



HIRING AND RETAINING SKILLED WORKERS IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

For the long-term prosperity of Atlantic Canada

SEPTEMBER 2019





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INTRODUCTION

“There are times we cannot find people regardless of what we do. We can raise wages, offer benefits, do what is necessary and members are still not getting the applicants required” (The Telegram, 2014)

Canadian Federation of Independent Business

Most industrialized countries are experiencing worker shortages and skill gaps due to low birthrates, aging populations, and new technologies that require workers with new skill sets. A global survey of nearly 40,000 employers in 43 countries and territories found 45% of employers reported having skill shortages (Manpower Group, 2019).

Canada is also experiencing these issues, and the Atlantic provinces are facing an even more serious situation. Current trends show a decline in the natural population with more deaths than births being recorded, and with the growing number of retiring baby boomers, the workforce in Atlantic Canada is likely to shrink. From 2012 to 2018, the labour force shrank by 54,400 (Statistics Canada, 2019a). Additionally, the proportion of aging population is higher in Atlantic Canada compared to the rest of the country. In 2018, those aged 65 and above comprised 20.5% of Atlantic Canadians (Statistics Canada, 2019a). This age group is forecasted to increase to 30.9% by 2035, along with a projected 5% overall decline in the total population in the region (Kareem & Goucher, 2017).

There are two major types of labour and skill shortages in the labour market: cyclical and structural. Cyclical labour and skill shortages can be alleviated by increasing wages, initiating recruitment campaigns, and implementing innovative workplace practices (Skills Canada B.C., 2004). However, structural labour and skill shortages can be difficult to solve in the short run due to a shortage of potential workers with the required quality of skills, driven by demographic and technological changes (Fang, 2009).

Many industries and businesses in Atlantic Canada are currently facing structural labour and skill shortages due to the interplay of demographic factors and new productivity boosting technologies. This report is part of PPF's [Immigration & Atlantic Revitalization](#) project that is examining immigrant retention and skilled labour shortages across Atlantic Canada. This report provides current data on the labour market in Newfoundland and Labrador and in the conclusion summarizes the results of a consultation workshop convened by PPF and Memorial University, with findings and summary recommendations from the attending employers, leaders of civil society, post-secondary education leaders, immigration lawyers and business association representatives.

FACTORS AFFECTING SKILL SHORTAGES IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Demographic, economic, technological and public policy factors have a direct effect on shortages of skilled workers in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL). Specifics on each of these factors are provided in Table 1 below.

Demographics

While Canada's population has grown in the last decade, NL has been the only province with a shrinking population due to the aging population, declining fertility rates, and out-migration — as shown in Table 1. Moreover it had the lowest percentage of international immigrants in the total population. The province also had the highest median age and the highest proportion of residents who were 65 and older.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of Canada and the Atlantic Provinces (Statistics Canada, 2016a; 2018a; 2019a)

	Canada	Newfoundland & Labrador	New Brunswick	Nova Scotia	Prince Edward Island
Population, 2018	37,057,765	525,604	770,921	959,500	153,584
Population change, 2017-2018 (%)	1.34	-0.52	0.54	0.95	2.04
Net interprovincial migration, 2017-2018	N/A	-2,733	481	3,048	177
International migration, 2018	303,257	1,275	4,113	5,137	2,012
Percentage of immigrants in the population (%) (2016)	21.9	2.4	4.6	6.1	6.4%
Median age 2018 (years)	40.8	46.5	45.9	45.1	43.5
Age 0-14 (%)	16.1%	13.9%	14.4%	14.1%	15.5%
Age 15-64 (%)	66.8%	60.8%	64.8%	65.5%	64.7%
Age 65+ (%)	17.1%	25.3%	20.8%	20.4%	19.8%

A shrinking and aging population makes labour and skill shortages the most serious in NL compared to the other Atlantic Provinces. From 2014 to 2018 the labour force shrank by 14,835 or 4.4%. Moreover, there will

be nearly another 35,000 more people exiting the labour market by year 2028, which represents approximately 10% of the total labour force.

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of Newfoundland and Labrador (Statistics Canada, 2019a)

Age group	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
All ages	528,159	528,117	529,426	528,356	525,604
5 to 14 years	52,124	52,005	51,993	51,412	50,687
15 to 54 years	275,246	271,857	268,806	264,543	259,099
55 to 64 years	84,259	84,913	85,556	85,686	85,717
65 years and over	92,894	96,218	100,186	104,064	108,017
Percentage of 65+	17.6%	18.2%	18.9%	19.7%	20.5%
Median age	44.7	45.2	45.6	46	46.5

Figures 1, 2 and 3 below show that net interprovincial out-migration is a defining trend for NL since 2000, as younger workers are leaving to go to other provinces to pursue employment and educational opportunities (ACOA, 2019).

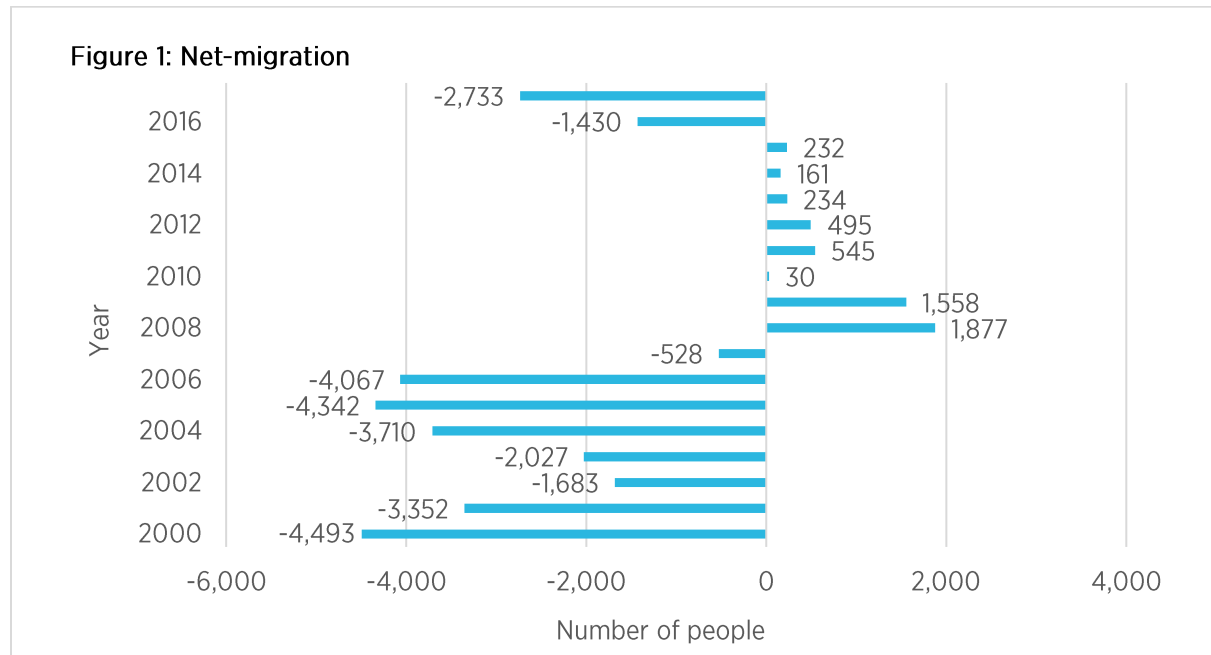


Figure 2: In-migration

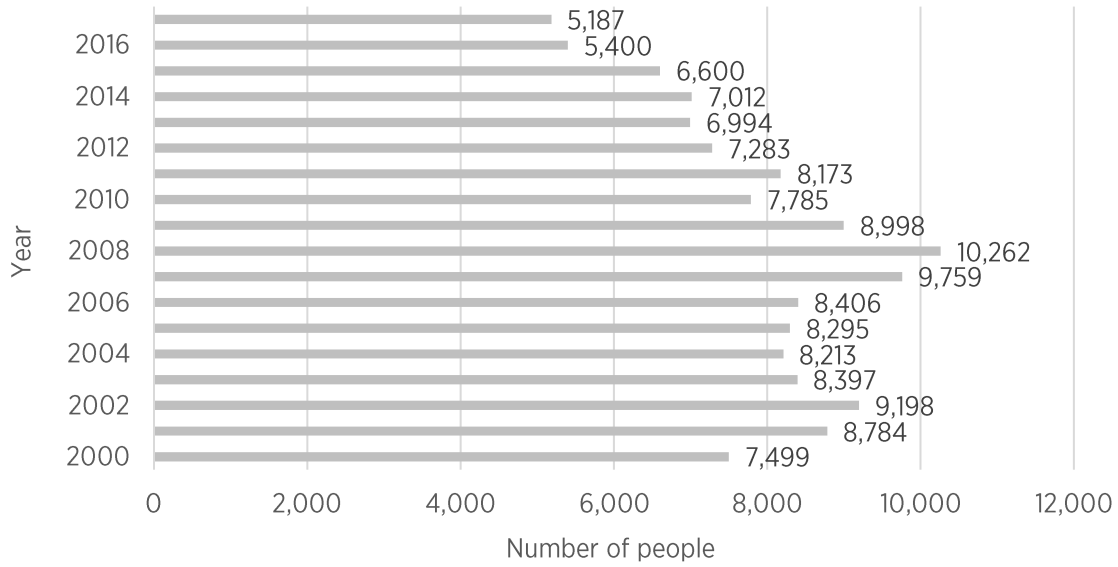
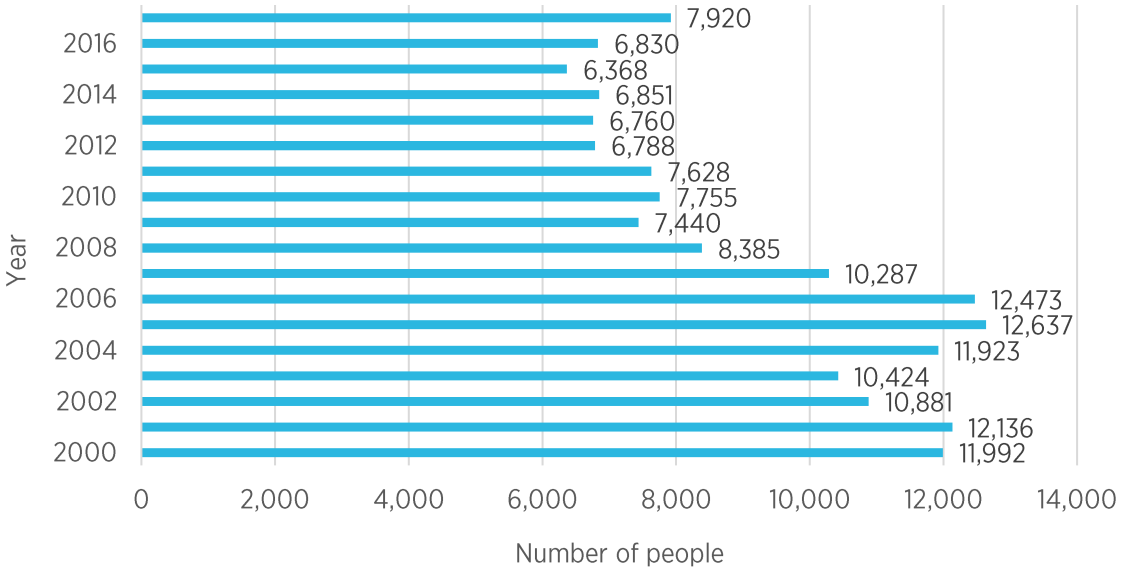


Figure 3: Out-migration



Economic Factors

Even as NL's demographics threaten to shrink the labour pool, the demand for workers has steadily increased. This can be attributed to economic recovery which can come from robust natural resource development, more capital investment (for example the West White Rose and Voisey's Bay projects) and

the growth of the tourism, international education and high-tech industries. Table 3 shows that after an economic contraction due to the collapse of oil prices, the NL economy has recovered since 2017, creating more employment. This growth was accompanied by a tightening labour market due to retirement and out-migration, with NL's labour force participation rate being approximately 7% lower compared to the rest of Canada (Table 3). According to a Canadian Federation of Independent Business report, there were 2,400 unfilled jobs in NL in 2018 (CFIB, 2018).

Table 3. Selected Economic Indicators, Newfoundland and Labrador (NL government, 2018)

Indicator	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019f	2020f
GDP (\$M)	34,277	31,138	31,696	33,074	34,362	35,242	35,082
% Change, real	-1.2%	-1.2%	1.8%	0.9%	-2.9%	4.1%	0.2%
Investment, Gross Fixed Capital Formation (\$m)	12,035	12,087	13,873	10,978	9,684	11,313	9,250
% Change in investment, real	2.0%	-1.8%	8.8%	-18.0%	-12.9%	14.4%	-19.7%
Labour force (in thousands of workers)	270.9	270.8	268.7	262.9	261.4	262.3	260.3
% Change in labour force, real	-1.3%	0.0%	-0.8%	-2.2%	-0.6%	0.3%	-0.8%
Employment (in thousands of workers)	238.6	236.2	232.6	224.1	225.3	228.1	225.2
% Change in employment, real	-1.7%	-1.0%	-1.5%	-3.7%	0.5%	1.2%	-1.3%
Unemployment rate	11.9%	12.8%	13.4%	14.8%	13.8%	13.1%	13.5%
Participation rate	61.0%	61.1%	60.5%	59.0%	58.9%	59.2%	58.8%

While there has been a decline in labour force participation, the unemployment rate has remained stable and GDP has been growing at a slow rate. Normally, labour force participation increases with economic growth. This deviation may suggest that NL's economy is in a gradual transition from a resources-based economy to a knowledge-based economy (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2019a), and some employees are exiting the labour market due to the lack of suitable skills to find a job in the new economy.

Tables 4 and 5 show that oil related industries employed fewer people in the economy and contributed less to provincial GDP between 2013 and 2017. Meanwhile the contribution of the service industries to GDP and employment have gradually increased or remained relatively stable over time.

Table 4. Percentage of GDP by Industry, Newfoundland and Labrador (NL Government, 2019b)

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Oil Extraction & Support Activities for Oil and Mining	28.2%	28.4%	25.7%	15.1%	14.4%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Business Support Services	12.3%	12.6%	13.0%	15.6%	14.7%
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	2.6%	2.3%	2.4%	2.6%	3.1%
Education Service	4.9%	4.9%	4.9%	5.8%	5.7%
Information, Culture & Recreation	2.3%	2.4%	2.5%	2.8%	2.7%
Public Administration	6.5%	6.9%	6.9%	7.8%	7.5%

Table 5. Employment of people by industry (in thousands, and as a percentage of total NL population), Newfoundland and Labrador (NL Government, 2019b)

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Oil Extraction & Support Activities for Oil and Mining	8.8 (3.8%)	9.2 (3.9%)	8.4 (3.6%)	7 (3%)	5.3 (2.3%)	5.2 (2.3%)
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Business Support Services	15.1 (6.5%)	15 (6.3%)	15.5 (6.6%)	14.8 (6.4%)	13.3 (5.9%)	13.8 (6.1%)
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	9.2 (4.0%)	10.6 (4.4%)	11.3 (4.8%)	10.5 (4.5%)	9.8 (4.4%)	10.0 (4.4%)
Education Service	18.1 (7.8%)	17.6 (7.4%)	15.1 (6.4%)	14.3 (6.1%)	15.2 (6.8%)	15.9 (7.1%)
Information, Culture & Recreation	6.6 (2.8%)	7.5 (3.1%)	7.3 (3.1%)	7.1 (3.1%)	6.5 (2.9%)	7.2 (3.2%)
Public Administration	18.3 (7.9%)	17.5 (7.3%)	15.7 (6.6%)	15.3 (6.6%)	15.1 (6.7%)	16.8 (7.5%)

This trend is in line with the provincial economic growth strategy to diversify NL's economic output while maintaining the strength of existing core industries (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2019a) and increasing the capacity in service sectors such as information and communications technology (ICT) and international education.

Technology and Skills

Technology changes the nature of work and skills needed at work. This can lead to less labour force demand in some fields and a shortage of skilled workers in other fields, as well as potential skill gaps. Some jobs require new skills and some new jobs are created in response to technology. An employer survey by the World Economic Forum shows that at least half of all employees will require significant re-skilling or up-skilling to be able to work with changing technology (World Economic Forum, 2018).

In NL, the highest number of job openings will be in technical occupations (ACOA, 2019). Occupations with at least a college diploma in public administration, education services, professional, scientific and technical services are among the top ten industries seeking employees across NL. About 14% of job ads require at least a university degree or higher education credentials. (The Job Vacancy Report 2017, Government of NL). However, only 4.6% of unemployed Newfoundlanders held a university degree or higher education

degrees in 2017 (Statistics Canada, 2017). According to the 2016 Census, 49.1% of people aged 25-64 years old had a college diploma (Statistic Canada, 2016). Therefore, unemployment is more likely to be structural due to contrasting skills.

A report on occupational ratings (Table 6, Department of Finance, fall 2018) shows the kind of occupations that are likely to be in demand in the upcoming years, broken out by educational and training requirements. They include natural resources industries with occupations such as processing, manufacturing and machine operating, which will likely continue to need workers. Additionally, occupations in the knowledge-intensive economy, such as highly skilled managers in financial and business services, will also likely be in high demand.

Table 6. Occupational ratings for 2018-2027 for NL (Department of Finance, 2018)

	Occupations that usually require university education	Occupations that usually require college education or apprenticeship training	Occupations that usually require secondary school and/or occupation-specific training	Occupations where on-the-job training is usually provided
Competition for qualified labour will be strong	Managers in health, education, social and community services, sales, natural resources production and fishing	Control operators		
New labour supply will be required to meet anticipated job openings	Managers in all fields Professionals in business and finance	Technical occupations Professionals in business, finance and administration Supervisors in manufacturing and utilities	Machine operators Administrative support occupations Tourism and security related occupations	Labourers in processing, manufacturing and utilities, and some elementary service occupations Cleaners

Policy Factors

However, NL is facing more serious structural skill shortages compared to other provinces, even as the economy transitions from resource dependence to greater diversification. In order to alleviate skills shortages, it is necessary to focus on re-skilling or upskilling the existing labour force as well as developing a new pool of skilled workers. Immigrants, temporary foreign workers, refugees and international students are part of the solution and immigration policies in NL can facilitate the growth of this new source of skilled workers.

International migration accounts for most population growth in Canada. According to Statistics Canada, population growth through immigration has been twice that of natural increase (Statistics Canada, 2019b). Since the inception of the [Temporary Foreign Worker Program](#) and the points system in the 1960s, immigration policies have had a significant effect on mitigating the short- and long-term labour and skill shortages. The [Canadian Experience Class](#) was introduced to attract and retain skilled workers and international students who have Canadian work experience or education experience to become permanent residents and alleviate skill shortages. These policies have contributed to the success of Canada's labour market, economy and social outcomes (IRCC, 2018).

Immigration Policy

As part of the Government of Canada's immigrant selection criteria, most newcomers to Canada are economic immigrants chosen by the point system that is based on a number of factors, including education and age. As a result, the newcomers tend to be more educated than Canadian-born workers (Docquier and Marfouk, 2004; Grogger and Hanson, 2011), and younger (Statistics Canada, 2019a), which means they are more productive and will stay in the workforce longer. In addition, immigrants play an important role in an open economy due to their knowledge of the markets and products of their country of origin (Dunlevy, 2004; 2019).

The most important contributions of immigrants include their innovation and entrepreneurship. Immigrants are fundamentally heterogeneous in terms of their abilities and skills as a result of their different education and cultural backgrounds and working experience, which can be considered important sources of innovation (Hanson 2012; Ozgen et al., 2014) and productivity (Huber et al., 2010; Hou et al., 2018; Harrison, Harrison & Shaffer, 2019). Due to their relatively higher risk appetite and lack of employment opportunities that provide decent income, immigrants are also more likely to start their own business, which can in turn create more jobs for the local community. For example, more than half of new Silicon Valley ventures are established by immigrants, and the same is the case for Canada as a whole (Green et al, 2016). Between 2003 and 2013, the average annual net job growth per Canadian firm was higher among immigrant-owned firms than among firms with Canadian-born owners, as was the likelihood of being a high-growth firm (Garnett et al. 2019).

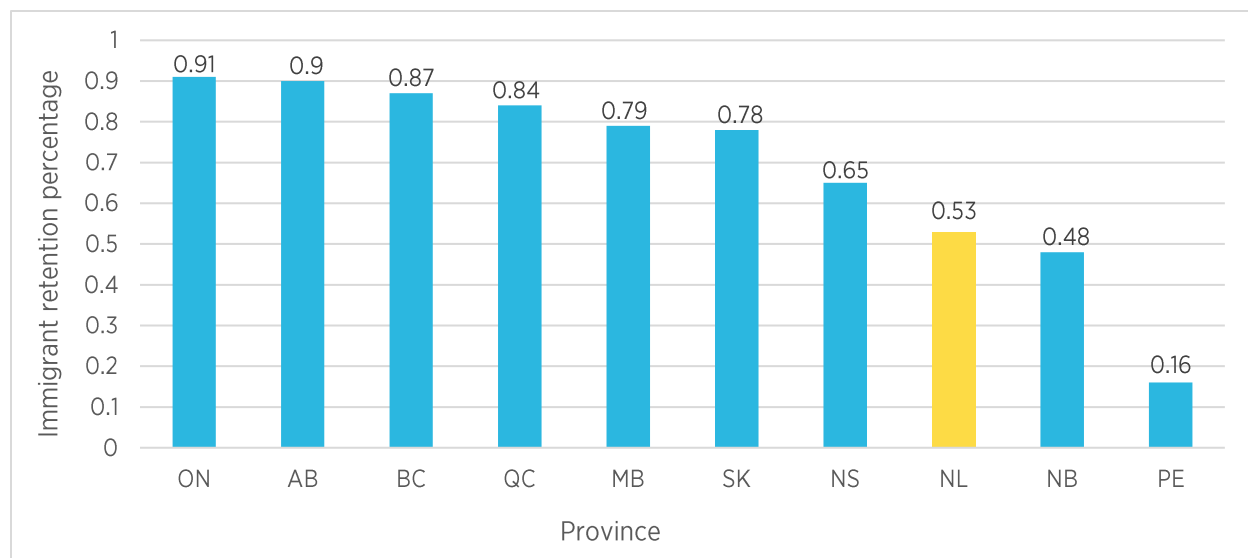
According to the Government of Canada statistics presented in Table 7 the number of immigrants in NL increased significantly from 2007 to 2018 (IRCC, 2019a). Partially thanks to the introduction of the Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program in 2017, more immigrants are now moving to NL as Table 7 shows.

Table 7. Permanent Residents Admitted to NL Annually (IRCC, 2019b)

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total Immigrants Welcomed	546	627	606	714	685	732	835	899	1122	1118	1171	1275

In fact, only 2.4% of the total population of NL are immigrants, compared to 21.9% for Canada as a whole (Statistic Canada, 2016a). Newfoundland and Labrador attract relatively fewer immigrants and struggle to retain newcomers. As shown in Figure 4, only about half of immigrants stayed in NL five years after admission (Statistics Canada, 2018b).

Figure 4. Five-year Immigrant retention rate, 2011-2015 (Statistics Canada, 2018b)



International students

In 2014, there were 2,261 international students in NL with \$48.2 million in annual spending. The presence of these students in turn created 511 direct jobs (Statistics Canada, 2016b) demonstrating that international students not only increase consumption and create more jobs, but also fill labour skill shortages as new skilled workers (CBIA, 2018a). Currently, there are about 2,800 college level international students enrolled at Memorial University and the College of North Atlantic. By developing an appropriate international education policy and attracting more international students, the economy of the province can grow even

further (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2019a). However, the number of international students in NL represent only 1% of the total students in Canada, while British Columbia attracted 24% and Ontario attracted 48% respectively in 2017 (CBIE, 2018b). Even though the retention rate of international students rose to about 17% in NL between 2004 and 2015 (Toughill, 2018), it is still low compared to Ontario and Quebec which retain over 70% of international students (Smith, 2016).

Temporary Foreign Workers

Canadian employers often hire temporary foreign workers to fill immediate skills and labour shortages on a temporary basis. These include positions that Canadian citizens and permanent residents are not available or willing to fill, such as seasonal work (Curry, 2016) and highly skilled occupations in technology and low skilled occupations in the service sector (Lemieux and Nadeau, 2015).

In 2017, 78,788 temporary foreign workers were admitted in Canada including caregivers, agricultural workers and other workers who require a Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA). In addition, 224,033 work permits were issued under the International Mobility Program (IMP), which are exempt from an LMIA for reasons such as reciprocal agreements that promote economic, social and cultural exchange between Canada and other countries (Hussen, 2018). Temporary foreign workers can also transition to permanent residence through the Canadian Experience Class, Provincial Nominee Programs and the Express Entry Program (Prokopenko & Hou, 2018). here is a growing number of temporary foreign workers who obtain permanent residence and most of the them are highly skilled workers (Prokopenko & Hou, 2018). In the past the Canadian Federation of Independent Business emphasized the demand by employers for temporary foreign workers in NL by explaining that,

“There are times we cannot find people regardless of what we do. We can raise wages, offer benefits, do what is necessary and members are still not getting the applicants required (across the country)” (The Telegram, 2014).

More recently, an employer survey and study on the hiring of temporary foreign workers also showed the need for these workers in NL due to the difficulties in attracting workers at all levels (Fang et al, 2017).

STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES ON HIRING AND RETAINING SKILLED WORKERS

Various organizations including government agencies, businesses and academic institutions have raised concerns about labour and skill shortages in NL. Employers have a crucial role, and the experiences and opinions of the private sector are a strong reference for decision making to address skill gaps and challenges across NL.

In May 2019, PPF organized consultations with employers at the St. John's Board of Trade to engage employers from different sectors including energy, information technology, education, tourism and business services to discuss pressing topics such as:

- The kind of skills shortages that employers are facing;
- The challenges impacting employers' decisions in hiring newcomers;
- Examples of successful policies or practices that can help overcome these challenges; and
- Suggestions to governments, communities and businesses to overcome skill shortages and improve the employment and retention of newcomers.

Through discussion, the consultation was intended to:

- Identify sectors that experience labour and skill shortages;
- Examine factors influencing employers' decisions to hire skilled immigrants, refugees, international students and temporary foreign workers;
- Identify factors that enhance, and those that negatively impact, employers' decisions to hire newcomers;
- Identify practices from government and other stakeholders that can help employers' recruitment of newcomers; and
- Identify measures to increase the skilled immigrant retention rate in the province.

Table 8 summarizes the input of employers through their experience with labour and skill shortages and their recommended solutions to address these shortages.

Table 8. Summary Findings from Employer Consultation in St. John's

Sector	Skill shortages	Challenges	Potential solutions
Engineering and energy	Fewer employees with the right skills, and few new workers coming into the industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of qualified job candidates for occupations searching for potential employees ▪ Lack of social connections for newcomers and connections to employers for international students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase immigration up to 5,000 newcomers a year, and improve newcomer retention ▪ Increase computer science graduates from 30 to 500 per year ▪ Expand newcomer involvement in the Connector Program for coaching and preparing them for work ▪ Improve labour market information and connections between job candidates and employers
Education, government and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of bilingual teachers (French and English) and bilingual public service workers ▪ Too few people with skills in IT, finance or administration, ▪ Lack of family doctors, social workers and nurses, especially in rural areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cost of credential recognition is high and time consuming for careers in nursing, medicine, engineering and law ▪ Many people are not willing to work in rural areas ▪ Sustainable agriculture and food safety are a challenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve and speed up credential recognition process ▪ Improve infrastructure and housing in rural areas

Sector	Skill shortages	Challenges	Potential solutions
Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bilingual workers (French and English) for customer service positions ▪ Too few workers with IT skills in the business sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lower wages and non-wage benefits than other jurisdictions ▪ Low level of language proficiency for immigrants ▪ Reduced funding for co-op positions ▪ Lack of bilingual customer service ▪ Lack of infrastructure such as housing and transportation in remote areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase the minimum wage ▪ Introduce ESL language training in high schools to reduce language barriers for immigrants ▪ Bridge the gap between business and the skilled immigrant community by building a partnership with Genesis Centre and the Association for New Canadians ▪ Provide more employment support to international students. An example of this is the Graduate Transition to Employment Program, where subsidized employment is provided to graduates
Information and communications technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of enough people with ICT skills in the province ▪ Acute shortage of creative technical workers such as designers, animators, web developers and big data specialists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Low wages in the ICT sector ▪ General lack of interest in the ICT field among local students ▪ Poor integration of international ICT students into the local job market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase admissions for ICT post-secondary students ▪ Address misperceptions about interests of international students, for example they may not stay for long-term, are overqualified or are not competent ▪ ICT should be included as a major skilled trade in the immigration programs and children should be encouraged to develop interest in IT by providing early childhood training programs in computer skills

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Newfoundland and Labrador faces a shortage of skilled workers, especially in areas such as computer engineering, information technology, sustainable food safety, healthcare, social work, and bilingual services. This situation is particularly acute in rural communities.

NL has found it difficult to attract people from other provinces because of a perceived unstable economic situation and high unemployment rate. Similarly, it is difficult to attract immigrant workers because the immigration process and regulations are considered long and tedious, which discourages employers from hiring newcomers. Employers are also hesitant to hire immigrants out of concern that they may not fit culturally, that they won't have adequate language skills, they aren't well trained, and/or that they will leave soon after arriving. Many employers, particularly in information technology, are contracting business out, and some have moved their business to other provinces where it's easier to find and hire skilled workers.

Our discussions with sector representatives and employers in St. John's yielded the following key recommendations:

- 1. Develop a one-stop database and information platform to collect and provide information on labour market, policies and services.** This will enable employers to easily obtain information about services and processes when hiring immigrants, temporary foreign workers and international students. It will also help newcomers learn about career opportunities, what kind of skills are needed in the province, and what kind of support is available to them.
- 2. Involve the private sector in the immigration policy-making process** by ensuring that immigration programs and processes are informed by employers and entrepreneurs who understand the process of hiring and are striving to retain talented workers.
- 3. Continue to evaluate and improve the Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program to make the process easier, faster and more transparent.** This includes streamlining the immigration process and providing adequate information to eliminate inconsistencies and delays.
- 4. Ensure adequate immigration legal services for employers, international students and temporary foreign workers** during the immigration and employment process.
- 5. Develop business and education sector partnerships by offering joint training programs for immigrants and international students** in order to build practical workplace skills including technical skills, interpersonal skills, and bilingual language skills relevant to the local business culture.
- 6. Build close connections between employers, immigrants and international students** by organizing networking events and other support services.

7. **Develop collaboration between educational institutions and immigrant settlement agencies** to integrate different language training resources across NL and provide language training information to immigrants, temporary foreign workers and international students more effectively and efficiently.
8. **Improve transportation infrastructure and access** to convenient and affordable public transportation systems to meet the daily commuting needs of the general public.
9. **Build wider communication channels among local communities and improve stakeholder collaboration** to disseminate information about the valuable contributions made by immigrants to NL's economy and society.

In conclusion, NL face deep structural labour and skill shortages which will affect long-term economic development and prosperity. Residents of the province need to know that the economy of the province can be improved by better attracting and integrating newcomers. Immigrants, international students, and refugees arriving in NL need to know about skill and labour shortages in different industries and the opportunities that exist for them. Finally, settlement agencies need to work with the government, employers, and training institutions to ensure the smooth settlement and integration of newcomers to the province.

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