



**Immigrant Employment Council**  
of British Columbia

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## Immigrants: an untapped opportunity for BC employers

The Immigrant Employment Council of BC wants to connect more immigrants to employment that reflects their knowledge and experience.

We are working closely with employers and other key stakeholders — government, labour, regulatory bodies, educators, community organizations and immigrants — to improve hiring practices, encourage new policies, and change perceptions about immigrants.

Immigrants bring a world of experience to our businesses and our community. Our goal is to help BC employers access the full potential of these workers, so that our economy and communities can benefit from the skills, training and knowledge they offer.

### LATEST NEWS

**Making full use of our skilled immigrants must be a national priority - Vancouver Sun Editorial**  
Vancouver Sun | Wed Dec 2 2009 | Page: A12 | Section: Editorial  
[Read More](#)

**Report - Supporting Immigrant Workforce Integration in BC**  
Employer Resources Working Group: Next Steps Phase II: Report  
[Read More](#)

**General news about immigrant employment in BC**  
Oct. 14, 2009 - Opportunities for Immigrants. The ITA





70% OF  
BC IMMIGRANTS IN  
2007 HAD "OFFICIAL  
LANGUAGE ABILITY" IN  
ENGLISH OR FRENCH

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## Context

### The Big Picture Problem

Canada opens its doors and encourages immigrants to come here. But when they arrive, many of these skilled and experienced people are often denied the opportunity to use the very qualifications that brought them here in the first place.

The frustration and despair can be overwhelming: the taxi driver with a PhD, the engineer working as a security guard, the physician surviving in a janitorial job. Thousands of these stories emphasize the lost opportunities for our communities, and our businesses.

In 2007, nearly 15,000 skilled immigrants arrived in BC, with the promise of opportunity.

Instead many of them found:

- The qualifications that earned them a ticket to Canada are not recognized and re-qualifying is an onerous, expensive and sometimes an impossible process
- Difficulties in obtaining interviews
- Low-paying work that does not use their skills and experience

Many new immigrants want to take the courses they need to upgrade their skills in Canada. But frequently they are relegated to jobs where they work long days for little pay. It leaves them little time or money to take training that could assist them in their job search.

At the same time, many BC employers have faced a skills shortage in recent years. The economic downturn has changed this situation temporarily, but forecasts still predict there will be more skills shortages in the future as Baby Boomers retire in droves. When this happens, our economy will need the talents of skilled immigrants.

"Welcome to Wuhan. You are  
one of us now."

— sign in Wuhan Airport in China, a city  
that welcomes many immigrants



MORE THAN **85%**  
OF BC'S NEW  
IMMIGRANTS HAVE  
UNIVERSITY DEGREES

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**\*If you are an immigrant to Canada and are looking for assistance and resources, please visit [Welcome BC](#)**

The Immigrant Employment Council of BC (IEC-BC) is taking action to change hiring practices, policies and perceptions about immigrants. Our goal is to connect more immigrants to employment that reflects their knowledge and experience.

The IEC-BC is working to find local, collaborative solutions that:

1. Raise the interest and capacity of employers to hire immigrants
2. Raise public awareness about the advantages of having immigrants in the workforce
3. Enhance coordination of programs and policies for immigrant employment

We are working to change things from inside the business community — things that help immigrants get started like paid internships, mentorship programs, and cross-cultural training so managers and human resources professionals better understand immigrants.

IEC-BC's Board is composed of many influential Vancouver business leaders, along with leaders from labour, education and organizations that serve immigrants. BC Hydro CEO Bob Elton is the Chair. The larger Leadership Council also has 150 members from the business community, labour, regulatory bodies, educators and immigrant serving organizations.

IEC-BC is overseen by Vancouver Foundation, Canada's largest community foundation. Initial financial support has been provided by the Province of British Columbia, as well as Maytree Foundation/ALLIES and Vancouver Foundation.

"It would be great if, when we heard the word 'immigrant' we thought 'opportunity'."

— Bob Elton, President and CEO of BC Hydro and Chair of IEC-BC



**82%** OF SKILLED  
BC IMMIGRANTS IN  
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## Our History

Many organizations have worked long and hard to help immigrants secure meaningful employment in BC. The Immigrant Employment Council of BC (IEC-BC) has taken over the work of the Employment Access Strategy for Immigrants (EASI), and is also building on the recommendations of a City of Vancouver initiative – the Mayor's Task Force on Immigration.

### Progress

**1999** | The first written report in BC detailing the issues immigrants face while trying to integrate into the local labour market. From this report the Looking Ahead Initiative was formed. Members worked to develop solutions to the issues.

**2003** | The Employment Access Strategy for Immigrants (EASI) worked from 2003 to 2008 to further the work started by the Looking Ahead Initiative. EASI made progress on the issues through a series of learning dialogues, research reports and strategic plans.

**2005** | The City of Vancouver created the Mayor's Task Force on Immigration to examine immigration issues, including labour market integration, at a local level.

**2008** | Immigrant Employment Council of BC, supported by funding from the Province of BC, launched at the Metro Vancouver Leaders Summit on Immigrant Employment. Vancouver Foundation was named to oversee the administration and operation of the Council, which took over the intellectual property and assets of EASI and will continue to build on EASI's accomplishments.

**2008** | Metro Vancouver Leaders Summit on Immigrant Employment in October, hosted by Vancouver Foundation and the City of Vancouver. About 150 leaders from business, labour, education, immigrant service providers and government attended and joined the Leadership Council for IEC-BC. They determined the Council's priorities for action.

At the IEC-BC we believe that tapping into the potential of our skilled immigrants is good for business, and good for British Columbia.

– Kelly Pollack, Executive Director of  
IEC-BC