help immigrants to access labour market opportunities.

Alberta has given a high priority toward the development of enhanced language training services through the Canada-Alberta Enhanced Language Training for Skilled Immigrants Initiative. Twenty-four projects have been funded since 2003 to 13 community organizations and colleges (Integration-Net, n.d.). Just over half of these projects offer training services. Other projects have been funded to develop training tools and programs. Also, 10 projects are targeted at specific occupations or sectors, including: pharmacists,

engineers and technologists, counsellors, skilled trades, teachers, accountants, the information technology sector, business/management, oil and gas sector, practical nurses, natural sciences, geologists and geophysicists.

Other existing services and initiatives for skilled immigrants that are also currently led or supported by various ministries in the government of Alberta include (Alberta 2005):

#### Assessment Services

- Language Assessment and Referral Centres are located in Edmonton and Calgary.
- The Ministry of Advanced Education's International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS) assesses educational credentials in comparison with Alberta standards for applications to 24 postsecondary institutions and 39 professional licensing bodies.
- The Ministry of Advanced Education (Apprenticeship and Industry Training) assesses international credentials and formal training, including work experience, for immigrants who wish to become certified trades people or establish advanced standing in apprenticeship programs.

#### Employment Preparation Services and Bridging Programs

- Funding for seven employment service agencies in Edmonton and Calgary offer work experience, skills upgrading and employment-related language training for immigrants. Four of these agencies offer a range of bridging and employment services specifically for skilled immigrants.
- Over 20 training and occupation-specific career bridging programs are funded and delivered through community service and training agencies.
- The Alberta International Medical Graduate (AIMG) program facilitates the entry of IMGs into family medicine and specialty residency programs.
- Restricted licences to IMGs are issued under the IMG Clinical Preceptorship Initiative, the IMG Surgical Assistant Program, and for the purpose of working in areas designated as having an emergency need for a physician.
- The International Pharmacy Graduate (IPG) Program provides international pharmacy graduates with fully licensed practice opportunities.

#### Information Resources

- The publications *Welcome to Alberta* and *Working in Alberta: A guide for internationally trained and educated immigrants*, are available online and in print form for immigrants (Alberta Learning Information Service 2006b; Alberta Human Resources and Employment 2004).
- The publication *Diversity: A strategy to meet your need for skilled workers* and other information resources are available for employers to assist in recruiting and retaining skilled immigrants (Alberta Human Resources and Employment 2002).

- The Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website provides information on occupations, labour market forecasts, and job opportunities. ALIS includes *CERTinfo: Certification and Registration Requirements for Employment in Alberta*, a new resource to assist both prospective immigrants and people already in Alberta to utilize their skills in the Alberta labour market (Alberta Learning Information Service 2006a).

## **Manitoba**

Manitoba has been working proactively for many years to increase its population through immigration efforts. In 2003, the province reinforced its immigration goals as part of the *Manitoba Action Strategy for Economic Growth* (Manitoba n.d.). The province also reinforced the need to increase support for Manitoba's Qualification Recognition Initiative, and strengthen settlement and integration programs to bring newcomers into the labour market more quickly (Manitoba Department of Labour and Immigration 2005a). Manitoba has recently adopted a Qualifications Recognition Strategy and has turned its attention to ensuring fair and efficient assessment processes, developing occupational and immigrant retention expertise, and establishing working relationships with employers (Public Policy Forum 2005b).

Manitoba's immigrant integration activities have been unique in terms of addressing the capacity needs of smaller communities who receive a significant proportion of immigrants through the Provincial Nominee Program (Public Policy Forum 2005b). The Department of Labour and Immigration leads the province in administering immigrant integration programs and services through the Manitoba Immigrant Integration Program (Manitoba Department of Labour and Immigration 2005b).<sup>32</sup>

The Manitoba Immigrant Integration Program (MIIP) is co-funded with CIC under the *Canada-Manitoba Immigration Agreement 2003* to deliver settlement and adult language training. In the 2005-06 fiscal year, 21% of settlement service funding was specifically dedicated to labour market integration and 6% was dedicated toward qualifications recognition programs. In addition, a total of 10% of the Adult ESL service funding allocation was dedicated toward workplace based and enhanced language programs for employment (Manitoba Department of Labour and Immigration 2005a).

Specific programs and services for skilled immigrants in Manitoba include:

### Foreign Qualifications Recognition Programs and Services

- Academic Credentials Assessment Service – Canadians and immigrants who have been educated outside of Canada can have their international education evaluated in comparison with educational standards in Manitoba. Employers can also use the service to assess credentials of job candidates.
- Credentials Recognition Program – Financial assistance for credential assessments and wages for work that contributes toward professional licensure is available for immigrants with international professional or technical qualifications that are not formally recognized

<sup>32</sup> See program descriptions at the Department's website at [www.immigratemanitoba.com](http://www.immigratemanitoba.com)

within Manitoba. This program also serves employers with permanent professional or technical employment opportunities. Counselling and referral services are also offered.

#### Adult Language Training Programs and Services

- English as an Additional Language (EAL) Services – Provincially funded services are delivered by third party service providers. Classes are offered for professional, business and technical purposes and for several specific occupations such as internationally trained nurses and doctors.
- English at Work Program – The program provides trained ESL instructors and job specific English language instruction for employees; workplace culture training; some on-site communication coaching for employees and supervisors; workplace needs assessments and advice in developing hiring guidelines. The Province shares the investment in training costs with employers, 23 of whom used this program in 2004-2005.
- English Skills Program – Part-time courses are offered during evenings and weekends in Pronunciation, Listening to Rapid Canadian English, Professional Writing, and Technical Reading for intermediate learners. This program is available to individuals and employer sponsored workers with intermediate language skills. It is particularly useful for small and medium sized enterprises that don't have enough employees to justify a workplace training course.
- Assessing Employee Language Levels – Business support is provided by Branch staff in the form of establishing workplace language benchmarks and developing customized language assessment tools.

#### Information Resources

- Access to Professions and Trades – General information is provided online regarding licencing requirements and referral lists of regulatory bodies.
- Occupational Fact Sheets – Information on credential assessment processes, and education and work experience requirements for 66 professions and trades is available on the government website.
- Employment information for physicians – A comprehensive guide and contact information on practicing medicine and finding employment opportunities is provided on the Health Employment Manitoba website.<sup>33</sup>
- Immigrant Toolbox - A new Manitoba information website for immigrants was launched in 2005, with financial support from Western Economic Diversification Canada. The site includes information and references related to securing work, enhancing language skills, newcomer and other specialized services, labour market needs, foreign credential recognition and business investment.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> See Health Employment Manitoba (n.d.). *Doctors: Live, Practice & Play in Manitoba, Canada*. Homepage. <http://www.healthemployment.ca/index.html>

<sup>34</sup> The Immigrant Toolbox website is located at <http://www.immigranttoolbox.ca/>

## Ontario

The Ontario government's Access to Professions and Trades Initiative (APT) has existed since 1995. Currently located in the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, APT supports credential assessment services and bridge training programs, and makes information on the labour market and credential recognition topics accessible to skilled immigrants through a number of venues (Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration 2005a).<sup>35</sup>

Some initiatives that were supported by Access to Professions and Trades during the period 2000 to 2002, in collaboration with other ministries and organizations, included (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities 2002):

- Occupational and professional licencing fact sheets;
- Employment service support through the job connect program; assistance for immigrant entrepreneurs under the business immigration services program;
- Skills for Change Sector-Specific Terminology, Information and Counselling (STIC) bridge training project for four occupations;
- Bridging programs for licenced occupations in areas experiencing skills shortages;
- Establishment of the world education services (WES) – Canada Academic Credential Assessment Service; and
- Development of prior learning assessment and recognition tools to assess skills and knowledge.

In a 2002 report on employment-related experiences of skilled immigrants, the Ontario government highlighted the importance of focussing information, training and academic credential assessments in specific occupations and sectors (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities 2002). Since then, the government has significantly invested in a variety of occupation-related initiatives in these areas and has recently committed to increase services and supports for information dissemination, international credential assessments, higher-level language training and other skills upgrading, and increasing work experience opportunities (Achter 2006; Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration 2005b). Twenty-four additional bridge training programs have recently been funded to help integrate skilled immigrants into over 100 trades and professions (Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration 2006a).

In 2005, Ontario signed its first immigration agreement with the federal government to increase funding resources for settlement and integration programs, and coordinate federal and provincial settlement programs. Ontario has also recently introduced a new Bill to establish legislation that will require fair and expedient registration processes within 34 regulated professions in Ontario (Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration 2006b). The proposed legislation would also develop an Access Centre for

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<sup>35</sup> See the Opening Doors for Internationally Trained Individuals website at [www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/english/citdiv/apt/index.html](http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/english/citdiv/apt/index.html)

information, research and assistance pertaining to professional registration, training, internships and mentorships.

The current range of services to support the integration of skilled immigrants into the Ontario labour market includes (Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration 2005a and 2006c):

#### Training and Apprenticeship Programs

- Bridge Training – Ontario funds bridge training and sector-based projects. Bridge training projects directly support internationally trained immigrants through skill and competency assessments, training and workplace experience. Sector-based projects provide support to employers, regulatory bodies, educational institutions and community service agencies to address issues and barriers to skilled immigrant integration. More than 35 bridge training programs have been funded in the last three years. Programs currently listed on the Bridge Training webpage are located in the Greater Toronto area, Ottawa and other communities in southern Ontario. Programs are available for 17 specific occupations and 4 industry sectors. There is one general bridging program and two employer outreach programs.
- International Medical Graduates Program (IMGO) – A central information and assessment application service for professional practice for internationally trained physicians is available on the IMG website (IMG-Ontario 2006). This program was developed in 2004, in partnership with the Council of Ontario Faculties of Medicine, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario and the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. The program has increased the number of training and assessment positions available to internationally trained physicians and provided opportunities for IMGs to compete for unfilled residency positions (Ontario Office of the Premier 2006).
- Enhanced-Language Training – Ontario cost-shares with CIC to support enhanced language training projects. More than 50 ELT projects have been funded in Ontario to 33 organizations since 2003.

#### Employment Services

- Employment support services are funded by the Ontario government through the Newcomer Settlement Program (Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration 2006d). Eligible services include advice and referrals for trade/professional certification and academic credential assessments, job search workshops, and job search resources.
- Job Connect – Funding was provided in 2005/06 to community agencies to deliver three new career and employment preparation services for internationally trained immigrants (Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration 2005b). Job Connect has also been expanded to assist skilled immigrants in finding work commensurate with their credentials.

- Career Bridge - The province has been working with the Toronto City Summit Alliance to support Career Bridge (Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration 2004). This three-year initiative was established in 2004 to match Toronto-area employers with internationally trained immigrants who had experience and skills in information technology, engineering, manufacturing, sales and marketing, and accounting and finance.

#### Information Resources

- The new website, [www.ontarioimmigration.ca](http://www.ontarioimmigration.ca), was established in 2005. The website provides a variety of information and resources for individuals who are considering immigrating to Ontario and landed immigrants.
- Career Maps and E-Career Maps – Twenty-two career maps are available on the government website with information on labour market conditions and the assessment processes for regulated professions and skilled trades. Six e-career maps are available that provide an interactive medium to navigate through professional registration requirements.

### Quebec

The province of Quebec has given a high priority to integrating immigrants into the Francophone community over the last four decades. This priority was established in partial response to Quebec's historical immigration pattern of integration primarily into the Anglophone community (Gervais 2005). Early provincial policies developed immigration objectives to advance economic prosperity and the Francophone community. These policies were supported through the *Canada- Québec Accord* (CIC 1991), a comprehensive federal-provincial immigration agreement which has enabled Quebec to select permanent immigrants and facilitate their social and economic integration at the outset of the immigration process (Gervais 2005; CIC 2004; Papillon 2002). Quebec's current immigration action plan, *Shared Values, Common Interests. Action Plan 2004-2007* updates earlier policy objectives to address today's immigrant conditions and provincial goals.

The *Action Plan* contains five “pillars” or strategic directions (Québec MRCI 2004):

- Immigration that corresponds to Quebec's needs and respects its values;
- Reception and lasting job integration;
- Learning French: a gauge of success;
- A Quebec proud of its diversity; and
- The Capitale-Nationale, metropolitan Montréal and the regions committed to action.

Two of the five pillars, Learning French and Reception and Lasting Job Integration, establish the principal directions for direct immigrant integration programs and services. However, Quebec's goals of aligning regional labour market needs with the immigration selection process and facilitating employer and other organizational support toward a more

inclusive society also support the integration of immigrants into the labour market (Québec MRCI 2004).

The provincial government provides funding and support to community organizations, local governments and other public organizations for the purpose of delivering integration services for newcomers, civic and intercultural relations programs, and regional action plan development and delivery. Quebec also offers financial support to individuals taking full-time French courses (Québec MICC 2006a).<sup>36</sup> Current programs and services that support the integration of immigrants into the Quebec labour market include (Gervais 2005; Québec MICC 2006b; Québec MICC 2006c):

#### Personalized Guidance Services

- Personalized Guidance Interviews - Newcomers arriving by air are interviewed and those who arrive by other modes of transport can arrange interviews. Interview sessions provide a general orientation, determine immigrants' needs and strategies for settling in, determine levels of language competence and provide direction to appropriate resources. Follow-up information is available with regard to job searches, education and occupational training.
- Information Sessions – A variety of orientation and labour market integration sessions are offered to groups or individuals on the following topics: Getting Established (2-4 hours), Socio-Economic Integration (16-20 hours), Quebec Regions (3 hours), and Self-Employed Workers (3 hours). Socio-economic integration sessions cover the social and economic context of living in Quebec, the labour market, labour laws and other work-related background information, qualification recognition and training, and information on conducting job searches. Employment opportunities are among the topics discussed in region-specific sessions. Brief individual meetings are also available in several languages.

#### Labour Market Integration Aide Service

- Information Services – Information is offered to skilled immigrants on the labour market in general, professional training programs, rules governing trades and professions, and available positions.
- Counselling and Referral Services – Counselling can be provided to help skilled immigrants find out how to have their international training and experience evaluated, and develop a plan of action to assist in their efforts to secure employment. Immigrants are referred to appropriate services with government and non-government partners specialized in job searches, providing assistance in preparing a resume or CV, and preparing for employment or professional training.

#### Information and Assistance Services for Business People

- Interviews – An entrepreneur immigrant can arrange an interview with an economic advisor to help assess business needs, establish an entrepreneurial profile, develop

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<sup>36</sup> Funding programs include: Programme d'accompagnement des nouveaux arrivants (PANA), Programme régional d'intégration (PRI), Programme d'appui aux relations civiques et interculturelles (PARCI), Programme d'aide financière pour l'intégration linguistique des immigrants (PAFIL).

a business plan, meet with field specialists, accompany them to business meetings, and provide other relevant documents and information.

- Regional Tours - Quebec economic organizations will arrange tours for business immigrants to learn about the local economy, meet local economic stakeholders and establish contacts.
- Training Seminars and Awareness Workshops – Training and information topics include: Quebec business practices, the tax system, purchasing and financing a business, contractual commitments, self employment, integration into the labour market, and project development strategies.
- Online Guide – The Quebec portal has a guide for immigrant entrepreneurs and others with an interest in starting a business in the province.

#### French Language and Communication Courses

- Full and Part-Time Courses – Full-time training for beginner and intermediate level learners includes language instruction and integration support activities. Financial assistance is available to eligible applicants to attend these classes full-time. Language training can be taken on a part-time basis during the day, in the evening or on weekends.
- Customized Courses - The government also offers a variety of courses to suit specific needs of skilled immigrants, such as: advanced language training, occupation-specific terminology, and integrated training within occupational areas. Customized workplace communication courses can also be arranged with employers.
- Other Courses – More general courses on French communication, written French and the realities of the workplace are also available, based on demand levels.
- Self-Learning Venues – Learning centres are located near workplaces and are equipped with facilitators and computers. An online French database is also available for self learners at beginner, intermediate and advanced levels.

#### Assistance in Accessing Regulated Trades and Professions

- Information Services – Information is provided by the *Service d'information sur les professions réglementées (SIPR)* regarding the regulatory environment in Quebec and the purposes and functions of regulated professions, registration processes, required documents and academic credentials, and fees. These services are available free to immigrants who have lived in Quebec for five years or less.
- *Guides de comparaison des études* – Five general guides are available online which give comparative descriptions of a country's education system with the Quebec system. Guides are currently available for China, Chile, France, Morocco and Rwanda.

- Assistance Services - SIPR also helps immigrants determine which profession matches their qualifications, helps them in preparing their applications for credential assessments and continues to provide advice throughout the application process. Advice and support is also provided to those who are adjusting to related occupations.
- Integration officers can advise and guide skilled immigrants on the applicability and process for obtaining an *Évaluation comparative des études effectuées hors du Québec*, which documents how their international academic credentials correspond to credentials obtained in the Quebec educational system.

#### Employer and Employment Support Services

- *Le Programme d'aide à l'intégration des immigrants et des minorités visibles en emploi (PRIIME)* was established in 2005 to encourage small and medium sized businesses to hire immigrants and visible minorities. The program provides support for diversity management, work experience, employee salaries, and skills adaptation and other related costs. Skilled immigrants and visible minorities who have never worked in their trade or profession in Quebec are eligible to participate.

#### Regional Integration Program (PRI)

- Quebec has actively tried to increase the number of immigrants living in regions beyond Montréal over the past decade. Under the *Action Plan 2004-2007*, the province is developing a new approach to regional integration by supporting the development of regional action plans in partnership with municipalities and community cultural and service organizations (Goss Gilroy Inc. 2005; Québec MRCI 2004). In 2005-06, six regional action plans were completed, and eight more were underway with regions and municipalities.

### 3.3 Community and Regional Initiatives

Immigrant and employment service agencies, language training services, educational institutions and professional associations are among several groups that have established long-standing networks for information sharing, support, and public policy development purposes. However, new multi-interest groups are becoming established on a regional or community-wide scale in which these and other organizations are coming together to develop and implement local immigrant integration initiatives. A sample of community and regional initiatives are briefly described below.

## Greater Vancouver Region

The Greater Vancouver region has a strong tradition of informal information sharing and collaboration among the immigrant service organizations. A recent evaluation of integrated employment services among the four largest immigrant service organizations found a high level of collaboration in complementing services and filling gaps within the region (CS/RESORS Consulting Ltd. 2005).

In 1996, the Looking Ahead Initiative formalized a local immigrant service network. This network has continued and expanded through the more recent Employment Access Strategy for Immigrants Initiative (EASI).<sup>37</sup> EASI was established in 2002 to develop a systems-wide perspective and participation in facilitating labour market integration of skilled immigrants (Susan Simosko Associates Inc. 2003; Walters 2002).<sup>38</sup> EASI members include regulated professions and trades, post-secondary institutions, community-based immigrant serving organizations, business and government. However, the main participants are representatives from senior government and non-profit community organizations (Public Policy Forum 2005b).<sup>39</sup>

The Looking Ahead Initiative provided the groundwork for identifying policy, program and service needs of which several were developed by the province and other participating members. The EASI Initiative subsequently developed an implementation strategy to increase access to relevant information for immigrants, employers and immigrant serving agencies; identify needed bridging programs to fill skill and experience gaps for immigrants; and promote the benefits of workplace diversity. In its first phase, the strategy developed an information portal. The EASI portal contains information and resource guides for immigrants, employers and service providers (EASI 2006).

## Greater Toronto Region

The City of Toronto has a webpage for immigrants on its website (City of Toronto 1998-2006). It is located under the Living in Toronto and Visiting Toronto listings. In addition to general references to community and social services, and federal and provincial immigrant websites, the City's website provides a link to an online resume database tool called SkillsInternational.ca.

The Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) was created in 2003 by the Toronto City Summit Alliance and the Maytree Foundation (Public Policy Forum 2005b). TRIEC is the vision of more than 40 civic leaders representing the private, public and non profit sectors who had identified integration of immigrants into the labour market as a high priority for the region (TRIEC n.d.). Among its three operating objectives, TRIEC has focused its energies to increase the availability of value added services for integration of skilled immigrants. Acting as a catalyst for these actions, TRIEC's intention is to develop

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<sup>37</sup> The Looking Ahead Initiative was a multi-sectoral group that was formed in 1996 with provincial and federal government leadership, to identify measures that would increase labour force participation of immigrants. Looking Ahead was focussed in the Greater Vancouver and Fraser Valley regions.

<sup>38</sup> The EASI Initiative has taken more of a provincial perspective but includes many of the same agencies that are located in Greater Vancouver.

<sup>39</sup> Some members or participants are located outside the Greater Vancouver Region or have province-wide mandates.

services that will be adopted and delivered through existing community service agencies (EASI 2004). The results of their efforts to date are two immigrant employment preparation services, Career Bridge and The Mentoring Partnership.

## **Montréal**

The City of Montréal has developed an action plan under a funding agreement with the province of Quebec for the support and integration of immigrants into the Francophone community (Public Policy Forum 2005b). Specifically, the action plan is intended to support intercultural relations and employment integration. Montréal also has an intercultural advisory body that identifies policy and service needs for the participation and integration of cultural communities.

The action plan was developed in partnership with 13 boroughs. It is delivered by other institutional and community organizations who work with immigrants and cultural communities throughout the region. Several projects have focussed efforts to address intercultural conflicts and encourage dialogue to bridge intercultural gaps. With respect to employment objectives, the main focus has recently been given to projects that address the needs of marginalized people and employment equity programs within the City. Among the many activities and services, the City's Intercultural Affairs staff in the Department of Community Development offer intercommunity relations training services.

## **Waterloo Region**

Waterloo Region has a strong network of community based organizations that support immigrants. In 2004, more than 30 groups joined together to organize the Immigrant Skills Summit which was held the following spring (Public Policy Forum 2005b). One of the main objectives was to form a multi-stakeholder group called the Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Council. In preparation for the Summit, more than 70 people worked in task groups to produce five action plans. Partners in this initiative are representative of business and labour, local governments, educational institutions, community organizations and immigrants.

## **Winkler**

The Winkler Initiative began in 1997 as a pilot project to attract and retain immigrants to this small community in Manitoba. The community of Winkler used the Provincial Nominee Program to attract more than 1,800 immigrants between 1999 and 2004 (Silvius 2005). This was achieved through close collaboration with businesses, city officials, and the provincial government. One of the recruitment strategies they used was to target immigrants who shared cultural, linguistic, religious and familial commonalities with community members. While the recruitment efforts have resulted in good success, the Winkler experience has illustrated the importance of establishing community services that are able to quickly respond to a variety of issues and challenges. Winkler and several other communities in rural Manitoba who initiated immigrant labour market recruitment

initiatives have served as important case studies in understanding the need to address social, cultural and economic integration challenges together.<sup>40</sup>

## **Ottawa**

In 2002, the Internationally Trained Workers Project was established in Ottawa by the United Way Ottawa, Canadian Labour and Business Centre and LASI World Skills (McGahey and Gagnon 2006; CLBC 2003; Public Policy Forum 2005b). The Project partners have been expanded to include the City of Ottawa, Ottawa Chamber of Commerce, the Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation, and the Regroupement des gens d'affaires de la Capitale nationale (RGA). Other stakeholders are also involved in various components of the project and a steering committee provides guidance with participation of three levels of government, labour, and community organizations. The Internationally Trained Workers Project has developed a strategy to facilitate accreditation and integration of internationally-trained immigrants into the Ottawa labour market in five occupational areas: nurses, engineers, teachers, masons and doctors (CLBC 2003).

## **Calgary**

Calgary's Innovation in Integration initiative is an ad hoc committee that was established in 2003 with more than 30 individuals and organizational representatives (Public Policy Forum 2005b). The Initiative held a symposium in 2004 involving over 100 people with government, justice, business, community, and education interests on the topic of immigrant integration. The symposium resulted in a framework for integration policies and practices, along with indicators for success. As of 2005, follow up activities included an inventory of potential actions and development of accountability reports for key stakeholder actions.

## **Prince George**

Prince George was one of eight communities to recently complete a research and planning project under the British Columbia Regional Immigration Initiative (Walker 2005a). The project was conducted by Community and Environment in partnership with Strategic Management Consulting, Initiatives Prince George, and the Fraser Fort George Community Futures Development Corporation.<sup>41</sup> Project results included the identification of local skills gaps, an exploration of realistic opportunities to recruit qualified immigrants to Prince George, a gauge on level of community stakeholder interest, and development of three strategies to attract and retain skilled immigrants. The project engaged more than 60 representatives from among the government, immigrant and employment service, business and education sectors as part of the study. Initiatives Prince George is currently following up with a new initiative funded by HRSDC, with direction from a multi-stakeholder committee with a significant employer component. This new initiative will develop specific tools and guidelines to help employers recruit and retain skilled immigrants,

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<sup>40</sup> Case studies have also been conducted for immigration initiatives in Steinbach, Parkland Region and Portage la Prairie.

<sup>41</sup> Initiatives Prince George is the economic development corporation of the City of Prince George.

and develop specific actions for community services to facilitate the full integration of newcomers into the community (Initiatives Prince George 2006).

### 3.4 Summary Observations

Federal and provincial government initiatives have provided substantial support toward the development of enhanced language training and occupational bridging programs. However, it is difficult to determine from the literature the degree to which these initiatives are working to meet the needs of skilled immigrants and employers within the jurisdictions included in this study. There is also little evidence of a systematic level of effort at the federal level to address the range of labour market needs and barriers for skilled immigrants.

At the provincial level, Alberta, Manitoba, and Quebec have developed more systematic and coordinated approaches to skilled immigrant labour market integration initiatives, through comprehensive strategy and program opportunities. Manitoba and Quebec have also established substantial in-house program delivery support. Although British Columbia and Ontario have not developed comprehensive provincial strategies, both provinces emphasize their support for integrated community-based services and are addressing service system needs through initiatives such as the B.C. Regional Immigration Initiative, B.C. Skills Connect and Ontario's Bill 124 for an act to provide fair access to regulated professions.

At the regional and local levels, governments, service providers, educators and employers are actively engaged in attracting and integrating immigrants into their communities. These multi-interest groups have formed in response to two very different situations. Some communities have large numbers of immigrant residents who are having difficulties in accessing professions and other skilled positions. Others are experiencing acute labour shortages and do not have an adequate local pool of workers to draw from.

The community responses to skills shortages and immigrant barriers to labour market integration issues illustrate different developmental stages in organizing and developing local services. Some communities have put their efforts into establishing policy forums or professional learning networks while others have focussed on creating action plans, recruitment activities, direct services and resources for immigrant residents. TRIEC in the Greater Toronto region stands out as a model because of its tangible actions to develop and deliver labour market integration services for skilled immigrants and employers. However, all of the examples offer insights into the value and potential benefits of regional and community collaboration that work in support of skilled immigrant labour market integration. Some of the successes to date from regional and community initiatives include:

- The engagement of employers and ongoing opportunities to bring key government and community service representatives together to share expertise, pool resources, and deliver specific services;
- A forum for addressing localized issues and service needs;

- Coordination of information and services at the local level to facilitate easier access by skilled immigrants and employers;
- Commitments from local government and business leaders to support skilled immigrant labour market integration; and
- Achievement of a common purpose, direction and success measures for specific programs and services.



## ***4. Services That Work to Integrate Skilled Immigrants***

Labour market integration programs and projects, services and tools for skilled immigrants were identified from a number of sources including federal and provincial lists of funded projects, research reports, consultation reports and website information resource tools. A small selection of 11 initiatives was chosen as examples of how programs, services and tools are meeting current labour market needs and skilled immigrant barriers. The examples were chosen primarily on the basis of how well their descriptions matched needs and barriers, as well as on the basis of third party opinions found in the literature and program results.

This literature review focussed specifically on the descriptive features of integration initiatives. Where information was readily available, program results such as employment success rates were highlighted. However, while extensive efforts have been directed toward developing policies, programs and instruments for skilled immigrants over the past five years, many of these initiatives have not been sufficiently established to have determined their effectiveness in integrating skilled immigrants into the labour market.<sup>42</sup> For the most part, evaluations conducted under contractual requirements have not been made widely available in the public domain.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, promising practices that have been talked about, tried and repeated across the country were considered. Any further determination of how successful these initiatives are toward integrating skilled immigrants would require a fuller evaluation which is beyond the scope of this study.

### **4.1 Responding to Labour Market Demands**

Program and service initiatives have addressed labour market needs in three noteworthy ways. They focus on skills shortages to align immigrant skills to match labour demand. They focus on regional needs to direct skilled immigrants to where there are jobs and they focus on employers' needs to provide human resource services and tools that connect employers with skilled immigrants.

#### **Addressing Skills Shortages**

Skilled immigrant integration initiatives have emerged from a widespread concern that newcomers' skills are being extensively underutilized while skills shortages are increasing in several sectors. As a result, program responses have put a lot of effort toward helping immigrants gain recognition for their international credentials and

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<sup>42</sup> For example, the federal government plans to evaluate the ELT Initiative in 2006-2007 and 2009-2010 after three and six years, respectively (Integration-Net 2006).

<sup>43</sup> For example, project evaluations are available for 24 pilot projects conducted under the Regional Immigration Initiative and Exploratory Planning projects in British Columbia, as part of the final reports. However, they were not useful for the purposes of this study.

facilitating their entry into specific professions and trades. These initiatives aim to:

- 1) facilitate access to licencing and certification while maintaining standards, and/or
- 2) facilitate access to skilled jobs.

Programs and services that address the skills shortage issues include credential assessments, and enhanced language and bridge training. Training and support programs often include a combination of services, such as language and academic assessments, orientation to the Canadian workplace, language and communication training, job search support, work experience and work placements, mentorships, exam preparation, occupation-specific training and computer skills development (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks 2004; FuturEd 2004a).

Individual programs vary quite significantly from each other and across provinces. However, one notable common feature is the design of ELT and bridge programs for specific occupations and sectors, within specific jurisdictions. For example, 62 out of 103 identified enhanced language training and labour market integration programs across Canada were targeted toward 27 specific occupations or sectors (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks 2004). Not surprisingly, health care was identified as the most well served sector.

Although skills shortages exist or are expected across the labour market spectrum, some shortages are being felt more immediately or more acutely than others. Program priorities are generally based on significant local or province-wide shortages. For example, the health sector has been targeted by the federal government and provinces such as Alberta, Ontario and Manitoba due to critical shortages of doctors, nurses and several other health care occupations. Some of the early pilot projects in British Columbia were also targeted toward nurses to address critical shortages. However, other sectors are also being prioritized. B.C.'s Skills Connect Program is directing projects to support the energy, transportation, tourism and hospitality, and construction sectors in addition to the health sector. It is interesting to note that Alberta's 2006-2007 call for proposals for Enhanced Language Training is taking a different approach to meeting labour market needs. Rather than identifying priority sectors or occupations, project proponents are being asked to identify and address local needs as they determine through labour market research (CIC and Alberta Human Resources and Employment 2006).

Some initiatives have been directed at a high number of immigrants with specific occupational skill sets. The Pilot Project for Internationally Trained Engineers conducted between 2001 and 2003 in British Columbia is one example. TRIEC activities are another. TRIEC has established four occupation and licencing working groups on the basis of the most common skill sets among immigrants in the Toronto area (EASI 2004). In these situations, skilled immigrants may be advised on how to transfer or apply their skills to a related occupation.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> For example, one of TRIEC's working groups is the Alternative Employment Planning for International Healthcare Professionals.

The occupation/sector approach to addressing skills shortage issues appears to work well on a project by project basis. For example, bridging programs for engineers, teachers and pharmacists in Manitoba have been cited as highly successful (Public Policy Forum 2005b). However, as an overall strategy, an occupation-based approach may prove difficult to sustain over time with the scale of shortages anticipated. Results from a 2004 survey of industry associations in the western provinces indicated that 73 industries are anticipating severe shortages in the next five years (Melynk 2006). A labour market study for Prince George identified 21 occupations that are at risk of experiencing labour shortages in the near future (Walker 2005a). Given the way that workplaces in the knowledge economy have changed over the past 20 years in terms of skill requirements, bridging programs may do well to direct more attention toward generally applicable employability and essential skills at a professional level (Bates 2004; Success Development Group 2003; Advisory Council on Science and Technology 2000). There are enhanced language and bridging programs with general business or professional skills training but they are much less common than occupation-specific programs.<sup>45</sup>

Some of the program and service related challenges to mitigating skills shortages through skilled immigrant integration initiatives include:

- The ability of specialized occupation-oriented services to respond quickly to new demands and changes in the labour market;
- Addressing the spectrum of anticipated skills shortages, across several sectors and in smaller communities;
- Program capacity to meet labour market supply and demand;
- Designing client-centred and flexible services that help move skilled immigrants more directly into positions; and
- Meeting the high demand for people with general management and communication skills in combination with technical skills and knowledge.

The two program initiatives in Tables 1 and 2 illustrate what works toward addressing skills shortages while demonstrating how some of these challenges are being addressed.

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<sup>45</sup> Seven such programs were identified in the ELT research project conducted by the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (2004). More generic employment preparation programs on resume and other job search tools are more common.

**Table 1**  
**Biotechnology Bridging Program for Internationally-Trained Professionals**  
**Vitesse Re-Skilling™ Canada Inc. - Kanata, Ont**

**Description:** This bridging program retrains scientists and engineers to fill labour market needs in high-tech and science industries. Immigrants must have recognized degrees, proficiency in English and at least 2 years professional experience. The program began in 2002 and is based on the Vitesse re-skilling™ model for people who have difficulty finding adequate jobs in their fields. Program components include skills and credential evaluation; Canadian workplace practices, standards, ethics and technical communication training; academic studies; and work placements (if available). In its first two years, employment success rate was 70%. The program was expanded to Toronto in 2004-05.

**What Works:**

- The program is open to unemployed and underemployed immigrants.
- The model is based upon acknowledging qualifications and building on them to transfer to higher demand areas.
- An employer sponsor and academic sponsor provide mentoring.
- Companies participate in student selection and program direction, which increases hiring potential upon completion.
- Training directly meets the needs of biotechnology companies and a growing industry.
- A program certificate is issued by Vitesse and the participating academic institution.
- Immigrants are exposed to Canadian work environments & cultures.
- The program includes valuable and relevant 'soft' skills training to increase performance at a professional level.

**Sponsors/Partners:**

- Initial funding came from Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Access to Professions and Trades.
- LASI World Skills, Canadian Bioprocess Institute, Ottawa Life Sciences Council also provide support as do numerous employers.

**About Vitesse Re-Skilling™ Canada Inc.:** Vitesse is an independent non-profit organization that was established in 1996 through a partnership with the National Research Council, University of Ottawa, Carleton University and employers. The re-skilling™ training model includes soft skills (culture/language, communications, workplaces), technical skills, and personal enhancement skills (leadership, mentoring, marketing, project management). The organization develops customized programs, currently in 13 high-tech industries.

Sources:

1. Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (2004). *Enhanced Language Training Research Project. What's already out there?* Toronto.
2. FuturEd Inc (2004a). *Bridging Program Benchmarks, Recommendations and Evaluation Framework.* Prepared by Dr. Kathryn Chang Barker. May 28, 2004. Vancouver.
3. Vitesse Re-Skilling™ Canada Inc (2006). *Upcoming Programs.* Homepage.

**Table 2**  
**CARE for Nurses**  
**Centre for Internationally Educated Nurses - Toronto & Hamilton, Ont.**

**Description:** CARE is a bridge training program with a job shadowing component. It was developed for internationally educated nurses who are eligible to write the registered or practical nurse exams to become registered professionals. The program includes coaching for exam preparation; a professional partnership program (mentor); resources including guest speakers and networking opportunities; individual and group counselling support, career planning and job search preparation; and financial guidance. CARE participants must take 3 courses on nursing in Ontario/professional issues, clinical skills assessment/review, and health assessment/assessment skills for nurses. Optional courses and workshops are available on employment strategies, exam preparation, English for Nurses, occupation-specific communication skills and technical workshops. This program started in 2001. The program has improved the success rate for passing professional exams from 33% to 66-70%. It is also continuously adapted to participant needs and changes in entry to practice requirements.

**What Works:**

- Individual learning plans develop specific skills and fit the program with other life priorities.
- The nursing readiness assessment identifies clinical knowledge gaps & strengths.
- There are flexible nursing language skills learning options (classes, workshops, tutoring).
- 80-100 hours of job shadowing with a mentor includes participation in workshops professional development seminars, case conferences and other activities.
- Internationally trained nurses are exposed to a health care employer, increasing the potential for employment.
- There are options for employer sponsorship to train an individual.

**Sponsors/Partners:**

- Initial funding from Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Access to Professions and Trades.
- Trillium Foundation, CIC.
- Education partners – George Brown College, Centennial College, Mohawk College.

**About CARE:** CARE for Nurses grew out of a pilot project in 2001 conducted by 4 health care centre partners; and guided by the Maytree Foundation and 5 professional and regulatory bodies. CARE has recently become an incorporated non-profit organization with two offices.

Sources:

1. Centre for Internationally Educated Nurses (n.d). *CARE*. Homepage.
2. FuturEd Inc. (2004a). *Bridging Program Benchmarks, Recommendations and Evaluation Framework*. Prepared by Dr. Kathryn Chang Barker. May 28, 2004. Vancouver.
3. Public Policy Forum (2005b) *Engaging Local Communities in Immigration Matters*. Prepared by Sandra Lopes and Yves Poisson. Toronto.
4. Zena Simces and ISS (2004). *Promising Practices in Workplace Practice: Opportunities for Skilled Immigrants in British Columbia*.

## Addressing Regional Labour Market Needs

Integration services for skilled immigrants are highly concentrated in the major destination cities of Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal. All of the provinces that were reviewed in this study have taken initiatives to support regional labour market needs. These initiatives have emerged in response to concerns with significant underemployment among skilled immigrants in highly concentrated areas, combined with acute skills shortages and the need for more workers in many smaller communities. Ontario recently implemented a Return of Service commitment plan for international medical graduates who are assessed for professional practice by IMG-Ontario (2006). This initiative provides under-served communities with immigrant doctors. The British Columbia Regional Immigration Initiative funded several pilot projects to explore ways to support community-driven initiatives for attracting and retaining immigrants outside the Greater Vancouver region. Alberta and Quebec have immigration links on regional websites to attract and inform prospective immigrants. The provinces of Quebec and Manitoba have been working with regions and non-gateway communities for more than a decade to address local labour shortages.<sup>46</sup>

Many community and regional immigration initiatives have focussed on measures to attract newcomers and prospective immigrants. For example, Edmonton recently commissioned a study to advise on how to attract and retain immigrants (Derwing, et al 2005), Quebec City conducted an overseas recruitment trip (Public Policy Forum 2005b), and several communities are developing websites with information and promotional features for immigrants. One unique approach to facilitating secondary migration was initiated by S.U.C.C.E.S.S. in Vancouver. This immigrant service organization has liaised with business communities in the Okanagan and Similkameen valleys, Prince George and Prince Rupert to connect immigrant entrepreneurs and job seekers to opportunities in these regions.<sup>47</sup>

While some communities are also organizing themselves to develop or coordinate settlement and integration services, initiatives such as enhanced language and bridging programs are predominantly located in the gateway communities and larger urban centres (PROMPT 2005; Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks 2004). Current activities and lessons learned from the experiences in both the provinces of Quebec and Manitoba highlight the importance of establishing a supportive infrastructure for social and economic integration in concert with immigrant attraction strategies. The initiative described in Table 3 below highlights some of the specific planned measures in Quebec regions to address their labour market needs with skilled immigrants.

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<sup>46</sup> Non-gateway refers to all communities that are not the primary landing destinations (i.e. Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary, Ottawa).

<sup>47</sup> S.U.C.C.E.S.S. has conducted regional familiarization tours and hosted information sessions in Vancouver as part of a regional immigration initiative and the Gateway to Asia project (S.U.C.C.E.S.S. 2005).

**Table 3**  
**Regional Action Plans for Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean and Estrie**  
**Ministère de l'immigration et des Communautés Culturelles - Province of Quebec**

**Description:** Regional action plans for the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean and Estrie regions were developed in 2004 and 2005. The regional action plans include specific activities and identifies responsible organizations and partners to carry out measures pertaining to the province's priorities, as outlined in the *Action Plan 2004-2007*. Some of the employment integration measures identified in the regional action plans include: establishing employment support and work experience services, proposing professional work immersions, supporting immigrants interested in creating micro-enterprises, assisting internationally trained professionals through the steps to enter licenced professions, promoting the value of local and new immigrants to local businesses and employer groups, supporting local economic initiatives that recruit immigrant workers, training employers on diversity management, putting skilled workers who arrive in Montréal in contact with prospective employers, and helping women immigrants break through their isolation and develop their competencies to access the labour market.

**What Works:**

- Regional action plans are connected to provincial funding agreements.
- The plans incorporate initiatives to support a range of integration needs along with initiatives to attract immigrants.
- The plans identify lead agencies and partners to be responsible for carrying out specific actions.
- Efforts are concentrated in those regions where the most interest has been shown to welcome immigrants.

**Sponsors/Partners:**

- Ministère de l'immigration et des Communautés Culturelles.
- Numerous local partners such as chambers of commerce, CÉGEPS and post secondary institutions, community service agencies, local politicians and governments, and local development agencies.

**About Quebec's Regional Action Plans:** The objective of these plans is to promote immigration as a development strategy by addressing specific regional needs. The regional action plans aim to raise public awareness of the potential contributions that immigrants can make, as well as identify specific measures. Specific measures must align with the provincial services for immigration and employment, and be carried out in partnerships with municipalities and with community cultural and service organizations.

**Sources:**

1. Québec. MRCI (2004). *Shared Values, Common Interests. Action Plan 2004-2007. Summary Document.* May 2004.
2. \_\_\_\_\_.MICC (2005c). *Des valeurs partagées, des intérêts communs. Région du Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. Plan d'Action.*
3. \_\_\_\_\_.MICC (2005d). *Des valeurs partagées, des intérêts communs. Région de L'Estrie. Plan d'Action.*

## Addressing Employers' Needs

Integration policies and programs are primarily directed at immigrants' needs. However, services and tools are also being developed for staff recruitment and training needs. Information resources were the most common services and tools found in the literature. Other services for employers include: website databases for job postings and resume reviews with pre-screening services for job candidates, diversity management workshops, administration and on-site support for internships, training and wage subsidies, on-site employee language training services, and international academic credential assessments. Many of these services have been integrated into specialized bridge training programs.

These services are generally new or do not appear to be widely available or known to employers (PROMPT 2005; Business Council of British Columbia 2004). For example, Reitz (2005) and Lochhead (2003) found that employers have difficulty judging international qualifications with which they are unfamiliar. Credential assessment services are a very useful and available service for employers in all provinces and territories; yet these services are underutilized by employers as well as by job seekers. The Canadian Labour and Business Centre research on ELT programs (2004) concluded that workplace ELT services are of limited value for employers due to a low level of availability, assistance and relevance to workplace language needs. Services such as Manitoba's Credential Recognition Program and English at Work Program and the work of the province of Quebec to increase a company's competitive advantage through a diverse work force appear to be more broadly available to employers.

Mentorship, job shadowing, networking, and other initiatives that aim to orient skilled immigrants to the Canadian working environment have good potential to serve employers' needs. They provide opportunities for employers to choose and coach a prospective employee before making a hiring commitment. However, reports by service providers commonly state how difficult it is to get employers to participate (Zena Simces and ISS 2004; Public Policy Forum 2005b).

Immigrant service providers and advocates have said that the needs of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) are not being met or represented by immigrant labour market programs (CLBC 2005; Public Policy Forum 2005a; Public Policy Forum 2005b; EASI 2004).<sup>48</sup> This is a serious gap, given the high number of jobs available in the SME sector. Small and medium sized enterprises lack the time, expertise and financial resources to hire and train skilled immigrants (CLBC 2005; ICA 2004). Employers most often find job candidates through their networks and ads posted on their websites; as well as meeting job seekers who take the initiative to walk in their door (Success Development Group 2003; Creighton-Kelly and Dachsel 2004; JobStart and Skills for Change 2001). Unfortunately, many immigrants have difficulty developing networks and initiating contact with prospective employers even after taking several job search workshops (Kim Walker Community and Environment 2003).

Services for employers that help integrate skilled immigrants into the labour market are still in early stages of development. The call for more involvement of employers in program development and delivery is repeated throughout the policy and research literature. However, employers' needs have been researched through numerous surveys and focus group sessions. It is clear from the research that employers are willing to hire more skilled immigrants but they have been largely unaware of services to provide them with international credential assessments, pre-screened job candidates, employee training support, inter-cultural communication and human resource management support, and low risk trial work opportunities (Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters 2003; Business Council of British Columbia 2004; Global Frameworks and EnCompass Consultants 2004).

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<sup>48</sup> For example, in a presentation given at an EASI Dialogue session, Elizabeth McIsaac of the Maytree Foundation stated that most jobs are in the SME sector but they have minimal involvement with the TRIEC. The Career Bridge and Mentoring Partnership projects have been well supported by large companies. However, Ratna Omidvar, Executive Director for the Maytree Foundation emphasized that there is a need for TRIEC to target the small and medium companies (Public Policy Forum 2005b).

The following initiatives in Tables 4 and 5 show how two organizations have developed services specifically for small and medium sized enterprises.

<b>Table 4</b> <b>Talent Pool – Talent Pool Development Society of Calgary - Calgary, Alta.</b>
<p><b>Description:</b> The Talent Pool offers information, resources and advice from experienced employers on how to find skilled immigrants workers. The Society's objectives include raising awareness in the business community, encouraging hiring, conducting demonstration projects to test best practices, and evaluating employment practices. A resource book is available in print as well as on the website. The program helps new immigrants to develop skills and find employment through the New Immigrant Workforce Development project. Talent Pool also invites specialists to give presentations on human resources from a global perspective. Educational sessions are held for employers to attract, retain and fully utilize skilled immigrants. Success stories are shared.</p> <p><b>What Works:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talent Pool is based on a model of businesses working with other businesses and identifying best practices that work in the business environment.</li> <li>• The resource is known and trusted by employers.</li> <li>• Employers have a venue to communicate their expectations to immigrants and immigrant serving agencies.</li> <li>• The Talent Pool conducted market research to define businesses' needs and to understand immigrants' barriers to employment.</li> <li>• Information resources are actively marketed to employers.</li> <li>• Talent Pool encourages hiring all local talent including immigrants, youth, older workers and people with disabilities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Sponsors/Partners:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calgary Chamber of Commerce.</li> <li>• Alberta Ministry of Human Resources and Employment &amp; HRSDC.</li> <li>• Bow Valley College, Petro-Canada, Calgary Economic Development, ToombsKWA Inc. and Manpower Staffing Services.</li> </ul> <p><b>About Talent Pool Development Society of Calgary:</b> A variety of business, employment and economic development leaders are involved in the Talent Pool. The Chamber of Commerce Human Resource Committee initiated this project in 2002. The Society has since developed into a non-profit organization. It is located at the Calgary Chamber of Commerce. The Talent Pool includes young people, older workers, Aboriginal people and those with disabilities as well as new immigrants.</p> <p>Sources:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Public Policy Forum (2005b). <i>Engaging Local Communities in Immigration Matters</i>. Prepared by Sandra Lopes and Yves Poisson. Toronto.</li> <li>2. Talent Pool Development Society of Calgary (n.d.). <i>Tapping into Calgary's Diverse Workforce</i>. Talent Pool.</li> </ol>

**Table 5**  
**Employment Integration Program for Immigrants & Visible Minorities (PRIIME)**  
**Ministry of Immigration and Cultural Communities (MICC) and Ministry of Employment**  
**and Social Solidarity (MESS) - Province of Quebec**

**Description:** PRIIME is a workplace integration program for immigrants and visible minorities in Quebec. The program is open to landed immigrants, refugees, and people who plan to obtain permanent residence status. The program supports employers in hiring immigrants into permanent full time positions with partial expenses for salaries, training, educational material, and costs incurred to adapt human resources tools and management practices. Program components include: coaching and guidance for the first three months to help the employee become familiar and welcomed into the workplace, human resource and diversity management development, and other activities to help the employee adapt his/her skills to the North American and Quebec context. Some of PRIIME's resources are also available to employers who hire immigrants and visible minorities under other Employment Quebec programs (e.g. income assistance recipients). Over 600 employers took part in the program during the 2005-06 fiscal year and 561 participants obtained full-time work.

**What Works:**

- The program specifically supports small to medium sized enterprises.
- Immigrants are hired into full time positions, rather than temporary or intern positions.
- Employers are eligible for significant financial assistance of up to \$34,300 in the first 30 weeks of hiring.
- A foundation for human resource management is put into place to facilitate ongoing management.
- The employer is fully invested and responsible for ensuring successful integration of the new employee.
- PRIIME is open to immigrants who do not have any Canadian work experience in their area of expertise, regardless of their employment or financial status.

**Sponsors/Partners:**

- The program is financed from provincial revenues acquired through the Program of Immigrant Investors, managed by MICC and Investment Quebec.

**About MICC and MESS:** MICC's mandate includes the provision of direct or contracted support to facilitate the integration of immigrants/visible minorities through individualized support tools and to facilitate credential and competency recognition. MESS's mandate is to increase employment, and reduce poverty and social exclusion. MESS also works to balance labour supply and demand locally and regionally. The PRIIME program operations are managed by Employment Quebec, a government agency.

Sources:

1. Québec. Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale (2006). *Immigrants and Visible Minorities*. Homepage.
2. \_\_\_\_\_.MICC (2005a). *Fiche thématique sur le Programme d'aide à l'intégration des immigrants et des minorités visible en emploi (PRIIME). Plan d'action. Des valeurs partagées, des intérêts communs.*
3. \_\_\_\_\_.MICC (2005b). *Intégration en emploi des personnes immigrantes – PRIIME: un nouveau programme pour soutenir les PME lors de l'embauche des nouveaux arrivants et des personnes issues des minorités visibles.* Communiqué6942. May 20, 2005.
4. \_\_\_\_\_.MICC (2006b). *Rapport Annuel de gestion. 2005-2006.*

## 4.2 Responding to the Diverse Needs of Skilled Immigrants

The skilled immigrant population is an unusually heterogeneous group of people (CON\*NECT 2004; Burnaby School District 41 2004). They come from different countries and ethnic cultures, educational and career backgrounds, socio-economic conditions, communication skills, and knowledge of Canadian cultures. Diversity among immigrants is often equated with ethnic cultures and countries of origin. However, local experiences in developing labour market programs and services for skilled immigrants are demonstrating the importance of responding to these other diverse characteristics as well.

There are many ways to respond to the needs of a highly diverse group of people. Three general approaches to working with diverse needs have been observed among the policies, programs and instruments reviewed in this study:

- Respond with specific initiatives for specialized needs;
- Design flexible programs and services to accommodate diversity; and
- Develop core skills to break down common barriers.

### Addressing Specialized Needs

One approach that addresses diversity is to develop separate programs for specialized needs. Examples of this approach include occupation-specific language tools and bridging programs.<sup>49</sup> An argument in support of this approach is that upgrading requirements such as academic qualifications, language skills and licencing processes for different occupations are unique and must be addressed separately.<sup>50</sup> These initiatives fill training and information gaps for those seeking to enter professions and skilled trades whose needs were not being met through general language and employment support programs.

Specialized programs and services have also been developed to support different skill levels. The Enhanced Language Training initiative is a good example. This initiative was developed in recognition that skilled immigrants have very diverse language and communication needs that were not being met. As a result, the ELT program is supporting the development of more advanced academic and occupation related language services across the country.

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<sup>49</sup> Examples may be found at the Integration-Net (n.d.) enhanced language training webpage at: <http://integration-net.ca/inet/english/elt-clna/index.htm>; Ontario's *Bridging Program* webpage of the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration's APT website at: <http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/english/citdiv/apt/index.html>; and the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks' *Essential Skills in the Workplace* website at: [www.itsessential.ca](http://www.itsessential.ca).

<sup>50</sup> Circa Enterprises (2004), Burnaby School District 41 (2004) and several other researchers and policy analysts have drawn this conclusion.

Services and programs for immigrant women, ethno-cultural communities or other immigrant population sub-groups also address specialized needs. Ethno-cultural and women's services are generally developed to address social and settlement needs. However, there are few examples of organizations serving these segments of the immigrant population for labour market integration purposes. The Immigrating Women in Science (IWIS) Project and Society of Punjabi Engineers and Technologists of B.C. (SPEATBC) are two examples of gender and culture-specific organizations offering services for skilled immigrants in Greater Vancouver. In these cases, skilled immigrant services evolved out of the interests of member-based networking and peer support organizations (IWIS n.d.; SPEATBC n.d.). IWIS is a project of the Society for Women in Science and Technology. SPEATBC's membership shares two common cultures that are ethnic and occupation based, but not deliberately immigrant based. The strength of these organizations has been their ability to help skilled immigrants break through the social isolation of not working in their field and not being able to develop networks of their own with Canadian colleagues.

Two major challenges were identified in the literature that addresses diversity through specialized programs (George Brown College 2003; CON\*NECT 2004; Akhter and Rasheed 2006). One is the cost of developing and delivering specialized programs, including the issue of how costs and other resource constraints limit the availability of specialized programs region by region. The other challenge is accommodating diverse needs within a given program. In some communities, more broad-based programs and services have been developed for people with professional, business and skilled trade backgrounds which are applicable to a wider range of people. The following initiatives in Tables 6 and 7 illustrate how specialized service needs address some of the challenges related to cost of service and applicability to a wider range of skilled immigrants.

**Table 6**  
**Sector-Specific Terminology Information & Counselling (STIC)**  
**Access to Professions and Trades (APT) and Skills for Change – Toronto, Ont.**

**Description:** STIC is a web-based qualifications profile and career planning tool. It can be used by immigrant service providers, regulatory bodies and other organizations to help skilled immigrants identify their skills and experiences in comparison with job profiles in the engineering, accounting, health care and automotive mechanics fields. Once completed, the profiles can be used in applying for jobs, training programs and licencing requirements. The STIC resource includes classroom workshop material and lesson plans to introduce occupations to skilled immigrants within the four sectors. Curricula have been organized into Orientation and Occupational Terminology training modules. Orientation lessons cover: the labour market, legislative framework, licencing and certification, the workplace, networking, and related occupations. Lessons provide practical information on employability skills, labour market and occupational terminology, workplace expectations and culture, salary expectations and hiring procedures. Occupational Terminology lessons cover licencing, work search and workplace topics. The curricula are available in both French and English.

**What Works:**

- Information is regularly updated and easily accessed on the internet.
- The tool can be adapted to local situations and needs.
- Lessons cover a wide range of issues and information needs that are relevant to several professions/occupations within the sectors (in Ontario).
- The modular design allows flexibility for instructors and immigrants to choose topics most relevant to their needs.

**Sponsors/Partners:**

- HRSDC funded the facilitator guides for occupational terminology.

**About APT and Skills for Change:** APT is an Ontario government initiative that was established in 1995. The APT Unit designed STIC with Skills for Change. Skills for Change is a non profit community organization, established in 1983. They offer a wide range of services in the form of training and other programs to assist immigrants and refugees in becoming gainfully employed.

**Sources:**

1. Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (2006). *Sector-Specific Terminology Information and Counselling (STIC)*. Homepage.
2. Melnyk, Julia (2006). *Review of Career and Employment Programs and Services for Immigrants in Calgary*. Prepared for Alberta Human Resources and Employment.

**Table 7**  
**Transitions to Technical and Trades Careers (ESL Trades)**  
**NorQuest College – Edmonton, Alta.**

**Description:** This 40 week full-time program is designed for skilled immigrants with international education and experience in a trade or technical career. There are two streams: trades and technology. Successful applicants will be eligible for membership in the Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta (ASET) or the Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists, and Geophysicists of Alberta (APEGGA). Applicants undergo a Canadian Language Benchmark assessment for English, and prior learning assessments for the course contents. Based on these results, the applicants may be given credits for previous experience and will be placed into the appropriate level in their courses. Course content in both streams include the technical skills required to pass apprenticeship or professional entrance exams, business and interpersonal communications related to the industry, job preparation and work experience. The work experience course consists of on-the-job experiences. The technology route also includes courses on professional ethics and beginner or intermediate AutoCAD. The program has been operating since 1989. Depending on labour market demand and students, this program has resulted in 70 – 90% employment following graduation, with wage levels of students who obtain full time jobs from their work experience placements significantly higher than previous employment.

**What Works:**

- International credentials are acknowledged by two professional associations following entry into the program.
- Different levels of competencies are accommodated and communication courses target intermediate to advanced level learners.
- The program is specialized but also general enough to accommodate a range of trade and professional occupations.
- The program prepares skilled immigrants for both professional licencing and employment.
- The program has developed a strong partnership with employers.

**Sponsors/Partners:**

- Several employers have consistently participated in the work experience course.

**About NorQuest:** NorQuest College was established in 1965 to provide skills upgrading for underemployed and untrained residents. It currently serves over 200 Alberta communities. It is the largest English language and intercultural education service in Edmonton.

Sources:

1. FuturEd Inc. (2004b). *Benchmarking Research Project – Bridging Program and Service Inventories*. Prepared for the B.C. Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services. Prepared by Dr. Kathryn Chang Barker. May 2004. Vancouver.
2. NorQuest College (2006). *Transitions to Technical and Trades Careers*.

## Designing for Flexibility and Adaptability

With the multitude of barriers to entering the skilled workforce, it is difficult to balance effective services for individuals with efficient service delivery. Designing flexibility and adaptability into service programs has been viewed as a way to respond to the diverse needs of skilled immigrants.

Two large-scale initiatives are currently underway to develop and test more flexible institutional systems and programs to serve diverse needs. The new B.C. Skills Connect Program is currently establishing a pre-employment service which supports individuals based on assessments of their language, work experience and training needs. Six service delivery organizations have been contracted to develop and deliver these services. CON\*NECT (Colleges of Ontario Network for Education and Training) is also in the process of developing more flexible college systems and programs for skilled

immigrants. CON\*NECT is conducting a multi-year project called CIITE with five pilot projects looking into ways of improving admissions, information and advice, credential assessment, language assessment, and employment preparation services (Radford 2005; CON\*NECT n.d.).<sup>51</sup>

In many ways, immigrant service organizations have always taken a flexible, client-centred approach. For example, an independent evaluation of employment services among the four largest immigrant service organizations in Greater Vancouver found that all of the agencies are able to tailor their services to the cultural and linguistic needs of their clients (CS/RESORS Consulting, Ltd. 2005).<sup>52</sup> However, extending that level of service to develop flexible programming for entry into professions, trades and other skilled occupations is logistically more difficult. The following initiatives in Tables 8 and 9 demonstrate how two organizations are designing labour market integration services with flexibility in mind.

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<sup>51</sup> Detailed project descriptions may be found at:

[http://www.collegeconnect.on.ca/ciite/pages/general\\_Phase2Projects.asp](http://www.collegeconnect.on.ca/ciite/pages/general_Phase2Projects.asp)

<sup>52</sup> The four main service organizations in Greater Vancouver are MOSAIC, ISS, SUCCESS and PICS.

**Table 8**  
**Academic and Professional English – Self Paced**  
**Vancouver Community College (VCC) – Vancouver, B.C.**

**Description:** The VCC Self Paced language program is designed for skilled immigrants who have a high level of proficiency in English and are interested in working at a professional level. Applicants are assessed for reading, writing, listening, speaking, grammar and vocabulary. An individualized learning plan is then designed to focus on areas of weakness and scheduled to fit around work and home commitments. Students are able to work at their own pace and focus on academic or professional language goals. Other program features include small group communication seminars, study materials in different professional fields, individualized tutoring, and guest speakers and workshops on various topics. The program is offered on a continual intake schedule and is available full or part time. Students can switch scheduling times if needed. Initial commitments are required for two or four months and then students can proceed on a monthly basis. Information sessions are held regularly to help immigrants determine whether this program is suited to their needs.

**What Works:**

- The program fills a service niche for all skilled immigrants with high language functioning levels.
- Resource materials can be added to suit different occupational backgrounds.
- An individualized program can help accelerate the learning timeframe and focus on the most relevant skills and topics.
- Flexible schedules accommodate immigrants who are working.
- The program supports rather than suppresses personal motivation and personal goals.
- Program features offer both independent and group learning opportunities.

**Sponsors/Partners:**

- The Self Paced program is a core program at Vancouver Community College.

**About VCC:** VCC has a wide range of ESL programs for beginner to advanced levels. Courses include basic government sponsored classes for adults, outreach classes in homes and community centres, college preparatory English, online resources and ESL for international students. In addition to the Self Paced program, the Professional and Career English department also offers communication courses for health sciences, business and customer relations, and engineers and engineering technologists. English and job training courses are also available for home support services, culinary arts, hairstyling, baking and pastry arts, and accounting.

Sources:

1. Kim Walker Community and Environment (2003). *Pilot Project for Internationally Trained Engineers*. Final Report. Prepared for Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of B.C. Victoria.
2. Vancouver Community College (n.d). *Academic and Professional English – Self Paced*.

**Table 9**  
**The Mentoring Partnership — TRIEC – Toronto, Ont.**

**Description:** The Mentoring Partnership program was established in February 2004. The program provides a matching service for experienced professionals (mentors) and immigrants (mentees) who share the same professional backgrounds and interests. Corporate partners help recruit mentors and immigrant community organizations match them with internationally educated professionals. It takes at least 4 weeks to go through the application, screening, orientation and matching process. Through 24 hours of mentoring over 4 months, immigrant mentees learn about the Canadian working environment and other related topics. They also have the opportunity to build their professional network. Optional workshops are available for mentees to develop their portfolios and for mentors to enhance their coaching skills. The Mentoring Partnership reached its goal of matching 1,000 mentoring partnerships in June, 2006. Over 60% of immigrants who completed the program found employment with a 250% average increase in salary.

**What Works:**

- Skilled immigrants are pre-screened to ensure they are ready and prepared for being mentored.
- Mentors and mentees are carefully matched for compatibility.
- Both mentors and mentees are prepared for their roles and the learning objectives are negotiated in advance.
- Mentees gain valuable exposure to the realities of work in their field and Canadian work culture through working professionals.
- The program helps mentors develop coaching and leadership skills.
- The mentoring process exposes immigrants to a professional network.
- The program is proving to be cost-effective
- The Partnership has the scale needed to access a large pool of mentors and mentees.

**Sponsors/Partners:**

- The Mentorship Partnership is a consortium of several community services in the City of Toronto, and the regions of Peel, York and Halton.
- There are over 35 corporate partners including TD Bank Financial Group, City of Toronto, Deloitte, Ontario Power Generation, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.
- Funding is provided by Service Canada, TD Bank Financial Group, Ontario Trillium Foundation, The Maytree Foundation, Region of Peel and United Way of Peel Region.

**About TRIEC:** TRIEC is a multi-stakeholder council that supports initiatives to integrate immigrants into the labour market (see Section 3.2 above). As a consortium of corporations, local governments and community service agencies, TRIEC is able to bring significant human resources to the Mentoring Partnership.

Sources:

1. Public Policy Forum (2005b). *Engaging Local Communities in Immigration Matters*. Prepared by Sandra Lopes and Yves Poisson. Toronto.
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## Building Common Ground and Core Skills

There is a third approach to addressing diverse needs of skilled immigrants. Rather than focussing on differences among skilled immigrants, some services and tools are developed to explicitly address common barriers across the spectrum of cultures, educational backgrounds, socio-economic levels and demographic characteristics. Difficulties in understanding Canadian culture and poor communication skills are common barriers

experienced by skilled immigrants. The need to address these barriers has been repeatedly identified by researchers, service providers and employers (Bauder and Cameron 2002; JobStart and Skills for Change 2001; Burnaby School District 41 2004; Public Policy Forum 2005b; Walker 2005b; CLBC 2005).<sup>53</sup>

Cross cultural training and communication services have long been offered to corporate clients and international students by specialists. However, these services have only recently become more widely available to immigrants. For example, Dr. Lionel Laroche, a cross-cultural trainer and coach, has provided services for several individuals and programs including Career Bridge and Pathways programs in Ontario. Graybridge Malkam, an inter-cultural and diversity training firm in Ontario, has developed an ELT program for immigrants interested in a policing career. In British Columbia, the UBC Centre for Intercultural Communication offers services to skilled immigrants, spouses of international professionals and employees. The Centre also delivered a cultural orientation pilot project for nurses in 2002. Simon Fraser University's English Language and Culture Immersion Programs mainly attract international students but new immigrants have also enrolled.<sup>54</sup>

Although there are some long-established programs that raise awareness of the benefits of multiculturalism and diversity, more immigrant service organizations are now also offering community and employer workshops on diversity management. In Ontario for example, Skills for Change offers workshops on Managing Diversity in the Workplace.<sup>55</sup> Career Edge also offers a workshop on managing cultural diversity in the workplace as well as communication workshops as part of its Career Bridge internship program for skilled immigrants (Career Edge Organization n.d.).<sup>56</sup>

Cross cultural and communication training for skilled immigrants has become more established through bridging programs, language courses and employment preparation workshops. Research conducted by the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks on enhanced language training projects (2004) noted that several bridging programs for professional credential recognition in Manitoba have included culture and communication components.<sup>57</sup> Orientation to Canadian workplace culture has become a more common topic in employment preparation workshops for immigrants; and stand-alone workshops are also

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<sup>53</sup> Culture and communication barriers have become increasingly recognized as critical issues, particularly in conjunction with increasing research on employers' perspectives and issues.

<sup>54</sup> See Dr. Laroche's profile at [http://www.hazell.com/about\\_people.html](http://www.hazell.com/about_people.html); Graybridge Malkam at <http://www.malkam.com/>; UBC Centre at <http://cic.cstudies.ubc.ca/index.html>; and SFU program at <http://www.sfu.ca/cstudies/lang/elc/welcome.html>

<sup>55</sup> See Skills for Change website at: [http://www.skillsforchange.org/employer\\_services/index.html](http://www.skillsforchange.org/employer_services/index.html)

<sup>56</sup> See Career Bridge website at: <http://www.careerbridge.ca/>

<sup>57</sup> The report also states that because the focus of these programs was on communication and not on language development, they were not profiled in the ELT.

being offered. Two examples of the latter include the YMCA of Greater Toronto and YMCA North York workshops on Canadian Workplace Culture and Canada: Culture, Society and People (Greater Toronto YMCA 2006).

The following initiatives in Tables 10 and 11 illustrate additional approaches to building core skills in communication and cross cultural understanding for skilled immigrants.

**Table 10**  
**Communication and Culture for Member Service Representatives**  
**Cambrian Credit Union and Manitoba Immigration Integration Program –**  
**Winnipeg, Man.**

**Description:** The Communication and Culture initiative was developed in 2004 for 18 immigrant participants. Program development steps included identifying challenges with immigrant recruitment and retention; program feasibility assessment; identifying job competencies in language, technical and soft skills; developing an essential skills profile; designing the training program; and determining organizational readiness requirements. The program was developed with contributions from front line managers and trainers. The training program consists of a five week, unpaid orientation followed by a three month paid work experience. The orientation component addresses skills gaps. The work experience component provides technical training. Each trainee is assigned to work with an employee who acts as a mentor and trainer. The program also includes customized in-house training for all supervisors. Cambrian has partnered with other credit unions to increase the job pool. In 2004 and 2005, 80% of the trainees were hired into full time jobs.

**What Works:**

- Qualified skilled immigrants were first assessed for education, work experience or skills levels.
- The program was initiated internally with full management support and front line involvement.
- Collaboration with other credit unions has reduced hiring time to less than one month with the creation of a candidate pool.
- Both immigrant job candidates and employees gain a better understanding of integration challenges.
- Employees have developed a new respect for immigrants' skills.
- The program provides more effective entry level recruitment and meets employment diversity goals.
- Managers develop new skills in managing a diverse workforce.
- There is good stakeholder involvement and support.

**Sponsors/Partners:**

- Partners included HR Group of Assiniboine, Steinbach, Portage and Astra Credit Unions.
- The project was funded by Manitoba Labour and Immigration.

**About Cambrian Credit Union:** Established in 1959, Cambrian is the largest credit union with 11 branches in the province. Cambrian Credit Union increasingly needed skilled workers and knew that immigrants were moving to Manitoba. It also recognized the need for cultural diversity within its workforce for business reasons. Cambrian Credit Union received a Gold Level Human Resources Leadership Award in 2006 from the Human Resources Management Association of Manitoba for this program.

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**Table 11**  
**Workshop Series for Professional Immigrants**  
**Employment Projects of Winnipeg (EPW) Inc – Winnipeg, Man.**

**Description:** The Workshop Series includes 18 class workshops that cover career planning, self esteem, self marketing skills, internet and hardware, and best practices for immigrant job seekers. Immigrant clients choose workshops that best suit their needs in consultation with a counsellor. This service is available to all landed immigrants who are residents of Winnipeg, have documented post secondary training and have worked in their professions prior to landing in Canada.

**What Works:**

- Job preparation workshops are chosen to fill specific needs identified with a counsellor.
- Several workshops include topics that require clients to become more self aware of culturally based issues such as values, work styles, personal power & interpersonal communication.
- The Best Practices workshop provides a foundation for understanding Canadian culture in job search & employment contexts.

**Sponsors/Partners:**

- Funders include the federal government and two provincial ministries - Labour and Immigration and Advanced Education and Training.

**About EPW Inc:** EPW is a registered charitable organization that provides employment services for immigrants of all skill levels and language competencies beyond basic English (Benchmark level 5 and above). Counselling and marketing staff are specialized to work with skilled immigrants at professional, trade and entry level. Other immigrant services include computer classes, bridges to employment, individual and group counselling, workshops for women, and a resource centre. Services for employers include: online job advertising, employment and work experience placement services with follow-up support, and a diversity program for small and medium sized businesses. The diversity program includes conferences and events that attract over 100 businesses to learn about topics such as incorporating diversity management into smart business initiatives, successes, and common traps of diversity initiatives.

Source:

1. Employment Projects of Winnipeg Inc. (2004). *Your Future Starts Here*. Homepage.

### 4.3 Summary Observations

The samples of skilled immigrant initiatives highlighted in Section 4 offer good insights into what works to address labour market needs and diverse immigrant needs. The common themes that emerged from these samples fall into the categories of program design and program content. Some of the distinguishing design and content features are briefly highlighted.

#### Program Design

Programs, services and tools that work well are well designed. Careful consideration has been given to both employers' and immigrants' needs; providing integrated services that fulfill diverse needs; enabling flexibility and responsiveness to changing needs; ensuring program participants are well prepared to enter a program; accessing a sufficient number of employer and skilled immigrant participants to sustain the program; and designing a program that builds on strengths and assets. The following themes summarize common and noteworthy program design features found among the 11 service samples.

**Employer-Centred Service** – When a service responds to employers’ needs, they become invested in and contribute to the success of the program. The employer-centred services in these initiatives:

- Offered services that are valued by employers;
- Sought out employers;
- Built strong working relationships and trust;
- Received program direction advice and participation from employers; and
- Required an investment of resources from employers (e.g. money, coaching).

**Immigrant-Centred Service** – An immigrant-centred service can accommodate different needs in a way that will achieve the overall service goal. Initiatives provided immigrant-centred services by:

- Offering courses at different skill levels;
- Working with immigrant clients to develop individualized plans;
- Focussing on the most relevant skills and useful topics to meet individual needs;
- Making the services available to both employed and unemployed immigrants;
- Focusing eligibility criteria on program objectives (e.g. skilled immigrants with no Canadian experience); and
- Accommodating flexible schedules to support work and home obligations.

**Multi-Objective, Integrated Programming** – Bridging programs are integrated by definition. However, some are highly focussed and specialized while others have been designed to serve a more diverse group of immigrants. The initiatives highlighted in this section achieved a variety of objectives and served a broader range of skilled immigrants by:

- Identifying and coordinating a range of immigrant service activities from landing to full integration into the labour market;
- Preparing skilled immigrants to meet both professional licencing and employment requirements;
- Developing training material on a wide range of issues and topics relevant to several occupations within a sector; and
- Developing several career streams in one program offers courses along a continuum of skill levels.

**Flexible & Responsive Programming** – Initiatives that work well are able to respond quickly to changes in labour market needs and be adapted for use in different places or situations. The initiatives that demonstrated these abilities:

- Designed program components as modules that could be adapted by trainers;
- Developed training with industry involvement to meet their needs and the needs of skills within growth sectors;
- Designed a menu of training options; and
- Established basic principles and a framework for activities.

**Selecting & Preparing for Success Potential** – Immigrants who successfully integrate into the skilled labour market generally enter a program with a good foundation of skills and attributes. Similarly, successful mentorships are based on good interpersonal skills and clear expectations. Those initiatives which involved mentoring and work experience components established a good foundation for success potential by:

- Establishing minimum qualifications or skills;
- Pre-screening skilled immigrant job candidates for job-readiness;
- Adequately preparing skilled immigrants, mentors and employers prior to entering a work experience or mentorship; and
- Carefully matching people to jobs and mentors to mentees.

**Resource Pooling** – A successful program will have a solid foundation of resources. Some of the program examples have managed to establish partnerships to increase the pool of employers, skilled immigrants and other resources. This has been accomplished by:

- Establishing strong partnerships with employers and other stakeholders;
- Collaborating among employers within the same sector;
- Developing multi-stakeholder partners in a specific region with identified roles;
- Creating a pool of trained job candidates; and
- Using established business networks.

**Asset-Based Approach** – The asset-based approach focussed on immigrants’ strengths and abilities, rather than barriers or skill deficits. The asset-based approach taken by several of the service samples:

- Helped to have international credentials recognized by professional licencing bodies for program participants;
- Issued academic credits for prior learning and experience;
- Used the participants’ international qualifications as a foundation for career transitions;
- Assessed applicants’ qualifications to identify strengths as well as gaps;
- Supported career goal choices and personal motivation; and

- Facilitated full time employment opportunities and then supported job retention.

## **Program Content**

The content of labour market integration initiatives varies according to the purpose, target audience, jurisdiction and other factors. However, some topics and integration methods have been consistently recommended by different informants throughout the literature. The initiatives profiled in this study reflect those recommended core topics and proven methods.

**Culture and Communication** – The importance of cross cultural understanding and communication as core topics cannot be underestimated. All of the service samples included culture and communication training in some form. The best examples reinforced topical issues through interaction with Canadians and experiential learning opportunities. Culture and communication was conveyed in the following ways:

- “Soft skills” training to increase performance at a professional level;
- Canadian culture training, particularly in relation to work environments;
- Exposure to the realities of work in the field;
- Workshops on values, work styles, personal power and interpersonal communication;
- Mutual learning and interactions between immigrant and Canadian professionals; and
- Diversity and human resource management training for employers.

**Mentoring & Networking** – Mentoring has been identified in the literature as a best practice. Networking has been identified as a critical path for employment as well as for social integration. The sample initiatives that used mentoring and networking methods were able to:

- Involve skilled immigrants in job shadowing as well as participation with Canadian colleagues in workshops, professional development seminars and case conferences;
- Mentor skilled immigrants for employment and academic upgrading purposes;
- Expose internationally trained immigrants to potential employers; and
- Introduce skilled immigrants into a professional network.

## ***5. Knowledge Gaps and Limitations of the Literature***

Skilled immigrant labour market integration is a very broad topic covering several issues across a range of disciplines and mandates.<sup>58</sup> Close to 60 primary information sources were searched in this study from federal government departments, provincial ministries, municipal and regional governments, journals, foundations, and research and policy institutes (see Appendix A). Service descriptions and reports from specific educational and community organizations were then followed up for review.

As a general observation, the multi-dimensional nature of immigrant integration issues does not appear to be well documented. Virtually no inter-disciplinary work was found in the literature. Few reports were found to comprehensively portray the range of conditions and variables that influence skilled immigrant integration. Moreover, until very recently, it appears that the body of literature has been primarily influenced by economic and sociological perspectives with a heavy focus on immigrants and very little attention to other key players.<sup>59</sup>

Information gaps, inconsistencies and biases are inevitable given the breadth of this topic. A brief discussion of specific limitations of the literature is presented in relation to defining issues and determining program effectiveness.

### **5.1 Limitations in Defining Issues**

Working effectively with skilled immigrants demands a solid understanding of the challenges they experience. Good understanding of the Canadian social, economic and cultural contexts within which immigrants are attempting to fit is also needed. The background context on immigrant integration was well documented in the literature, particularly with respect to socio-economic conditions and projected skills shortages. However, in defining policy and program development issues, policy makers and service providers often made assumptions regarding barriers to the labour market and drew conclusions on the basis of relatively limited data.<sup>60</sup>

Theories and assumptions were implicit throughout much of the research and policy literature. Human capital theory, in particular, is widely applied with little deliberation or challenge. However, this conceptual model has been criticized for its inadequate

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<sup>58</sup> The multi-dimensional nature of this topic was demonstrated in the mid 1990s with the commissioning of literature reviews for the Metropolis Project and CIC from demographic, urban studies, criminology, economics, sociology, and social psychology perspectives (Weinfeld 1998). One literature review was conducted for Quebec from an integrative, ethnocultural perspective. Weinfeld also identified six additional disciplines that could offer further insights and traditions of research on the topic area.

<sup>59</sup> In 1998, sociology was identified as the most prominent discipline represented in the immigrant integration literature (Weinfeld 1998). Li (1996) also noted a preoccupation of economic perspectives in the literature.

<sup>60</sup> Ramlo and Berlin (2006) found, for example, that the literature on labour shortages has drawn conclusions from demographic studies without the benefit of economic analyses.

explanation of labour market outcomes within the cross-cultural context of newcomers to Canada (Walters, et al 2006; Reitz 2005).

Human capital theory asserts that earnings are a reflection of skills gained through formal education and work experience.<sup>61</sup> Faced with statistical data showing that skilled and experienced immigrants earn significantly less than their Canadian counterparts, many researchers and advocates have defined issues and solutions in human capital terms. That is, if earnings are not commensurate with education and experience, then interventions are required to enhance the values of immigrants' education and work experience.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, much of the research and policy literature has called for academic upgrading, employment interventions and credential recognition to address immigrant labour concerns.<sup>63</sup> While these types of initiatives offer valuable solutions, they also overshadow other actions that contribute toward immigrant labour market integration.

Implicit in the application of models are assumptions regarding benchmarks and standards from which to observe or measure change. The application of human capital theory, as a general formula, is not as much of a concern as the application of value-based assumptions regarding quality of education or measures of success. An earlier literature review found that empirical studies were embedded with normative standards in which immigrants' successes were measured by Canadian economic values rather than immigrants' values (Li 1996). This biased perspective toward immigrant success does not appear to have changed in the last decade and has since been criticized by other researchers (Azmir 2005; PROMPT 2005).

Most of the research and policy literature reviewed in this study was based on demographic data correlating low earnings and employment rates with non-European, non-English speaking immigrants. A significant proportion of the literature took this information and determined that discrimination is a major barrier for skilled immigrants. However, little evidence has supported this conclusion.<sup>64</sup> Without discounting discrimination as a real issue, a review of a broader range of literature revealed many other factors that influence the employment and earning outcomes of skilled immigrants. The relatively narrow perspective portrayed by demographic studies and human capital theory has minimized attention to other issues. Most notably, issues related to social isolation, discrimination, emotional well-being, cultural differences, and the range of challenges for employers do not appear to be well researched and are poorly represented in policies and programs.<sup>65</sup>

Overall, researchers and analysts rely heavily on quantitative data to define policy issues. A recent evaluation of the Metropolis Project verified that the current state of research on immigration and integration relies on quantitative analysis too much and called for more

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<sup>61</sup> Reitz stated that Canada's immigration strategy is based on human capital theory (2005). It is assumed here that he was referring to the skilled worker immigrant class.

<sup>62</sup> The solutions that are generally recommended include upgrading immigrant credentials through bridging programs or changing credential recognition systems to increase acceptance of international qualifications.

<sup>63</sup> It is not surprising then, that most of the federal government initiatives have concentrated in these areas (CLBC 2005).

<sup>64</sup> Walters et al (2006) noted that discrimination as an explanation for the immigrant wage gap is based on unverified assumptions rather than empirical data.

<sup>65</sup> For example, cultural awareness training has been identified as an area that is inadequately funded (CLBC 2005).

qualitative analyses (SSHRC 2006).<sup>66</sup> One specific limitation with statistical data is its superficial treatment of issues. While statistical information identifies symptoms, relatively little knowledge has been generated from quantitative studies to understand causal factors that underlie barriers to labour market integration. For example, labour market conditions of individuals are highly influenced by societal and economic changes over time. Changes in wage and employment levels from the 1970's to today have been significantly influenced by globalization and technology in terms of the progression toward a knowledge-based economy, availability and locations of jobs, types of jobs, qualification requirements, and the nature of work. However, statistical studies of immigrant integration have not taken these circumstances into consideration when comparing Canadian and immigrant cohorts or changes among new immigrants over different time periods.

Considerable efforts have been made in the last few years to gather insights and experiences directly from immigrants, employers and immigrant service providers. Consultation processes have been extensively used to define issues that determine research and policy priorities.<sup>67</sup> Additionally, policy makers, academics and community service organizations regularly come together at events such as the Metropolis annual conference to share information on immigration and integration topics. These qualitative resources have been very influential in policy and program development. While consultative processes have been valuable for identifying areas of agreement, little evidence was found in the literature that critically analyzed or compared various stakeholder perspectives and experiences. This information gap is significant to the extent that qualitative data has generally not been tested for validity, consistency or bias.

To a large degree, integration issues and barriers for immigrants have been identified from the personal experiences of immigrants and community service providers. While the strength of this information is in the prevalence of these experiences across the country, the qualitative research based on these experiences has provided limited perspectives on issues such as credential recognition and Canadian work experience. For example, there is little evidence in the literature that Canadian professional licencing and certification systems and requirements have been well understood by researchers, immigrants and immigrant service providers despite the numerous opinions and criticisms.<sup>68</sup>

Most of the qualitative information has been focused on skilled immigrants' challenges and barriers to obtaining work commensurate with their pre-landing experiences. Relatively little is known about newcomers who have been successful in overcoming

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<sup>66</sup> The Metropolis Project is a forum for research and policy development on topics such as immigration, cultural diversity and immigrant integration. There are five Metropolis research centres across Canada.

<sup>67</sup> For example, see the Canadian Labour and Business Council roundtable meetings (2005), the Public Policy Forum (2005), and the Metropolis Conversation Series. Also, the Metropolis Project mandate promotes collaborative efforts with academics, community practitioners and other interested groups.

<sup>68</sup> Misinterpretations and misleading information on licence application requirements and procedures were evident within the research and policy literature. To some degree, this is understandable given the complexity of the subject and level of detailed information that would be required to fully explain the system. An example of a well documented report was produced by the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers (2003).

challenges and re-establishing their careers in Canada.<sup>69</sup> This information gap highlights disproportionate knowledge with respect to understanding the nature and scale of labour market integration for skilled immigrants.

Much more information could be gained through qualitative data on cultural and emotional barriers. However, Walters, et al (2006) has attributed this shortcoming to an overall dependency on empirical studies. Some research has been conducted to identify the effects of culture on immigrant labour market outcomes; and there has recently been a noticeable increase in recognizing the need to expand immigrants' understanding of the Canadian work culture.<sup>70</sup> However, the nature of culture and its influence with perceptions and beliefs, communication, adaptation and change, cross-cultural pollination, Canadian corporate culture, regional perspectives, and other related topics pertinent to immigrant labour market integration are under represented in the literature.

## 5.2 Knowledge Gaps on Program Effectiveness

Overall, the literature on defining issues and labour market integration barriers for skilled immigrants has been abundant. However, the question of what works in terms of program effectiveness has not been addressed to the same extent in the literature.

There are a variety of ways to observe what is working to help integrate skilled immigrants into the labour market. One way is to look at the development of programs and services, and the level of effort in responding to identified needs. Often referred to as promising practices, there is generally good coverage in the literature on integration initiatives for skilled immigrants.

Promising practices have been identified through consultation processes or have been self identified by service delivery agencies. Promising practices that appear to be well supported by stakeholders and reported in the literature include: integrated programs, mentoring, paid work experience at market levels, inter-cultural understanding, communication skills, personal coaching, and opportunities to develop networks. For the most part, many of the promising practices have been mentioned repeatedly throughout the literature but not rationalized to any significant degree. However, early indicators of specific initiatives are showing some success in terms of skill enhancement and job placement, though the numbers of immigrants participating in these programs are generally small. Some, such as mentoring programs for example, have been described with detailed information on why they work.

Other ways to observe what works include measures of service quality and program results. Unfortunately, information on the quality and outcomes of integration initiatives on these levels was generally unavailable for review. Few evaluations of integration services were found in the literature and those reviews that were found were more

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<sup>69</sup> Two reports were found that explored the experiences of 'successful' internationally trained professionals (Creighton-Kelly and Dachsels 2004; Kim Walker Community and Environment 2003). However, the concept of success is relative, with varying criteria and definitions.

<sup>70</sup> For example, Bauder and Cameron (2002) argue that cultural perspectives and related expectations on the part of immigrants are overlooked as issues related to their barriers to employment.

descriptive than evaluative. The ELT research project conducted by the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (2004) found that of the 103 programs included in the study, less than half had been evaluated by an external party; and most of those were audits conducted by the funders. Approximately two-thirds of the programs were evaluated internally. However, only 10 programs included post-program follow up activities to determine client progress and only 3 programs included employment as an indicator of program success.

Several reasons may explain the lack of information on service quality and program results. Most notably, the integration process takes several years and many of the initiatives for skilled immigrants are either short-term projects or new programs. Initiatives such as ELT and bridging programs are showing very positive early results in terms of improved skills and acceptance into the professions and workforce. However, it is too early to know the extent to which skilled immigrants are securing suitable work over the long term or seeing steady improvements in earnings and living conditions as a result of these programs.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> For example, the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada statistics has not accumulated demographic statistics over a long enough period to document trends.



## ***6. Implications for Future Policies and Programs***

Labour market integration initiatives for skilled immigrants have been developing steadily over the past six years. Senior governments are beginning to approach skilled immigrant integration more broadly; resulting in an array of services across the country specifically for skilled immigrants.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, numerous training and employment related services have been integrated to address the range of barriers experienced by immigrants (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks 2004; Zena Simces and ISS 2004). There has also been an increased recognition and effort to expand immigrant labour market programs beyond the major destination cities into regional centres and smaller communities.

Despite these significant efforts, numerous program and service gaps still exist in terms of addressing occupation-specific skills shortages, regional skills shortages, immigrants' barriers, and employers' needs. Identified gaps include services and tools for cross-cultural communication, enunciation, occupation-specific language skills, mentoring, work experience, competency-based assessment, workplace language training, and engaging SME and public sector employers (CLBC 2004; Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks 2004; Public Policy Forum 2005b; Burnaby School District 41 2004).

### **6.1 Addressing the Skills Shortage Problem**

The literature review highlighted some potentially useful directions for future policies and programs. This study confirms the importance of developing integrated and flexible programming to respond to the multiple barriers facing skilled immigrants. Yet, priorities for matching skilled immigrants to labour market needs do not appear to be as strategic as they could be.

The skills shortage is predicted to become both widespread and chronic in the next five to eight years. Given the estimated timing and scale of this problem, programs that emphasize credential recognition or training without creating better opportunities for employment could fall short of meeting labour market needs. In contrast, initiatives that bring immigrant integration programs into the workplace such as Quebec's PRIIME, Manitoba's English for Work, and the Cambrian Credit Union's in-house Communication and Culture programs have the potential to facilitate skilled immigrants' entry into the labour market more efficiently and effectively.

Training services and tools that enhance communication skills and enable skilled immigrants to negotiate the Canadian work environment develop essential skills that can benefit more skilled immigrants in more communities. From a strategic perspective,

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<sup>72</sup> Comprehensive approaches are reflected by CIC's Enhance Language Training and Bridging Program; British Columbia's Skills Connect Program and Quebec's PRIIME program; Alberta, Manitoba and Quebec's immigration strategies; and Ontario's recent federal-provincial immigration agreement.

programs that can address common barriers across different occupations are well suited to serving labour market needs, particularly in regions outside the metropolitan areas where highly specialized bridging programs are not as feasible to develop.

Finally, addressing skills shortages in regional centres and rural communities could be enhanced by creating stronger rural-urban linkages to connect the skilled immigrant job seekers living in urban centres with employers outside those centres. City to city and rural-urban linkages may also help to expand organizational capacities through knowledge transfer or regional collaboration (Public Policy Forum 2005a). Various experiences in the communities of Prince George and the Okanagan valley, NorQuest College's Transitions to Technical and Trade Careers program and the Quebec Regional Action Plans may offer some future insights for regional program development.

## **6.2 Addressing Barriers and Challenges to Employment**

The dissonance between high expectations for success and disappointing realities suggest a need to review issue definitions and operating assumptions within the context of who should be targeted for future programs and services. The review of current programs and services showed that a significant number of skilled immigrants and employers are not well served by immigrant integration programs.

ELT and bridging programs often select immigrants for their potential to succeed. This program strategy is proving to be advantageous. For example, immigrants who have been recognized for their credentials and intermediate to advanced level of language competency have a good foundation for entering a bridge program. The asset-based attitude that accompanies this programmatic approach is also an important contribution toward immigrants' emotional health. It boosts the confidence of both immigrants and employers. However, selecting for success potential does not address the needs of skilled newcomers who need assistance the most such as those who have difficulty negotiating through a credentialing system or who have poor communication skills.

Cultural literacy, communication and mentoring services are particularly important in assisting a large cohort of skilled immigrants with very different cultural and socio-political backgrounds. They include, but are not limited to, newcomers from the major source countries and immigrants with limited work experience in the Canadian socio-economic context. Very often, newcomers will seek out people who share their language and culture. While ethno-cultural communities provide important social connections, newcomers may find themselves becoming more isolated from mainstream Canadian society. Specific services which help skilled immigrants expand their social bearings offer some very positive economic benefits.

Issues of social isolation among skilled immigrants have not been addressed to a significant degree by immigrant service programs.<sup>73</sup> Specialized programs and services can have a potentially isolating effect by segregating skilled immigrants from mainstream society, as well as from each other in occupational and language level sub-groups. Approaches such as that taken by Red River College in Manitoba, where immigrants have been integrated into existing technical programs and provided with immigrant-specific services, are worth considering as a future model (CLBC 2004).

Skilled immigrants are typically mid career workers who have been wedged into low skill jobs. Academic ESL and retraining programs are less relevant to them than services that are more applied and directly linked to work. Moreover, working immigrants often cannot afford to quit their jobs in order to participate in full time bridging programs. At the same time, a significant number of skilled immigrants need to improve their language skills and cultural competencies, in addition to upgrading technical skills. On-the-job training, which has already been discussed, would also be beneficial in breaking down isolating conditions and program design barriers for underemployed immigrant workers.

Future policies and programs will likely require more active involvement of employers, many of whom do not view themselves as trainers or human resource developers.<sup>74</sup> Progress has been made to engage employers in multi-stakeholder initiatives. TRIEC is a model of what can be accomplished through coordinated efforts and corporate involvement. Existing networks such as the Talent Pool in Calgary and Quebec's PRIIME program for SMEs are also good models. Nevertheless, the challenge of serving the skills shortage needs of small businesses is not being adequately addressed, overall.

Successful labour market programs serve the needs of employers as well as immigrant job seekers. However, these efforts require more than their participation in program development and hiring, as is often recommended in the literature. To serve employers also requires a thorough understanding of their needs as well as the organizational capacity to meet those needs. Both skilled immigrants and employers expect high quality services; a level of demand for integration initiatives that goes well beyond simply supplying labour at the employer's door.

There are many excellent examples of high quality labour market services for skilled immigrant integration. Existing initiatives are demonstrating their value in working toward successful labour market integration. More importantly, they are also demonstrating a critical need to expand service priorities in future.

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<sup>73</sup> Isolation of women and families, particularly in smaller communities, was mentioned in the literature.

<sup>74</sup> This is particularly true for small to medium sized enterprise employers.



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# *Appendix A*

## *Primary Literature Sources*

### **Government of Canada**

- Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC);
- Human Resources and Social Development Canada;
- Health Canada;
- Industry Canada;
- Canadian Heritage;
- Foreign Affairs & International Trade Canada;
- Western Economic Diversification Canada;
- Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions;
- Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency;
- Federal Economic Development Initiative in Northern Ontario (FedNor); and
- Policy Research Initiative.

### **Provincial Government Ministries**

- B.C. Ministry of Economic Development;
- B.C. Ministry of Attorney General;
- Alberta Human Resources and Employment;
- Manitoba Labour and Immigration;
- Manitoba Advanced Education and Training;
- Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration;
- Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities; and
- Québec Immigration et Communautés Culturelles.

## **Regional/Municipal Governments**

- Toronto;
- Vancouver;
- Montreal;
- Calgary;
- Winnipeg;
- Ottawa; and
- Kitchener-Waterloo.

## **Research and Policy Resources**

- Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada (APEX);
- Atlantic Institute of Market Studies;
- C.D. Howe Institute;
- Caledon Institute of Social Policy;
- Canada West Foundation;
- Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives;
- Canadian Council on Social Development;
- Canadian Ethnic Studies;
- Canadian International Labour Network;
- Canadian Journal of Communication;
- Canadian Journal of Economics;
- Canadian Policy Research Network;
- Canadian Public Administration Journal;
- Canadian Public Policy;
- Canadian Urban Institute;
- Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks;
- Centre of Excellence for Metropolis Atlantic;
- Culturescope.ca;

- Inclusive Cities Canada;
- Institute for Research on Public Policy;
- Institute of Intergovernmental Relations;
- Institute on Governance;
- Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement (CERIS);
- Looking Ahead – An EASI Initiative;
- Maytree Foundation;
- Montreal Centre for Inter-university Research on Immigration, Integration and Urban Dynamics (IM);
- Prairie Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Integration (PCERII);
- Public Policy Forum;
- Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis (RIIM);
- The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation;
- The Conference Board of Canada; and
- The Metropolis Project.



## *Appendix B*

### *Key Informant Sources*

The following informants provided recommendations and resource material for this study.

<b>Key Informant Sources</b>		
Amanda Frayling	Camosun College	Victoria
Barry Edmonston	University of Victoria	Victoria
Benton Mischuk	Ministry of Economic Development International Qualifications Unit	Victoria
Jean McRae	Intercultural Association of Greater Victoria	Victoria
Kathy Knight	Ministry of Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism Multiculturalism and Immigration Branch	Victoria
Kelly Pollack	MOSAIC	Vancouver
Lisa Robertson	Camosun College	Victoria
Michelle Goldberg	Ryerson University	Toronto
Percy Cummins	Alberta Human Resources and Employment Intergovernmental Relations and Immigration	Edmonton
William Stewart	Citizenship and Immigration Canada, CIC Atlantic Region	Halifax



## *Appendix C*

### *Database Framework*

<b>Database Framework</b>		
<b>Field Name</b>	<b>Data</b>	<b>Descriptions (examples)</b>
Name	<i>Title of the Policy, Program, Initiative</i>	
Category	Policy Program Project Tool	
Linkages	Links to policies, major initiatives	
HRSDC Interest Area	Employment Related  Skills Development  Essential Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reduce barriers to employment, employ youth &amp; others, support sectors, industries &amp; employers</li> <li>• occupation related skills. bridging, retraining</li> <li>• language literacy, numeracy, communication, computer literacy, learning, interacting, thinking</li> </ul>
Location	<i>Geographic Service Area</i>	
Organization	<i>Lead Agency</i>	
Type of Organization	Federal Provincial Regional Municipal NGO Service Agency Education Industry/Profession	
Partners	<i>Specific partners</i>	
Start Date	<i>Start up Date</i>	
End Date	<i>End date, if applicable</i>	
Reference	<i>Citation</i> <i>Website Address</i>	
Description	<i>Annotated Description</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• objectives, activities, policy/program linkages, program eligibility, access, client costs</li> </ul>
Allocated Funds		
# Clients	Specified quota or goal	
Target Client Groups	Age, ethnic, occupation	
Eligibility Criteria	for participation in programs/ projects	

<b>Database Framework (continued)</b>		
<b>Field Name</b>	<b>Data</b>	<b>Descriptions (examples)</b>
Immigrants Challenges *	Socio-Cultural Understanding Useful Information Racism/Discrimination Relevant Work Experience Academic/ Technical Qualifications Language/ Communication Skills Financial Barriers Job Search Preparation	
Immigrant Challenges Notes		
Relevance to Canadian Context *	Specific Labour/Skills Shortages Distribution of Labour Age/Experience of Labour Socio-Economic Well-being	
Gender Analysis *	Culturally Defined Roles Family/Spouse Support Personal Life Expectations Economic/Financial Differences Access and Control Benefits and Losses	
Gender Analysis Notes		
Deliverables	Specific outputs	
Evaluation	Yes No Don't Know	
Knowledge Gaps	Organizational Capacity Meeting Labour Market Needs Interim Success Employment Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge, personnel, tools, \$</li> <li>• immigrants, employers</li> <li>• skills, credentials, readiness</li> <li>• short/long term employment</li> </ul>
Knowledge Gap Notes **		
<p>* Are these factors addressed or considered?</p> <p>** Does it do what it intends to do? Does it operate with other initiatives to complement and enhance efforts? Does it address contemporary needs and issues? What are the measures for success and does it meet these measures? Does the organization have adequate capacity?</p>		