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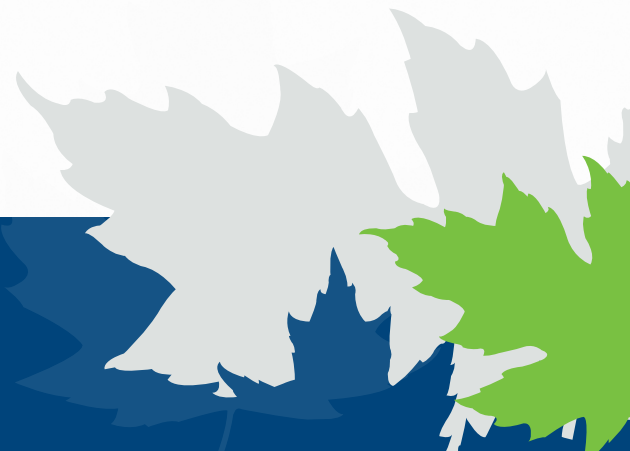
FORUM

DES POLITIQUES PUBLIQUES
DU CANADA

Ahead of the Talent Curve

Ensuring B.C.'s Competitive Edge

WHITE PAPER
SEPTEMBER 2015



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PUBLIC POLICY

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The Public Policy Forum is an independent, not-for-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of government in Canada through enhanced dialogue among the public, private and voluntary sectors. The Forum's members, drawn from business, federal, provincial and territorial governments, the voluntary sector and organized labour, share a belief that an efficient and effective public service is important in ensuring Canada's competitiveness abroad and quality of life at home.

Established in 1987, the Forum has earned a reputation as a trusted, nonpartisan facilitator, capable of bringing together a wide range of stakeholders in productive dialogue. Its research program provides a neutral base to inform collective decision making. By promoting information sharing and greater links between governments and other sectors, the Forum helps ensure public policy in our country is dynamic, coordinated and responsive to future challenges and opportunities.

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FOREWORD

By Anthony Ariganello
President and Chief Executive Officer
HRMA

As a leading professional association in British Columbia, HRMA is very pleased to collaborate with the Public Policy Forum on this white paper “Ahead of the Talent Curve”. Through our project, we brought together leaders and human resources professionals across sectors to discuss human capital priorities for a more prosperous British Columbia.

Over the next decade, there will be an estimated 1.1 million job openings in the province. However, only 650,000 young people will emerge from the school system to fill those jobs. In our roundtable discussions across the province, participants highlighted the need to consider regional contexts, create agile workplaces, leverage diverse talent, and develop a versatile workforce to meet future human capital demands. As new economic opportunities come to bear, greater cross-sector collaboration in these key areas will help B.C. stay ahead of the talent curve.

Human resources professionals are uniquely situated to assist business and government in addressing labour market challenges. With a number of key trends redefining workforce needs, organizations must ensure that HR professionals are qualified to act in this important capacity. HRMA believes that self-regulation can help increase accountability and promote excellence in the HR profession. In fact, many of the potential strategies explored in our roundtable discussions depend on HR expertise and innovation.

The management of talent is important to us and to our 5,500 members. As HR professionals, we recognize the significant challenges we face and the tremendous opportunities we have to contribute to building a more competitive workforce in B.C. If we are to prosper as a province and as a country, we must endeavor to find solutions together to address human capital issues.

I would like to thank David Mitchell and Winnie Wong from the Public Policy Forum as well as Christian Codrington from HRMA for their leadership throughout this project. We sincerely hope our white paper is the starting point for further collaboration across sectors.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From increasing economic volatility and competition, to disruptive shifts in technology and demographics, new dynamics are redefining workforce development and talent management. In light of global trends, strategic workforce planning in British Columbia has become imperative as the province seeks to benefit from increasing economic diversification, emerging development prospects, and growing trade with new markets. While B.C. has an inherent advantage due to its natural beauty, resource abundance, and geographic location, long-term prosperity depends on human capital as people drive growth and innovation.

To help advance a more coordinated approach to workforce development in B.C., Canada's Public Policy Forum partnered with the Human Resources Management Association to launch *Ahead of the Talent Curve: Ensuring B.C.'s Competitive Edge* in spring 2015. Through a series of roundtable discussions with leaders and human resource practitioners across sectors, this project explored labour market contexts across the province to identify priorities for adapting to an evolving human capital landscape.

Discussions focused on overcoming regional disadvantages, building agile workplaces, maximizing diverse talent, and developing a versatile workforce. While employer capacity and labour market forecasting constraints remain, promising developments are emerging in areas where a sense of urgency and growing competition has inspired action. As new economic opportunities emerge, greater intergovernmental and cross-sector collaboration will help B.C. stay ahead of the talent curve. Some of the potential strategies identified by participants include:

- **Rebranding cities as attractive career destinations by showcasing unique advantages and challenging common misconceptions**
- **Leveraging new technology to expand talent pools and increase employment opportunities beyond geographic boundaries**
- **Providing flexible work arrangements and two-way mentoring opportunities to build a productive intergenerational workforce**
- **Creating a multi-stakeholder platform to encourage ongoing dialogue on the impact of employment and labour laws**
- **Expanding mentoring and internship opportunities for immigrant and Aboriginal talent to better connect them to the job market**
- **Establishing employer coalitions across sectors to champion workforce diversity and ensure broad commitment to action**
- **Increasing the reach and value of co-operative education programs to better prepare graduates for the workplace**
- **Investing in greater employer engagement to expand training opportunities and promote in-demand fields**
- **Addressing capacity constraints by setting up employer consortia focused on developing and sharing talent**
- **Rethinking employer incentives to improve strategies for increasing investments in employee training and professional development**
- **Supporting strategic workforce planning by investing in innovative research methods to enhance labour market forecasting**
- **Engaging municipal leaders across the province to advance a balanced, coordinated approach to human capital development**

INTRODUCTION

Commonly defined as the value that people bring to an organization, human capital is a key priority across sectors. A high-performing workforce not only drives innovation and productivity but also ensures resilience in the face of greater uncertainty. Today, a number of trends are transforming the human capital landscape. Intensifying globalization and demographic change are redefining labour market needs. Technological advancements are also reshaping the workplace. As dynamic economies depend on human capital, effective workforce development has become more important than ever.

In British Columbia, emerging opportunities, including prospects for the development of a liquefied natural gas (LNG) industry and expanding international markets, provide further impetus for building a competitive workforce. In addition to resource companies, the growing number of small enterprises in the service-based industries is also fueling the demand for skilled labour. To that end, the provincial government has launched various strategies, including a comprehensive review of the trades training system and an action plan to better align education with labour market demands.

Despite the range of measures taken, B.C. continues to struggle with ongoing challenges in recruitment and retention, as well as talent development and utilization. As the province strives to overcome current and emerging human capital issues, collaboration will be especially important given the range of stakeholders and solutions involved. From labour market information and planning, to education and training opportunities, governments, employers, educational institutions, and community organizations all have a role to play in building a competitive workforce.

Partnering with the Human Resources Management Association, Canada's Public Policy Forum launched *Ahead of the Talent Curve: Ensuring B.C.'s Competitive Edge* to help identify priorities for adapting to an evolving human capital landscape in British Columbia. Based on cross-sector roundtable discussions across the province, this white paper presents key challenges and recommendations for maintaining the province's competitive advantage.

Our Approach

In May 2015, the Public Policy Forum convened roundtable discussions in Prince George, Vancouver, and Victoria to explore different labour market contexts across the province. Hosted by the University of Northern British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, and the University of Victoria, these discussions brought together leaders and human resource practitioners across sectors to reflect on the following key questions:

- What are the emerging human capital challenges that will have the greatest impact on B.C.'s economic future?
- How are governments, businesses, and other stakeholders addressing these issues?
- Where are the opportunities to build on current efforts across sectors?

Convened on a not-for-attribution basis, the three roundtable discussions provided a platform for candid cross-sector dialogue on emerging challenges, current strategies across sectors, and promising opportunities for improving outcomes. Please refer to the appendices for the roundtable agenda and participant lists.

THE CHANGING HUMAN CAPITAL LANDSCAPE

New dynamics are forcing organizations to rethink talent management. For instance, leaders and human resource professionals need to respond to increasing competition for talent, intergenerational workplaces, skills gaps and mismatches, as well as rapidly changing economic contexts. To thrive in this challenging human capital landscape, organizations are prioritizing employee engagement, leadership development, and continuous innovation.

In the context of global trends, strategic workforce planning in B.C. has become imperative as leaders across sectors seek to benefit from increasing economic diversification, emerging development prospects, and growing trade with new markets. While the economic outlook appears promising, the province needs to address labour shortages, skills gaps, and the underutilization of talent to fully prepare for and take advantage of new growth opportunities.

Global Talent Management Trends

With demographic change and intensifying competition for talent, labour shortages are becoming commonplace across sectors. According to an annual global survey conducted by Manpower Group, over a third of employers face shortages, making it the highest number in seven years.¹ In this challenging environment, most organizations recognize the impact of effective talent management.² In particular, employers are concerned with creating an attractive workplace for a younger generation of workers and accommodating diverse expectations as intergenerational workplaces become the norm.

To respond to changing demands, organizations are focusing on improving workplace culture and engagement. Employees need to feel valued and to see value in their work through recognition and opportunities to make an impact. Based on a global workforce study conducted by Towers Watson, some of the specific factors that contribute to an attractive workplace include competitive pay and job security, as well as career advancement and effective management.³

Much of the research on human capital trends highlights leadership training and succession planning as another top priority for organizations. Despite the integral role of leaders in managing change, attracting talent, and inspiring engagement, recent research by Deloitte reveals that only six percent of organizations are confident in their ability to address leadership issues.⁴

While effective leadership is critical to organizational performance, investing in professional development more broadly can help employers attract and engage top talent, especially as successive generations tend to seek diverse experiences and new avenues for professional growth.⁵ However, many organizations are not prepared to meet growing demands for professional development, and few are applying new technologies to enhance workplace training.⁶

Global competition is also complicating human resource management. Today, organizations are focused on new markets, international talent, and digital technologies that support a borderless workforce.⁷ Amidst economic, demographic, and technological changes, HR teams can help organizations thrive by informing workforce planning, marketing career opportunities, and designing productive workplaces.⁸

In this highly competitive environment, organizations need to do more with less, challenging HR professionals to develop innovative approaches to maximize limited resources, such as diversifying talent pools and leveraging new technology.⁹ While many organizations recognize the importance of investing in talent management, gaps in HR capacity remain. Based on research by The Conference Board and McKinsey & Company, barriers to advancing a more strategic approach to human capital management include the lack of data-based analysis, the narrow focus on administrative functions, and the challenge of securing leadership buy-in for HR innovation.¹⁰

¹ Manpower Group, The Talent Shortage Continues: How the ever changing role of HR can bridge the gap, 2014: http://www.manpowergroup.us/campaigns/talent-shortage-2014/assets/pdf/2014_Talent_Shortage_WP_US.pdf

² Deloitte, Global Human Capital Trends 2015: <http://dupress.com/periodical/trends/human-capital-trends-2015/?id=us:2el:3dc:dup1179:eng:cons:hct15>

³ Towers Watson, The 2014 Global Workforce Study: <http://www.towerswatson.com/en-CA/Insights/IC-Types/Survey-Research-Results/2014/08/the-2014-global-workforce-study>

⁴ Deloitte, Global Human Capital Trends 2015.

⁵ Cushman and Wakefield Global Business Consulting, Facing the Millennial Wave, 2014: http://www.cushmanwakefield.com/~/_media/reports/corporate/Global%20Reports/Facing20the20Millennial-20WaveCW2014.pdf

⁶ Deloitte, Global Human Capital Trends 2015.

⁷ Accenture, Trends Reshaping the Future of HR, 2015: <http://www.accenture.com/sitecollectiondocuments/pdf/accenture-future-of-hr-reconfiguring-global-talent-landscape.pdf>

⁸ Manpower Group, The Talent Shortage Continues.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ McKinsey and Company and The Conference Board, The State of Human Capital 2012: False Summit: http://www.mckinsey.com/client_service/organization/expertise/human_capital

Local Labour Market Dynamics

British Columbia has transformed from a largely resource-based to a diversified knowledge-based economy dominated by small businesses. In addition to the expanding high-tech sector, another key driver of growth is the prospects for LNG development and increasing trade within the Asia-Pacific region. In a time of economic promise, the province is focused on attracting and maximizing talent, as well as building the right skills to support a prosperous future. However, a number of human capital issues remain, including labour shortages, skills gaps, and the underutilization of immigrant talent.

Although concerns over labour shortages in B.C. may be premature, the province needs to respond to emerging challenges as the demand for workers will grow faster than the supply. With an aging workforce and low birth rates, the province will have to rely on migration to compensate for a shrinking workforce. If projections for LNG development become a reality, the demand for skilled mobile labour will increase significantly. By 2022, a third of the projected job openings will need to be filled by migrants.¹¹ As many countries and jurisdictions across Canada face similar demographic pressures, competition for skilled workers will only intensify. In fact, this competition is already playing out at the regional and sectoral levels.

To respond effectively to labour shortages, migration flows must be more responsive to the diversity of needs across the province. In a context of declining productivity, the underutilization of immigrant talent is particularly concerning. While some progress has been made to address barriers to foreign credential recognition, skilled immigrants continue to experience poorer labour market outcomes compared to the non-immigrant population.¹²

Skills gaps create further challenges for the province. Specific issues include gaps in essential skills, limited participation in apprenticeships, and low rates of graduation among Aboriginal youth.¹³ Failing to close the gaps in educational performance and economic participation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations will limit not only the talent pool, but also the ability

of Aboriginal communities to benefit from economic opportunities. With Aboriginal youth as the fastest growing demographic, addressing these disparities will improve B.C.'s long-term economic trajectory. Skills mismatches also undermine workforce productivity. Education and skills are not being maximized due to either low demand in particular fields or the inability of some employers to fully utilize available talent.¹⁴

Both the provincial and federal governments have introduced policy initiatives to address current and emerging human capital challenges. Recently, the B.C. government launched a comprehensive review of the Industry Training Authority to improve the trades training system, created an LNG Working Group to support training and employment priorities, and developed the *Skills for Jobs Blueprint* to better align education with labour market demands. Key policy developments at the national level include the establishment of a pan-Canadian framework outlining guiding principles for foreign qualification recognition and an electronic system for selecting and processing economic immigrants, known as Express Entry.

To remain competitive and benefit from new opportunities for growth, employers are also taking a strategic approach to talent management, focusing on building workforce capacity and improving workplace culture. Specific measures include investing in in-house training and development, providing mentoring and experiential learning opportunities, as well as offering competitive employment packages and flexible workplace arrangements.¹⁵

It is important to note that small businesses may experience all the same human capital challenges as larger companies, but often lack the capacity and resources required to respond effectively. As the need for labour mobility grows and workplace dynamics become more complex, immigration policy and employment laws will need to adapt to changing contexts while considering the implications for employers of all sizes. With small enterprises making up the bulk of employers in the province, ensuring their ability to address human resource challenges will be imperative to economic growth.

¹¹ WorkBC, BC 2022 Labour Market Outlook, 2014: <https://www.workbc.ca/WorkBC/media/WorkBC/Documents/Docs/BC-LM-Outlook-2012-2022.pdf>

¹² Kerry Jochen, Critical Success Factors and Talent Risks for BC, Human Capital Law and Policy, Vol. 4, Issue 5, Nov 2014, Business Council of British Columbia: <http://www.bcbc.com/content/1441/HCLPv4n5.pdf>

¹³ Kerry Jochen, Critical Success Factors and Talent Risks for BC.

¹⁴ The Conference Board of Canada, Skill for Success: Developing Skills for a Prosperous BC, 2015:

<http://www.nyerson.ca/content/dam/politics/docs/Skills%20Shortage-ConferenceBoard-FullReport-150205.pdf>

¹⁵ Ibid.

Recent Provincial and Federal Policy Initiatives

Express Entry System (Jan 2015)

In 2015, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) introduced an electronic system called Express Entry to manage applications for permanent residence under certain economic immigration programs. This new system is intended to better meet the needs of the labour market through an expedited, pre-screening process. Under Express Entry, candidates are ranked against others based on an online profile that includes their skills, education, work experience, and language ability. Through regular rounds of invitations, CIC invites top candidates from the pool to apply for permanent residence. Under this new system, most complete applications will be processed in six months or less.

Skills for Jobs Blueprint: Re-engineering Education and Training (Apr 2014)

B.C.'s *Skills for Jobs Blueprint* is a detailed, cross-government action plan to align funding and programs for education and training with in-demand occupations, especially those of the liquefied natural gas sector. Using a data-driven system, the Blueprint focuses on providing British Columbians with a seamless plan that takes them from school through to the workforce. Key objectives of the Blueprint include providing a head-start to hands-on learning in schools, shifting education and training priorities to better match jobs in demand, and building stronger partnerships with industry and labour to deliver training and apprenticeships.

The Premier's Liquefied Natural Gas Working Group (Mar 2014)

In September 2013, the Premier convened a meeting between government and leaders of organized labour to discuss B.C.'s vision for the liquefied natural gas (LNG) industry. That meeting led to the establishment of the Premier's LNG Working Group, which included representatives from organized labour, industry, First Nations, and government. From November 2013 to March 2014, the Working Group's 18 representatives met nine times and produced a report with recommendations for planning, skills training, marketing, and developing best practices within the LNG sector to attract a mobile workforce. The Premier accepted all recommendations as a road map for building the labour force needed to leverage LNG opportunities.

Formal Review of the Industry Training Authority (Feb 2014)

To ensure that B.C.'s trades training system continues to meet changing economic demands, the provincial government launched a review of the Industry Training Authority (ITA), the agency responsible for apprenticeships and industry training programs. The review involved consultations with trades training stakeholders, including employers, apprentices, industry, labour, trainers, ITA, and government. The process was also informed by written submissions and cross-jurisdictional best practices. Completed in February 2014, the report of the Independent Review Lead sets out 29 recommendations to enhance and strengthen B.C.'s trades training system, all of which have been accepted by government and will be implemented as part of B.C.'s *Skills for Jobs Blueprint: Re-engineering Education and Training*.

Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications (Nov 2009)

The Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications articulates a joint vision for governments to improve the integration of immigrants and other internationally-trained workers into the Canadian labour market. While the Framework is not a legal document, it is a public commitment to advancing a principles-based approach for improving qualification assessment and recognition practices, especially for regulated occupations. Based on the guiding principles of fairness, transparency, timeliness, and consistency, the Framework emphasizes clear information as early as possible in the immigration process, fair treatment during the assessment process, and prompt communication of recognition decisions. Supports are also available for both individuals and employers helping to facilitate immigrant participation in the workforce.

KEY PRIORITIES FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA

Exploring provincial human capital issues in greater detail, the roundtable discussions provided an opportunity to gain a better understanding of common concerns and regional challenges. Participants focused on bridging the urban and generational divide, as well as developing a versatile workforce and maximizing diverse talent. While capacity and institutional constraints remain, promising developments are emerging in areas where a sense of urgency and growing competition has inspired action. Some examples of good practices and innovative strategies are profiled throughout this section. To build on the progress achieved, participants emphasized that all sectors have a role to play, from promoting local opportunities and modernizing employment legislation, to advancing workplace inclusion and supporting experiential education.

Overcoming Regional Disadvantages

The urban divide complicates workforce planning in B.C. Although all regions are competing for talent, the urbanization trend is making recruitment and retention especially challenging for remote areas and smaller cities. Even in Victoria, which is the second largest city in the province, roundtable participants expressed concern over youth outmigration. As the urban centre of the province, Vancouver has a significant advantage over other cities; nevertheless, complacency is not an option given intensifying competition and declining affordability.

Attracting talent to remote regions is never easy due to limited economic prospects. Competing for business and people becomes a challenge without the diversified economy and consumer base found in urban areas. In small, remote cities, businesses must contend with thin applicant pools, while employees lack career advancement opportunities. According to roundtable participants, these realities leave remote regions with little choice but to rely on temporary workers, which is problematic for long-term community development. Misconceptions about the standard of living outside of urban centres can also have an impact on recruitment.

Relative to other cities across the province, Vancouver may be better positioned to attract talent. However, urban centres are also competing with each other both nationally and globally. For example, the lack of head

Vancouver Economic Commission Campaign

As part of Vancouver's economic action strategy, the Vancouver Economic Commission (VEC) has launched a strategic communications campaign to expand the city's global brand on livability by promoting its vibrant business climate. In addition to creating a social media campaign and redeveloping its newsletter and website, VEC is targeting business communication vehicles and international partners that can help profile Vancouver as a destination for business and talent. With this campaign, VEC intends to better inform business leaders about the advantages of Vancouver's business climate, increase awareness of key efforts to boost the economy, showcase local business stories and partners, and expand the city's brand as a business destination. Vancouver's economic action strategy is based on research, consultation, and direct input from business leaders and city residents.

offices compared to Calgary and Toronto places Vancouver at a disadvantage when it comes to attracting and retaining those interested in career advancement. Known internationally as more of a tourist destination than a business hub, Vancouver's economic potential may also be overlooked by young, ambitious professionals. Participants also raised concerns over the lack of affordable housing in Vancouver, especially as incomes have not kept up with the cost of living. While the city has benefitted from its positive global reputation, not addressing this affordability issue may eventually result in Vancouver becoming a victim of its own success.

Potential Strategies

Rebrand cities as attractive career destinations by showcasing unique advantages and challenging common misconceptions.

Perceptions matter in talent attraction. Just as countries market themselves to boost investment and tourism, cities can also benefit from a more strategic approach to strengthening their public image. Rebranding is particularly important for remote areas often overshadowed by urban centres. While the urbanization trend continues, not everyone is looking for the same type of lifestyle. Small cities across the province need to find ways to effectively promote their benefits and dispel common myths. Even attractive urban centres need to invest in branding. As demonstrated by recent initiatives launched by the Vancouver Economic Commission, efforts are underway to shift Vancouver's global image from simply a tourist to a career destination.

Leverage new technology to expand talent pools and increase employment opportunities beyond geographic boundaries.

B.C. is a tale of two cities, with Vancouver attracting more talent than other parts of the province due to its diversified economy and larger consumer base. However, the high cost of living in Vancouver may deter professionals from moving to the city. To broaden the talent pool beyond the urban core, service sectors can explore remote work arrangements through new collaborative technologies. Employers struggling with recruitment and retention in more rural or isolated regions can also tap into outside talent by considering telecommuting options.

Building Agile Workplaces

Similar to other jurisdictions, B.C. is facing demographic changes that require greater flexibility in talent management. With emerging labour shortages and growing competition, organizations also need to become more responsive to evolving employment trends. As retention can be just as difficult as recruitment, participants discussed the need to create an organizational culture that aligns with evolving workplace dynamics and expectations.

Increasingly, people want to engage with employers on their own terms. Based on our discussions, younger generations prioritize opportunities for professional growth and career advancement, yet employers struggle to

TELUS Work Styles Program

TELUS' national Work Styles program allows staff with eligible roles to adopt a mobile, at home, or resident work style. TELUS believes that giving employees the flexibility to work where and when they choose will increase their overall productivity. Flexible work arrangements also enhance work-life balance and contribute to environmental sustainability. Similarly, their At Home Agent program enables call centre agents to work from home, using the same tools and equipment as employees in the office. Through these initiatives, TELUS aims to have 30 percent of their staff working in the office and 70 percent working remotely across Canada. To support flexible work arrangements and create attractive workplaces, TELUS is also focused on leveraging technology such as videoconferencing; creating sustainable, collaborative work spaces; and providing amenities that support employee health and well-being.

adapt to these changing workplace demands. Participants also highlighted the value of retaining older workers, especially as people are living and working longer. While organizations tend to focus on attracting and retaining young talent, they can take greater advantage of the expertise of experienced workers to improve overall productivity.

Legal barriers to workplace agility also came up in the roundtable discussions. Innovation in talent management can be challenging in B.C.'s heavily unionized environment. In some cases, collective agreements have made it difficult for employers to hire co-op students due to rules around seniority. Employment laws can also restrict flexible workplace arrangements. For example, some participants expressed frustrations with rigid contracting requirements that limit project-based work common in some sectors. Organizations exploring casual employment options for older workers face similar constraints.

Potential Strategies

Provide flexible work arrangements and two-way mentoring opportunities to build a productive intergenerational workforce.

To benefit from an intergenerational workforce, employers need to create flexible workplaces that value diverse perspectives. As new technologies continue to transform the workplace, accommodating different work styles and arrangements can help organizations attract and retain talent. Mentoring relationships can also contribute to employee engagement and support knowledge exchange between generations. For instance, older workers can pass on their expertise and groom the next generation of leaders while younger workers can bring value to the workplace by challenging conventional approaches and leveraging their knowledge of social media to engage clients and stakeholders.

Create a multi-stakeholder platform to encourage ongoing dialogue on the impact of employment and labour laws.

Organizations need to be agile to stay competitive in a dynamic global economy. However, legislation must also adapt to changing contexts to effectively serve the needs of employees and organizations. As workplace dynamics continue to evolve, greater dialogue between employers, unions, policy makers, and other key stakeholders can help improve mutual understanding and lead to balanced approaches that support greater productivity while protecting the rights of workers. With the speed of economic change, a formalized platform for ongoing engagement and collaboration may help ensure that legal frameworks remain relevant.

Maximizing Diverse Talent

Low unemployment and high underemployment in B.C. reflects a troubling trend of talent underutilization. Participants were particularly concerned about immigrant integration, Aboriginal engagement, and leadership diversity. In a changing demographic landscape, employers across sectors need to build a more productive workforce by embracing and developing diverse talent, as well as creating the right conditions to help them thrive. Based on the roundtable discussions, talent maximization is not simply about recruiting underrepresented groups, but providing equal opportunities for meaningful engagement, professional development, and career advancement.

Ontario Securities Commission Amendments to Promote Gender Diversity in Corporate Leadership

Supporting more executive women in the workforce is part of Ontario's economic plan. The province has taken action to increase the number of women in high-ranking positions by requiring publicly traded companies listed on the TSX to disclose the following: the number of women on the board and in executive officer positions, policies regarding gender diversity on the board, consideration of the representation of women in the director selection process, and director term limits and other mechanisms of board renewal. Enforced by the Ontario Securities Commission, the new amendments help support a proactive approach through a "comply or explain" model rather than prescribed diversity quotas. The amendments are based on input from a public roundtable and Ontario Securities Commission led consultations with corporate stakeholders and subject matter experts.

The province not only relies on *immigration* to replace an aging workforce, but it also faces growing competition for talent from other countries, including developing economies. While the province claims to welcome immigrants, the reality on the ground reflects a culture of protectionism that favours local over foreign talent. In particular, participants shared frustrations about onerous immigration requirements and credential recognition barriers. These issues discourage foreign talent from coming to Canada and small employers from sponsoring workers from abroad. While successful integration initiatives exist, more can be done across sectors to help prepare and connect immigrants to the job market, especially given recent cuts to settlement services.

Improving immigrant outcomes is critical to competitiveness, but the province also needs to invest in maximizing local talent, such as increasing Aboriginal economic participation. Although progress has been made on Aboriginal graduation rates in B.C., community outreach among many educational institutions and training

investments among employers remains inadequate. Participants also noted the lack of gender diversity in private sector leadership as another example of unrealized potential.

Potential Strategies

Expand mentoring and internship opportunities for immigrant and Aboriginal talent to better connect them to the job market.

Connecting newcomers to mentoring and employment opportunities is critical to integration, especially considering gaps in workplace readiness and Canadian work experience. Similarly, greater access to training opportunities can help improve Aboriginal labour market outcomes. While successful initiatives exist, including the Federal Internship for Newcomers program, expanding workplace training can help open more doors for immigrant and Aboriginal talent. In addition to building skills and networks, such hands-on experiences provide exposure to actual workplace dynamics and different career paths.

Establish employer coalitions across sectors to champion workforce diversity and ensure broad commitment to action.

From advancing workplace inclusion to increasing leadership diversity, challenging the status quo requires organizational champions who are committed to shifting mindsets and achieving results. To drive greater impact, establishing a coalition of employers can help mobilize action and share innovations across sectors. Some jurisdictions, such as Ontario, are also encouraging greater transparency in diversity policies and outcomes to help build momentum for change and increase accountability.

Developing a Versatile Workforce

A long-term view of workforce development was a common theme in all of the discussions. Although some participants raised concerns about the impact of skills gaps and mismatches, many focused on the need to develop core competencies and cultivate a mindset of continuous learning. With shifting economic dynamics and the evolving nature of work, the jobs of tomorrow may look nothing like what exists today. As economic and technological change can render specific expertise irrelevant, developing such foundational skills as creativity, critical thinking, and problem solving may be a better way to ensure employability. Economic growth is also being driven by small businesses, demonstrating the importance

Federal Internship for Newcomers Program

The Federal Internship for Newcomers (FIN) Program provides recent immigrants with temporary Canadian work experience and training opportunities with the federal government and private sector organizations. Requirement for Canadian work experience continues to be one of the primary barriers to immigrant integration. Through the FIN Program, interns gain local work experience, learn about Canadian workplace culture, expand their professional network, and have the opportunity to participate in orientation and training sessions. While the number and types of positions available in a given year vary, internships are offered in a range of fields, including policy, administration, project management, computer science, communications, science, and finance. Interns are hired for 90 working days and a mentor is provided for the duration of the internship. The Program is currently delivered in partnership with immigrant serving organizations that screen for employment readiness.

of entrepreneurial skills. In this context of increasing uncertainty, building an adaptable workforce can help contribute to long-term economic prosperity.

Experiential learning plays a key role in the development of foundational skills that may not be easily taught in a classroom setting. Co-operative education not only provides hands-on training and exposure to different career paths, but also prepares students for success in the workplace through real-life experiences. Although the province is a leader in co-operative education, further opportunities exist to increase the impact of experiential learning initiatives. For instance, program uptake in high demand fields, such as skilled trades, remains limited and finding work placements, especially for international students, continues to be a challenge.

In response to changing human capital demands, post-secondary institutions have an opportunity to rethink education to better serve the needs of a 21st century workforce. Some participants support a shift from the static four-year program to a more flexible model of education that integrates practicum experience and

continuous learning opportunities. Educational institutions can also explore new avenues to build interdisciplinary knowledge and work with other sectors to develop programs that align with changing market needs.

Potential Strategies

Increase the reach and value of co-operative education programs to better prepare graduates for the workplace.

While many post-secondary institutions offer co-operative education programs, participation is not compulsory and access can be limited to specific disciplines. In some cases, eligibility requirements and program policies can also create barriers for some students. Although institutional capacity and employer engagement are important considerations, **making work placements** mandatory for graduation or creating opportunities across all disciplines throughout the calendar year may help expand the impact of co-op education. Extending the duration of co-op placements can also provide employers with a greater return on investment and offer students a more enriching experience.

Invest in greater employer engagement to expand training opportunities and promote in-demand fields.

With limited industry engagement and restrictive collective agreements, educational institutions need to better promote the advantages of co-operative education, find ways to simplify program processes, and advance positive outcomes for all the parties involved. As small and medium-sized enterprises make up the bulk of employers in the province, investing in employer outreach, with a focus on small organizations across sectors, may help expand co-op placement opportunities and better align program objectives. Educational institutions can also work with employers to better showcase in-demand occupations and expose students to diverse career options.

Empowering Small Employers

Employer investment in training remains inadequate despite high expectations for talent. Characterized by intensifying competition, complex legislation, and changing workplace expectations, the current business environment presents a number of challenges for workforce development. Some participants believe growing pressures to remain competitive have led to more aggressive, short-term solutions, such as relying on temporary foreign workers and poaching across sectors and regions. These trends make it less practical for employers to invest in training or long-term workforce strategies.

As small employers make up the majority of businesses in B.C., their capacity constraints have a significant impact on the province's overall economic performance. In both the

Island Health Aboriginal Employment Program

Enhancing Aboriginal employment in the healthcare sector is one of a number of strategies for meeting Vancouver Island Health Authority's future workforce needs. To advance Aboriginal recruitment and retention, Island Health developed a five-year plan focused on building relationships with Aboriginal communities and organizations, providing education and information on careers in healthcare, promoting employment opportunities to qualified candidates, improving Aboriginal employee retention, and increasing cultural awareness among employees and physicians. As part of this strategy, Island Health launched their Aboriginal Employment Program to help build relationships with local First Nations communities and Aboriginal organizations and a workforce that better represents the population it serves. Some of the key features of the program include health career workshops, post-secondary education scholarships, career counseling provided by an Aboriginal Career Coach, and regular visits to First Nations communities by Aboriginal Employment Advisors.

private and non-profit sectors, small employers face similar issues in talent management due to limited personnel, expertise, and resources. From investing in Aboriginal outreach to training co-op students, tapping into a broader pool of talent can take time, effort, and money, all of which are in short supply among small employers.

Given the role of experiential learning in workforce development, limited employer engagement in co-operative education is especially concerning. Although co-op opportunities can help fill labour shortages and expand talent pools, employer participation continues to be limited across sectors. Most small employers lack the human resource capacity to effectively recruit and train co-op students. Some question the value of investing in co-op training considering the short duration of most placements.

Potential Strategies

Address capacity constraints by setting up employer consortia focused on developing and sharing talent.

Small employers can benefit from better access to talent management services and resources.

Reducing risks and simplifying processes may encourage and enable small employers to invest in workforce development. A promising approach to addressing capacity constraints is the multi-employer training model or consortium, which has been used in some regions, including Prince George. Collaborative training arrangements can enable employers to pool resources to develop and share talent. Although such collaborative solutions can be cost-effective, risks such as talent poaching need to be managed to achieve long-term success. Learning from existing models across jurisdictions can lead to more innovative strategies that build on key success factors.

Rethink employer incentives to improve strategies for increasing investments in employee training and professional development.

As organizations face growing competition for talent and greater complexity in the workplace, employers need strong incentives to invest in skills development. While perceptions and preferences can affect engagement, most employers tend to be motivated by immediate returns on investment. Existing mechanisms include tax credits and training subsidies for organizations that invest in training or participate in co-op education. Although financial supports are common approaches, exploring areas of success can also challenge assumptions and inspire innovation. For instance, the value of personal connections should not be overlooked as small communities seem to enjoy a higher level of employer engagement in co-op programs than urban centres. As existing opportunities for talent development can be complex and burdensome for small employers, providing accessible information and making processes easier may also increase uptake.

Improving Workforce Planning

Throughout the roundtable discussions, participants reinforced the need for a more strategic, coordinated approach to human capital planning in B.C. As dynamics continue to shift, focusing on immediate needs and specific industries may be a short-sighted approach to workforce development. With an unpredictable economy and a shrinking workforce, the province needs to develop a more flexible, long-term vision informed by quality data and responsive to regional priorities.

Labour market information enables governments to develop systematic approaches to human capital development. Ongoing improvements to labour market forecasting are necessary to ensure that policies effectively respond to future trends. However, changing contexts and the time-consuming nature of data collection continue to present challenges for human capital planning.

Lack of strategic alignment across jurisdictions is another significant barrier to effective workforce planning. Policy development tends to take place at the provincial and federal level with limited input from local governments. This disconnected approach prevents governments from establishing a common purpose that reconciles local priorities with broader provincial and national objectives.

Potential Strategies

Support strategic workforce planning by investing in innovative research methods to enhance labour market forecasting.

As forecasting can help support a systematic approach to human capital planning, it is important to explore more efficient methods for collecting and sharing accurate labour market information. In addition to understanding future job trends and labour market demands, policymakers need to have a clear idea of the range and supply of talent available to determine emerging skills gaps. Quality labour market data can also support planning across sectors and inform career decisions. A promising development in B.C. is the shift from developing a single outlook to scenario models, which will better account for uncertainties.

Engage municipal leaders across the province to advance a balanced, coordinated approach to human capital development.

Better communication and collaboration between all levels of government are integral to advancing a more coordinated approach to human capital development. Given the diverse contexts across the province, labour market policies need to address local realities. To accomplish broader goals that affect all jurisdictions, municipal initiatives must also complement provincial and national strategies. Through meaningful local engagement, the province can establish a shared vision for human capital development and identify clear roles and responsibilities to enable effective collaboration.

ADVANCING A PROSPEROUS FUTURE

British Columbia has an inherent competitive advantage due to its natural beauty, resource abundance, and geographic location. However, long-term prosperity depends on human capital as people drive growth and innovation. To effectively attract, develop, and leverage talent, the province needs a balanced approach that not only addresses short-term and long-term priorities, but also maximizes local and immigrant talent.

While it is important to respond to immediate needs and opportunities, strategic workforce planning requires a long-term view of human capital development to ensure resiliency in the face of constant change. The skills that are in demand today can become irrelevant in the next few years as technological changes and economic dynamics continue to redefine the labour market landscape. Rather than a targeted approach focused narrowly on short-term demands, the province can become more adaptable by building a versatile workforce with a broad range of skills to thrive in any context.

In addition to managing short and long-term workforce development needs, balancing local and foreign talent maximization will also enable B.C. to build a more responsive workforce. Governments across jurisdictions and employers across sectors need to invest as much in developing local talent as attracting immigrants. By prioritizing both objectives, the province will increase productivity and reduce tensions around immigration.

As new economic opportunities emerge, greater intergovernmental and cross-sector collaboration will help B.C. stay ahead of the talent curve. Governments, employers, educational institutions, and community organizations all have a role to play in building a competitive workforce. To advance a more coordinated approach, all stakeholders will need to work together to prioritize issues, build on best practices, and identify new avenues for greater impact.

APPENDIX A

Roundtable Agenda*

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 7:30 – 8:00am | Arrival and Breakfast |
| 8:00 – 8:25am | Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcome by David Mitchell, President and CEO, Public Policy Forum and Christian Codrington, Director, Regulatory Affairs and Member Value, Human Resources Management Association• Tour de table and opening remarks |
| 8:25 – 9:55 am | Roundtable Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the emerging human capital challenges that will have the greatest impact on BC's economic future?• How are governments, businesses, and other stakeholders addressing these issues?• Where are the opportunities to build on current efforts across sectors? |
| 9:55 – 10:00am | Closing Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wrap-up by the Public Policy Forum |

**Note that the same format was used for all three roundtable discussions.*

APPENDIX B

Participant Lists

PRINCE GEORGE PARTICIPANT LIST

Sabrina Angus

HR Manager
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Christian Codrington

Director, Regulatory Affairs & Member Value
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Cuyler Green

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Trudy Langthorne

HR Director
Sinclar Group Forest Products Ltd.

Jim Martin

Chief Administrative Officer
Regional District of Fraser-Fort George

David Mitchell

President & CEO
Public Policy Forum

Corey Naphtali

Partner
KMPG

Heather Oland

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Initiatives Prince George

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President
College of New Caledonia

Kathleen Soltis

City Manager
City of Prince George

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Pat Hibbitts

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SFU

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Langara College

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Pomponia Martinez

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Associate Dean, Beedie School of Business
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Public Policy Forum

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Trevor Pancoust

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Dean & Lansdowne Professor of International Business
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