



EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY REPORT

Abstract

PVLIP invited local Employers to discuss the impact of immigration in their workplace. The following content will help to determine next steps to support more welcoming and inclusive workplaces for newcomers throughout the Pembina Valley.

Elaine Burton Saindon, PVLIP Coordinator
elaine@pvlip.ca

Acknowledgments

The information gathered in this report was a result of a collaboration of partnerships and individual efforts:

CPHR Manitoba – event promotion and registration

Regional Connections - host for the event

Chambers of Commerce – in Morden, Winkler and Altona for newsletter promotion

LJS Consulting – for compiling the summary

LPC Member – for making the connection with CPHR and PVLIP to work together

Table Facilitators – for recording comments and summarizing thoughts

A special recognition to all the participants who took extra time from their busy schedules to contribute to this vital conversation. It is recognized that their contributions reflect the desire of local employers to offer welcoming and inclusive workplaces and ensure a greater sense of belonging for newcomers who they employ.

Thanks to each of you for your passion and participation.

~ Elaine Burton Saindon, PVLIP Coordinator

As we collectively strive to understand the historic and ongoing relationship between settlement and the land on which we are located, PVLIP respectfully acknowledges that the land that this document was created on and where our work is done is located on Treaty 1 territory, the original lands of the Anishinabek, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene Peoples, and homeland of the Metis Nation.

We would like to acknowledge Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) for funding this event.



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada



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*“We should embrace our immigrant roots and recognize that
 Newcomers to our land are not part of the problem,
 They are part of the solution.”
 ~ Roger Mahony*



Executive Summary

The Pembina Valley Local Immigration Partnership (PVLIP) seeks to understand the impact immigration has had on communities and the various sectors engaged with newcomers.

Understanding this impact from those most directly affected, will afford the opportunity to improve on programs and services to help continue efforts in creating Welcoming and Inclusive Communities, thereby improving overall settlement and integration of newcomers throughout the region.

Of particular interest was to hear from employers about their views on the impact that immigration has had in the labour market sector. In February 2020, PVLIP conducted a focus group to engage local employers who have experienced a high growth rate, due in part to an increase in newcomer employees as a result of higher immigration through local recruitment programs.

The overall goal of this discussion was to identify the resources employers need to support the increasing diversity within the workplace, to better understand the challenges employers face by increased diversity, and to learn what employers have identified to be the barriers to newcomer success.

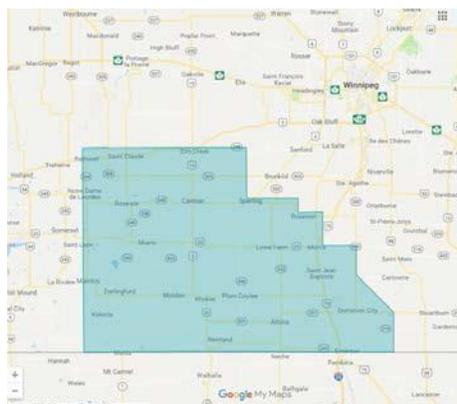
We hope the recommendations from this report will result in programming and services to support employers, and overall, improve outcomes for newcomers through a welcoming and inclusive workplace.



Background

Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) were first developed in Ontario in 2008, through a partnership between Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), now named Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and the host organization. In 2012, the first LIPs outside of Ontario were established. (A list of current LIPs and their communities across Canada can be found on the Pathways to Prosperity website at <http://p2pcanada.ca/lip/>).

Regional Connections was awarded funding to establish a LIP in 2017. The goal was to develop a mechanism to formalize community-based partnerships to improve settlement and integration outcomes for newcomers in the Pembina Valley region. As a multi-community LIP located in a rural area, PVLIP is one of only a few regional LIPs across Canada.



The Pembina Valley has a combined land area of 9,791 square KM and a total population of 60,656 (2011 census).

PVLIP meets quarterly with a Local Partnership Council, representing 7 municipalities and has 18 members from various sectors including: economic development, education, police, chambers of commerce, human resources, health care, employment, settlement & language services, federal and provincial representation. These members represent decision makers in each community and help to implement the action items from the strategic plan.

Immigrant Advisory Tables also meet quarterly, both regionally and locally, representing lived experiences from newcomers through the Pembina Valley. These discussions help to identify and implement action items and work together with the Local Partnership Council to improve settlement and integration outcomes for newcomers.

The Employer Engagement Focus Group is an important conversation to further understand the role PVLIP can have in connecting the needs of both local leaders and newcomers. As well, this information will enable PVLIP to identify solutions that will ultimately lead to a better sense of belonging for newcomers and seek out resources for employers as they adapt to increasing diversity in the workplace.

Methodology

The Employer Focus Group was organized by the PVLIP Coordinator in partnership with CPHR Manitoba, the exclusive certifying body in Manitoba for the nationally recognized Chartered Professional in Human Resources (CPHR) designation – the leading standard for HR professionals in Canada.

A PVLIP Council member, also a CPHR Manitoba member, facilitated the connection with PVLIP. PVLIP conducted the focus group while CPHR Manitoba collected registrations and distributed communication about the event.

Focus group attendees received the table discussion questions in advance so they would be aware of the content and be prepared to fully participate in the event. This proved helpful and aided the conversations, enabling active and focused discussion in a short period of time.

27 people attended from approximately 20 organizations, representing the following industries: manufacturing, education, banking, employment services, human resources, business owners, employers, hospitality, agriculture, language services, settlement services, immigration, and municipal and provincial government.

Attendees were divided into 5 groups, each hosted by a table facilitator who also acted as note-taker. The focus group was allotted one hour for the discussion session.

Listed below are the questions prepared in advance for the Table Discussions.

Questions for Round Table Discussions:

1. As an employer who hires immigrants, how would you describe this experience in your workplace? What are the strengths and good stories? What are the needs and challenges?
2. What challenges do you have in finding and retaining new employees?
3. From your experience, what challenges do immigrants in particular have in getting jobs and succeeding in the workplace?
4. What have you heard from your newcomer employees are some of their settlement challenges?



5. What are some of the things that you believe make a workplace a “welcoming community”? Does your workplace need any supports to make it more welcoming?

6. What are some of the things that you believe make Canadian society a better place for immigrants? From your perspective as an employer of immigrants, what advice would you give to municipal, provincial, and federal government?

Summary of Results

As an employer who hires immigrants, how would you describe this experience in your workplace?

Most attendees reported that hiring immigrants has been a mostly positive experience. With the changing demographics in the region, it is necessary to hire immigrants because of diverse clientele. Immigrants enrich the workplace with additional skills, languages, culture, high education, strong work ethics, and positive attitudes.

What are the strengths and good stories?

Labour shortages are being met, and skilled positions are being filled. Immigrants have a good attitude and are motivated to learn. The increased knowledge, skills, and diversity in the workplace creates new ideas and perspective. Positive attitudes of other employers in welcoming newcomers.

What are the needs and challenges?

Needs and challenges still occur, such as English language levels need improvement, cultural differences and communication styles, silo cultural groups occurring, increased cost of personalized training, onboarding and learning, reference checks. Day care for shift workers, housing shortages, transportation challenges, and discrimination issues affect the workplace.

What challenges do you have in finding and retaining new employees?

Finding skilled workers for specialized positions including technology skills is a challenge. Seasonal workers with experience for agricultural positions is a challenge. There are a lot of job opportunities in manufacturing, so staff jump around. Restaurants find it hard to hire non-skilled people for minimum wage because they can go to manufacturing jobs where starting wage is much higher.



From your experience, what challenges do immigrants in particular have in getting jobs?

Low English language skills present a challenge for communication, workplace safety, and cost of training. The lack of affordable transportation negatively impacts immigrant employees. Both transportation and housing affects whether they can accept a job offer, get to work (at all, on time, or between communities). Skill gaps, relevant Canadian work experience, lack of knowledge of interview skills, job expectations, or soft skills. Lack of child care spaces for shift workers.

From your experience, what challenges do immigrants in particular have in succeeding in the workplace?

Some of the challenges are language skills and soft skills for communication (empathy, body language), cultural differences between other employees or managers, employer education (diversity training, awareness), and mobility to commute to jobs that fit their skills and education.

What have you heard from your newcomer employee are some of their settlement challenges?

The biggest settlement challenge is transportation, which prevents some from getting employment. Lack of affordable, secure housing, lack of affordable/flexible child care for shift work, trying to attend language classes while working, learning about the Canadian culture, rules, laws, and systems, and winter.

What are some of things that you believe make a workplace a “welcoming community”?

Have a good orientation or onboarding process in place. Willingness of employers to provide internal support programs, such as a buddy system or mentor from similar backgrounds, or other internal support programs. Have a friendly work environment, that is culturally inclusive, with company social events that are family friendly to foster a welcoming and inclusive workplace community.

Does your workplace need any supports to make it more welcoming?

Cultural competence training for employers and employees, more partnerships among local programs and employers, development of an onboarding program, translation services, and networking opportunities for employers to share ideas.

What are some of the things that you believe make Canadian society a better place for immigrants?

A peaceful environment that is welcoming and tolerant, freedom, good education and health care systems, opportunities for diverse people, variety of employment opportunities, good relations with other countries.

From your perspective as an employment of immigrants, what advice would you give to municipal, provincial, and federal government?

- i) Municipal Government – work on transportation options or alternatives within communities and within the region. Freedom for business decisions such as Sunday shopping. Resources and amenities for newcomers.
- ii) Provincial Government – reduce the lead time for immigrants to get here, keep improving the application process/timeline, work on transportation, child care, education, and language services.
- iii) Federal Government – more flexibility in the process/requirements, better education on employer application opportunities, rural/northern is a good start, need faster, more responsive support, and more/better access to equivalency databases for international education and experience (eg. Apprenticeship programs/credentials recognition).

Time was allotted at the end of the focus group for attendees to contribute further comments and concerns. A brief summary is found below.

Transportation - Each group identified transportation as the number 1 issue impacting immigrant families, employment, social and community connections. The lack of affordable transportation affects the newcomers' ability to get to work and to have the freedom to connect to their new community.

Language – Each group identified language as the second largest issue facing both newcomers and employers. There is a need for translation services, as well as a desire for more post-secondary options to pursue higher language training.

Child care – There are not enough options to support shift workers.

Welcoming workplace – Diversity training is needed to help make workplace more welcoming and inclusive.

Networking and communication – We need to stop working in silos and make connections for employers to be more aware of programs and find relevant information. A Networking opportunity such as a job fair for businesses and newcomers would be valuable.

Conclusion

PVLIP organized the Employer Focus Group to provide an opportunity for employers to discuss the strengths, needs and challenges of hiring immigrants, and to identify what resources are needed to support the increasing diversity within their workplaces. This report has identified a great interest from employers in the Pembina Valley Region to discuss the impact that immigrants have had in their workplace. Employers, among other sectors, are continuing to face challenges as they engage with immigrants, and immigrants as well, are facing challenges in the workplace that are impacting their well-being and overall sense of belonging.

Overall, participants contributed passionately, expressed a desire to see improved outcomes for immigrants, and also recognized that they do not have the resources or staff to make adjustments, or accommodate the time required for additional attention needed by immigrants. Many employers are just trying to cope with the situations.

As evidenced by the responses, employers revealed that hiring immigrants has been a mostly positive experience, but also identified areas of concern that need to be addressed. Employers recognize that ongoing partnerships are needed to work together to find collaborative solutions to help improve workplace diversity, newcomer outcomes, and retention for employers.

A result of hosting this session showed that PVLIP's main objective and goals are very much in need for this region, to enhance collaboration and coordination at the community level in various sectors, to foster more welcoming and inclusive communities, and to host subsequent events for sector tables.

Recommendations from the session include:

- Implore local governments to collaborate to find a transportation solution
- Increase diversity training/intercultural training at workplaces
- Provide opportunities for education on discrimination/racism awareness
- Increase language level requirements. Immigrants need higher language levels before arriving to avoid being hired at entry level positions but overqualified for jobs. Higher language skills would ease communication issues at the workplace with co-workers or managers, and improve the ability to understand safety standards.
- Provide more options for child care options for shift workers
- Have networking opportunities for employers and immigrants.

In conclusion, employers are looking for initiatives to attract and retain immigrants to meet their labour market needs, and are interested in providing the supports and resources needed for immigrants to be successful, therefore creating a welcoming and inclusive workplace.



Appendix A - Notes from the Employer Focus Group



Employer Engagement Luncheon

Wednesday February 5, 2020

11:30 – 1:30

HOST LOCATION: Regional Connections Immigrant Services, 295 Perry St, Winkler – Room 2A + 2B

FACILITATORS: Trevor Siemens, Karina Bueckert, Rhoda Keck, Steve Reynolds, Johanna Hildebrand

PVLIP COORDINATOR: Elaine Burton Saindon

Attendance: 27

Industries Represented:

Municipal governments	Settlement	Education	Eco-Friendly
Manufacturing	Human Resources	Finance	Business
Food Services	Employment	Law	Social Assistance
Hospitality	Agriculture	Language	

SUMMARY of Round Table Discussions:

1.0 As an employer who hires immigrants, how would you describe this experience in your workplace?

- Generally positive, good workers, diligent
- Positive – lots of referrals from friends
- Mostly Positive
- Well educated workers
- Bring additional language skills to communicate with clients
- It is almost necessary to hire newcomers because of diverse clientele
- Positive reaction, enthusiasm, appreciation when you give them a job
- Adds depth and interest to the company



- Success Story: one newcomer employee advanced from secretary to firm manager at law firm
- Time consuming
- Good
- Mixed stories of success
- Normalized, have been bringing in immigrants for years
- Experience is unique for each type of newcomer (i.e. refugee, TFW, Permanent Resident)

1.1 What are the strengths and good stories?

- Support families in the community
- Integration and contribution to the community
- Rely on immigrants to meet business goals
- Positive feedback in our community is shared
- Adds language skills – 2 or 3 languages
- Have high levels of education
- Motivated to work and learn
- Good skills
- Labour shortages are being met
- Skilled positions being filled
- Good to have large numbers coming in regularly
- Receiving a lot of referrals from family members so the one position turns into a few
- They are looking to connect so staff enjoy the positive attitude/approach
- Translations
- Positive attitudes
- Attitude – willing to work – can be cultural, generational
- Ambition – to do well and succeed
- Diverse ideas and perspective
- Increased diversity and knowledge
- Skill sets
- New skills
- Community culture
- Connecting with community
- Translation services available while training, internal or external
- Increased diversity in workforce
- Diversity of knowledge and skill
- Positive attitudes of other employees, welcoming new comers
- Strong community culture
- Employer practices in place to connect newcomers with community



1.2 What are the needs and challenges?

- Language barriers – can't assume they understand
- Language
- English language
- UK English difference
- Language – particularly for professional levels or specialized jargon
- Education and English too low for skills training
- High education but low English (entry level)
 - o Some learn English and move up or on
 - o Some don't learn English and stay at entry level
- Assume they have expertise and may be unaware of differences
- Culture and communication
- Silo cultural groups at work
 - o Interpersonal conflict
 - o Lack of team work
 - o Misunderstandings
 - o Leaves people out
- Onboarding, training, learning
- The extra time required to tailor/personalize training for each newcomer
- Support to explain cultural differences
- Making local connections to make sure they stay instead of moving to a larger center
- Transportation - Affordable
- Transportation – lack of public, one vehicle per family
- Transportation – not easy to transfer driver's license from home country, long waiting time to take a driver's test, need of translators to take a driver's test due to language skills
- Transportation
- Post-secondary education opportunities
- Daycare – especially for shift workers
- Timeline for applying for LMO (no guarantee)
- Reference checks for new immigrants
- Racial discrimination
- Personalized training for newcomers ie. Refugee, TFW's
- Creating Safe spaces for newcomers to give feedback to employer about their experiences (ie.discrimination, etc)
- Secure, affordable Housing



2.0 What challenges do you have in *finding* new employees?

- Perception job (prestige) / family influence
- Finding skilled workers (limited in market) *
- IT division is in serious need
- In manufacturing, staff jump around, there are a lot of opportunities so it's hard to keep staff
- Restaurants – it's hard to hire non-skilled people for minimum wage because the same non skilled workers can go to manufacturing companies where minimum wage to start is much higher
- Available new staff on workshare
- Housing options are costly
- Finding the right skill set
- Soft skills
- Technical skills – technology
- Seasonal workers (skilled)
- Depends on position and skills required
- Skills experience can vary by country (= varies in how directly transferable)
- Requirements for job postings – before international recruitment
- Delay (6-12 months) means not useful for some positions
- Skilled labour shortage or for specialized positions
- Lack of information or clarity for employers about types of recruitment programs/avenues available
- Lack of agricultural experience for certain employment opportunities
- Costs
 - o Of immigration
 - o Turnover
 - o Training etc.

2.2 What challenges do you have in *retaining* new employees?

- Differing work ethics.
- Large amount of jobs available in MFG so staff often explore new options
- New immigrants willing to start entry level rather than their skill level, then they see opportunities in other communities in their field of expertise (and leave)
- Draw to other provinces (BC/AB) or/and Wpg where their family member have settled
- Immigrants are opportunistic by nature so moving again is more of an option (to obtain goals/dreams)
- Transportation
- Housing
- Higher education
- Engaging employees
- Survival job expectations – newcomers who don't plan to stay



- Live is changing – major transitions (family, housing)
- Housing and transportation – may want to hire newcomer from another community but they can't drive or can't move due to limited housing/transportation/personal finances
- Winnipeg to here – low retention experience
- Survival jobs, might not be working in their desired job or field
- Transportation in rural communities
- Transient
- Differences in community cultures, difficulty adapting

3.0 From your experience, what challenges do immigrants in particular have in *getting jobs*?

- Transportation
- Communication
- Language
- Culture/religion
- Accommodation/safety policies
- Skill gaps
- Resume's, job interviews – find a job – listing skills on resume
- Canadian traditions re: communication
- translate skills from home country to here
- Language skills – especially reading
- Often are over qualified for jobs
- Not having references
- English skills
- Interview skills in English
- Transportation
- Lack of connections in community (not knowing who is hiring)
- Transferability of skills to the new country
- Relevant work experience – Canadian Experience
- Language
- Understanding
- Expectations based on prior experience, status, or job title
- Language level, or scheduling issues trying to attend classes while working
- Lack of training/education for employers
 - How not to discriminate when reviewing applications and resumes
 - Understanding how to interpret international work histories and equivalency

3.1 From your experience, what challenges do immigrants in particular have in *succeeding in the workplace*?

- Canadian culture (how quickly the newcomer learns these skills), expectations, safety, etc.
- Communication within the workplace



- Language
- Employer education – diversity training, awareness
- Cultural Difference between manager and employee relationships
- Soft skills – communication (oral and written), empathy, body language, etc
- English skills
- Communication skills
- Cultural differences
- Lack of connections in work community (knowing long term benefits)
- Expectations
- Mobility – commute to other locations
- Education and experience – reading, writing
- Lack of Canadian experience for upward career movement

4.0 What have you heard from your newcomer employees are some of their settlement challenges?

- Housing and transportation (transportation is the biggest – prevents some from getting jobs)
- Childcare – lack of daycare
 - o Can't be available for regular work hours due to lack of daycare
 - o Lack of personal support network for childcare
- Transportation, access to services, groceries etc.
- Trying to schedule time for English classes while working
- Lack of access to information about available services for employers to share with their new employees
- Affordable, secure housing
- Learning the cultures
 - o Workplace
 - o Community
 - o Schools etc.
- Lack of affordable housing
- Hard to find work/housing
- Affordable/flexible child care for shift work
- They don't want to ask for help/they don't know they can ask for help
- Transportation
- Schools for kids
- Banking
- Transit (Public)
- Family doctor
- Trust of Canadian systems



- Winter – clothes, driving
- *Transportation (fear it will hold back growth)
- Perception of community members – education and religion
- Defer too much to others
- Canadian Culture (less formal)
- Not knowing rules, laws, etc

5.0 What are some of the things that you believe make a workplace a “welcoming community”?

- Promotion and celebration of diversity and inclusion
- Involvement in cultural events
- Onboarding processes – introducing to all our staff
- create a welcoming environment
 - Acceptance
 - taking interest in the person
 - asking about self/culture
- Deal with concerns that arise
- Visual communications (safety) in multiple languages
- Buddy system
- Diversity awareness/training?
- Proper communication
- Social events (family Friendly)
- Strong respectful policies that are being enforced
- Cultural inclusive
- look for opportunities to showcase cultures from the top
- Good orientation/onboarding
- integrated teams
- ‘mentor’ or connection from similar backgrounds
- accommodating cultural/religious practices
- celebrating cultures, food
- Friendly work environment, company social events
- Willingness of employers to engage with newcomers, share resources and knowledge (Internal support programs)
- Existing high immigrant population to share settlement experiences and provide familiarity
- Willingness of employers to change and adapt for new cultures

5.1 Does your workplace need any supports to make it more welcoming?

- adopt mindset to welcome newcomers
- More sharing of newcomer stories with companies
- Translation services



- Onboarding process
- Team building (including spouse)
- Connecting/networking opportunity for employers to share ideas
- Job fairs for all industries
- Cultural competence for everybody
- More partnership amongst local programs and employers
- More clarity for employers about available programs and where to start/find relevant information

6.0 What are some of the things that you believe make Canadian society a better place for immigrants?

- More inclusive – open
- Supportive
- Exposure to new resources
- Better opportunity
- Safe
- Not crowded
- Clean
- Accessibility – ability to have a good living
- Healthcare
- Relations with other countries – consular services
- Tim Horton's
- Multicultural support
- Peaceful
- Opportunities for everyone
- Freedom
- Education
- Safety
- Healthcare
- Welcoming, tolerant
- Opportunities for diverse peoples (occupational, government services)
- Diversity of Canadian communities
- Variety of employment opportunities available
- Tolerant society
- Healthcare
- Multitude of education opportunities
- Many local programs, partnerships, and engagement opportunities



6.1. From your perspective as an employer of immigrants, what advice would you give to:

i) Municipal Government?

- Transportation options
- Transportation
- Transportation in Region
- Freedom for business decisions – ex. Sunday shopping
- Amenities that immigrants are used to (Cricket, etc)
- Resources to newcomers (learning to skate, etc)
- Community services/centers help
- Transportation alternatives

ii) Provincial Government?

- Make it easier to get them, less lead time to make a decision
- Education options
- Language services
- Provincial roads
- Keep tweaking application process/timeline
- Better education for application options for employers
- Childcare
- Transportation
- Regional thinking
- Faster
- Employer vetting to streamline process of bringing in newcomers

iii) Federal Government?

- Flexibility of the process/requirements
- Language requirements
- Keep tweaking application process/timeline
- Rural/northern is a good start – not for us
- Better education on employer application opportunities
- Regional thinking
- Faster, more responsive
- Settlement services help
- Employer vetting to streamline process of bringing in newcomers
- More/better or access to equivalency databases for international education and experience (Eg. Apprenticeship programs/recognition)



Final Statements:

1. Transportation**** (each group recognized this as a #1 issue)
 - Impacts: family, jobs, social connections,
 - Community Connections
 - Logistics: communities too far apart without additional transportation
 - Ongoing need
2. Need an umbrella (connector)
 - Stop working in silo's
 - Need to connect/be more aware of all programs
3. Welcoming workplace
 - Diversity training needed to help make workplace more welcoming
4. Language ** (also recognized as 2nd biggest issue facing newcomers and employers)
 - Need translation services
 - Desire for more post-secondary options to pursue higher language training
5. Childcare
 - Not enough options to support shift workers
6. Networking opportunity between businesses and newcomers

Green Action Center – Go Manitoba – brief summary of carpooling app and options available to use for free that could be implemented in the region to resolve some transportation needs

Appendix B – Employers Resource

A resource guide prepared by IRCC was provided to participants and can be found online:

[The Employers Roadmap: Hiring and Retaining Internationally Trained Workers](#)

