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ALBERTA IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION INTO THE PETROLEUM INDUSTRY

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INTRODUCTION

Alberta is now in the midst of the labour crunch experts have been predicting. In the last ten years, the province has moved from **an era of more workers than work, to an era of more work than workers**. From a demographic perspective, this will continue to be the case for at least the next decade.

Petroleum industry employers have traditionally secured the talent required by hiring it away from competitors, service providers, other geographic locations, or other industries – mostly by escalating worker compensation. Though this has been relatively effective to date, it is not a sustainable solution as it has both:

1. Driven up industry operating costs impacting the economic viability of some exploration and development projects; and
2. Driven up inflation in the general economy of Alberta.

A key opportunity for Alberta's oil and gas industry to address worker demand and minimize the negative impacts associated with current and future labour concerns is to increase the participation of workers currently under-represented in the workforce – i.e. Aboriginals, women and internationally trained workers.

To date, internationally trained workers still represent an underutilized labour pool. The Government of Alberta has invested a considerable amount of work and resources into equipping internationally trained workers with settlement support, job search assistance, language training, support in seeking accreditation of foreign credentials and academic upgrading of skills. "Fixing the immigrant" is only half of the equation — work needs to be done from the employer perspective as well.

Alberta falling short 100,000 workers Labour crunch jeopardizes mega projects

Alberta faces a potentially crippling shortage of workers that could stall development of multi-billion-dollar oil sands projects and the economy at large, government and industry officials said Tuesday.

Government forecasts say Alberta needs 400,000 new workers by 2015. But that analysis also shows 100,000 of those jobs won't be filled unless new strategies are engaged to recruit and retain people from every possible demographic.

Brian Maynard, a vice-president with the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, says the energy industry alone faces a shortfall of 40,000 workers over the next 8 years.

Failure to find the right workers could jeopardize billions in investment planned for the booming energy sector. Energy contributes about a third, more than \$59 billion annually, to Alberta's gross domestic product.

Maynard said Alberta can't afford to ignore the brewing demographic storm. "There's just too much at stake" he said, "This is one of the biggest issues our industry faces."

*Front page story from the Calgary Herald
Wednesday July 11, 2007*

PROJECT OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the **Alberta Immigrant Integration into the Petroleum Industry** project is to determine the tools, resources and/or support processes needed by petroleum industry employers to increase the employment and retention of internationally trained workers already living in Alberta into the upstream petroleum industry.

The purpose of this report is to:

1. Outline the gaps in information, tools, resources and services that are preventing the petroleum industry from taking advantage of the skills and experience offered by Alberta's labour pool of internationally trained workers in any significant way; and
2. Present an overview of strategic priorities and recommended activities, duly endorsed by stakeholders, to improve the recruitment and integration of internationally trained workers into the petroleum industry workforce.



Recognizing the variety of terms used to describe immigrants and foreign workers, combined with sensitivity within the labour supply community surrounding terminology, there has been a conscious decision to use the term “internationally trained workers” within this report. Our use of this term refers to those individuals who:

- Have received training and/or education outside of Canada;
- Possess skills and experience that can be utilized within the upstream petroleum industry;
- Have immigrated to Canada and are currently legally able to work within Canada; and
- Currently reside in Alberta.

These internationally trained workers have immigrated to Canada of their own accord, require no sponsorship from employers and are available to work within the industry immediately.

It is important to note that this report and project represents a snapshot of the situation today. We are presenting information as it exists in an environment of rapidly evolving information, knowledge, skills, attitudes and resources related to the employment of internationally trained workers. This is compounded by the dynamic business environment within which the oil and gas industry operates, affecting the demand side of the labour equation. Ever-changing market commodity prices as well as government regulatory and fiscal regimes impact industry investment decisions, activity levels and ultimately staffing requirements - in terms of the number of workers as well as the skill sets required. Evidence of this is both the current slowdown in drilling activity resulting from depressed natural gas prices, as well as industry’s response to Alberta’s recent royalty review. Our intent is to present information in such a way that it provides a foundation that can be built upon and utilized by those parties interested in taking action regardless of the direction the business environment may evolve.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The key findings resulting from the research and gap analysis conducted for the **Alberta Immigrant Integration into the Petroleum Industry** project are the foundation for the strategic priorities and recommended activities found later in this report. Primary and secondary research was conducted; first with the petroleum industry (from a labour demand perspective), and then with internationally trained workers and immigrant-serving agencies (from a labour supply perspective). All primary research undertaken was qualitative using a purposeful sampling approach. Research participants were selected for their in-depth knowledge of and insight from either a labour demand or supply perspective.

A 17 member Advisory Committee representing industry, labour supply, government and educational institutes provided the Petroleum HR Council and the project consultants direction throughout the project as well as provided input to and validation of the research and gap analysis. The Advisory Committee, research participants, and other key stakeholders attended a Strategy and Action Planning session in January 2008 to review and prioritize the recommendations to address the gaps. The result of that session is included in the *Overview of Strategic Priorities and Recommended Activities* section of this report.

DEMAND RESEARCH

The sectors of the petroleum industry involved in this study align with the Petroleum HR Council’s definition of the “upstream” petroleum industry and include:

- Exploration & Production companies (E&P);
- Service Industries: Geophysical contractors, Drilling companies and Service companies;
- Natural Gas Processing companies;
- Pipeline companies; and
- Oil Sands companies (Heavy Oil and Bitumen Extraction and Upgrading).

Initiating the research with the demand side was critical in order to understand the petroleum industry’s:

- Business case/drivers for hiring internationally trained workers; and
- Readiness to recruit and integrate internationally trained workers.

Readiness was evaluated by assessing:

- Interest in this labour supply;
- Knowledge of this labour supply;
- Past experience with this labour supply; and
- Prevalence of human resources organizational structure and activities that support recruitment and integration of internationally trained workers.

Readiness was assessed from an industry-wide perspective as well as from a sector perspective. This report does not identify the readiness of individual companies although the information within this report should help them assess their own readiness.

The industry-specific research conducted for this project provided the opportunity to better understand industry's needs and recommend solutions that align with these needs. Information was also gathered in relation to current employer hiring and integration practices for internationally trained workers.

Broad sampling was obtained through purposeful selection of demand interviewees to access information from a wide range of petroleum industry sectors. In total, 17 individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives from across all sectors including industry associations whose responses incorporated feedback from multiple sources. In addition, information was gathered during an advisory board meeting for BOWEN Workforce Solutions' *Immigrant Works* program where 8 petroleum industry representatives and 5 internationally trained professionals seeking employment in the industry were consulted.

SUPPLY RESEARCH

For the purpose of this study "immigrant-serving agencies" have been defined as any agency or organization that provides settlement and/or employment services and programming to immigrants. This includes training institutions that may also service a broader client base.

The focus of the labour supply research was to gain an understanding of the internationally trained workers' experience pursuing employment within the petroleum industry, as well as their overall integration into the industry's workforce. Immigrant-serving agency interviewees were selected on the basis of their experience and perspective from having worked with large volumes (hundreds to thousands) of internationally trained workers and their knowledge of the skills and experiences of the labour pool. In total, 21 representatives from immigrant-serving agencies and programs within Alberta participated in this phase of the research. The research team also interviewed 9 internationally trained workers who are pursuing employment within the petroleum industry, as well as 4 who have successfully secured employment.

SECONDARY RESEARCH

While this is the first time research related to recruiting and integrating internationally trained workers has been undertaken specifically for the petroleum industry, a considerable body of relevant research exists that was built upon for this project. Existing statistical information and research studies were reviewed as part of the research phase of this project.

Statistical data quantifying the internationally trained labour pool is presently available at a macro level and though directionally useful, is difficult to feed into workforce plans at the level of detail required by petroleum industry employers. Primary immigration information available through Statistics Canada provides data on numbers of internationally trained workers, education levels, immigration classification, source country, and initial settlement point within Canada. This is useful in assessing the size of pool available and the number of new internationally trained workers entering the Alberta market annually; however, there are limitations when it comes to assessing the information in relation to skill sets and work experience available.

Research studies on the labour market integration issues of internationally trained worker are plentiful and readily available, containing valuable and relevant information for the petroleum industry. These studies can be categorized as follows by the group for which the research was conducted:

- *Industry/Occupational Studies:* There has been a variety of related research conducted for other industries and occupational groups investigating various aspects of employment and integration of internationally trained workers.

- *Government Studies:* Generally used for developing policy, strategy and programming investment decisions or in response to industry issues.
- *Educational Institutes and Think Tank Studies:* Generally conducted for knowledge building, influencing government policies, and program development.
- *Governing Bodies and Regulated Professions:* Initiated in response to managing credential recognition and accreditation responsibilities as well as supporting the integration of internationally trained workers within their occupation.
- *Special Interest Groups Studies:* A body of work exists on the hiring and integrating of special interest groups such as women and Aboriginals from which learnings can be gleaned.

Primary research interviews were utilized to validate the relevance of the findings from secondary research to the petroleum industry. In general, the key findings identified from this project align with the key findings from secondary sources.

SUMMARY OF KEY LABOUR SUPPLY AND DEMAND FINDINGS

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY: LABOUR DEMAND RESEARCH

1. There is a business case for recruiting and integrating internationally trained employees into the petroleum industry.

The labour shortage that has been exacerbated by unprecedented industry activity and workforce demographics is, and will continue to be, the driving force for effective recruitment and integration of internationally trained workers into the industry.

2. The petroleum industry's "readiness" to recruit and integrate Alberta's internationally trained workers varies across industry sectors.

A number of factors were used to assess the readiness of Alberta's petroleum industry to recruit and integrate internationally trained workers. These factors and findings are described below.

- **Interest in tapping into this labour supply** – the greatest interest came from industry sectors that have completed the most extensive workforce planning, as they appear to have the greatest understanding of their own labour demand risks.
- **Knowledge about this labour supply** – this includes the education, skills and experience available; job expectations; commitment to employer; willingness to move/relocate; and other characteristics of this labour supply.
- **Past experience tapping into this labour supply** – regardless of whether it was recruitment of internationally trained workers as described for this project or those accessed through foreign recruitment.
- **Human Resources organizational structure and activities that support recruitment and integration of internationally trained workers including:**
 - Longer-term workforce planning;
 - Effective on-boarding and orientation programs;
 - A "build the skills" philosophy and a work environment that supports the development of technical and soft skills (as opposed to just trying to "buy the skills");
 - Holistic view of recruitment to include the broader needs of the employee's family and how they integrate into the community;
 - Expertise in recruiting and integrating from other under-represented groups; and
 - A centralized recruitment function.

The following chart provides a summary indication of the petroleum industry’s readiness to recruit and integrate internationally trained workers by industry sector as of January 2008.

INDUSTRY SECTOR	INTEREST IN TAPPING INTO THE SUPPLY POOL	KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE SUPPLY POOL	PAST EXPERIENCE WITH THE SUPPLY POOL	HUMAN RESOURCES ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND ACTIVITIES THAT SUPPORT RECRUITMENT AND INTEGRATION OF SUPPLY POOL
Exploration & Production				
▪ Large Producers	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✗ Multi-disciplinary teams; one discipline per team; working managers with limited time to mentor & support development. ✓ Workforce planning & centralized recruitment more common.
▪ Mid-Size Producers	✗	✗	✗	✗ Multi-disciplinary teams; one discipline per team; limited training capacity.
▪ Small Producers	✗	✗	✗	✗ Business is built on knowledge of key players; no training capacity.
Service Industries				✗ Traditional culture of field operations environment not supportive of diversity; activity in reaction to E&P needs limits workforce planning capability; conventional industry greatly impacted by cyclical nature of industry activity.
▪ Geophysical Services	✗	✗	✗	✗ Low activity & hiring levels. Prevalence of small employers with reduced HR capacity.
▪ Drilling & Completions	✓	✓	✓	✓ Career progression ladder allows entry point and development. ✗ Decreased drilling activity slows hiring.
▪ Service Companies	✗	✗	✗	✗ Decreased activity levels. Prevalence of small employers with reduced HR capacity.
Pipeline Transmission	✓	✓	✓	✓ High hiring activity for expansion projects; knowledge from employment equity experience.
Natural Gas Processing	✓	✓	✓	✓ Traditional recruitment & retention problems in remote locations have increased interest.
Oil Sands	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓ High hiring activity for expansion projects; new projects have adopted “build the skills” philosophy; large workforces offer increased opportunity to provide supervision, development support and training capacity; internationally trained workers gaining critical mass.
Unions	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓ Trades traditionally built on internationally trained workers; process for skill development & career path exist through apprenticeship program.

- ✗ Annotates **no** readiness and/or support mechanisms in place
- ✓ Annotates **low** readiness and/or support mechanisms in place
- ✓✓ Annotates **moderate** readiness and/or support mechanisms in place
- ✓✓✓ Annotates **high** degree of readiness and/or support mechanisms in place

3. Communication is a major concern related to hiring internationally trained employees.

The term “communication” is used in this report to define the process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behaviors.¹ It is the act of passing information and the process by which meanings are exchanged so as to produce understanding.²

- The petroleum industry’s workplace structure requires a high functioning level of English language capability and comprehension as well as industry and occupation-specific language proficiency. Much of the industry is structured into cross-functional teams, meaning that team members need to effectively communicate specialized technical terms and concepts to other members of different disciplines. Many of the industry’s occupations also require some level of interaction with customers and a significant amount of business is conducted over the phone, which makes language proficiency a necessity.
- The knowledge-based components of the industry are dominated by professional occupations working with conceptual and detailed technical matters. In these occupations, the value of a candidate is based on his or her ideas and the ability to communicate them effectively. If a candidate cannot get his or her ideas across, then he or she offers little value to the organization.³
- The operations labour-based components of the industry are safety-sensitive work environments. The ability to clearly understand and be understood is essential for the safety of both the individual worker as well as other employees in the workplace.

4. Safety is a major concern within the industry.

Given the focus on safety within the petroleum industry, a number of potential concerns were raised related to hiring internationally trained workers that go beyond what can be mitigated by appropriate safety training and certification. These concerns include communication capability, driving safety and operating within a workplace culture where safety is a high priority.

5. Challenges exist with industry culture and organizational structure.

- The upstream petroleum industry holds a reputation for its:
 - “Survival-of-the-fittest” mentality, which often exists in field operations environments; and
 - Lack of tolerance for minority groups be they women, Aboriginals, visible minorities or internationally trained workers.
- Structural barriers exist within the industry that inhibit its ability to effectively hire and integrate internationally trained workers including:
 - Working manager roles versus mentoring manager roles; and
 - Self-managed multidisciplinary teams often include only one representative from each functional discipline. This structure results in a lack of opportunity for technical supervision/guidance and can create learning as well as accreditation challenges for internationally trained workers.
- Petroleum industry employers traditionally hire their talent already trained setting the expectation that new employees should be able to “hit the ground running” with little support.

6. Petroleum industry’s experience with internationally trained workers, while limited, seems positive.

Industry reported hiring internationally trained workers into the following occupations:

- Accountants;
- Engineering technologist roles;
- Field engineers;
- Human resources;
- IT/IS;
- Mining operators;
- Pipeline designers;
- Process operators; and
- Trades.

In the majority of cases, industry reported that the technical skills of the internationally trained workers were good. Some companies indicated cultural clashes due to different ways of doing business, but the hiring of internationally trained workers also brought a different level of creativity to the organization which was viewed as positive.



7. The petroleum industry is on the cusp of looking to immigrant-serving agencies as a labour supply resource, but changes to programs for internationally trained workers may need to occur.

Traditionally, the petroleum industry's involvement with immigrant-serving agencies has been driven from a social responsibility perspective or specific relationships between individuals in the company and the agency. Industry's increasing interest in partnering with organizations that work with labour supply pools not traditionally accessed by the industry is driven by:

- A rapidly developing business case to address labour shortages; and
- A transition to more centralized and strategic recruiting functions with specialized skills and focus.

The intention of current programming is to equip internationally trained workers for employment; however, it does not adequately meet the business needs of employers within the petroleum industry. If the industry is to partner with immigrant-serving agencies to address their labour supply concerns, changes may be required. The types of changes required are reflected in the recommendations proposed later in this report.

INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED WORKERS: LABOUR SUPPLY RESEARCH

1. Difficult to assess internationally trained labour supply.

One of the greatest challenges associated with trying to understand the potential match between the labour demand within the petroleum industry and the internationally trained labour supply is the lack of solid statistical information on the workers and their skills, qualifications and work experience. The findings from the qualitative research indicates that there are opportunities to match the Alberta internationally trained labour supply with demand in the industry; however, understanding the magnitude of that match will require development of data gathering tools and processes.

2. Internationally trained workers are not equipped to undertake job search in Canada.

Focus groups and interviews with internationally trained workers and immigrant-serving agencies working on employment issues indicated that internationally trained workers lack job search knowledge and skills that are effective within the Canadian job market because:

- They arrived in Canada with the impression they would become gainfully employed in their professional field in a short period of time.
- There is a significant difference between what the Canadian job market values and those factors valued within the home countries of the majority of internationally trained workers. This creates a disconnect between what the industry is looking for and how an internationally trained job searcher presents their qualifications on their resume and in interviews. Internationally trained workers are also not accustomed to quantifying or presenting their work in a measurable fashion as is expected in Canada; therefore, they tend not to represent their skills and experience appropriately.
- They are often not prepared to represent themselves in behavioural interviews, the common interviewing method used by Canadian industry to assess "soft skills." In general, there is little value placed on "soft skills" in their home countries. This can be attributed to a combination of cultural factors including:
 - Behavioral and societal norms that do not support self-promotion; and
 - Greater importance placed on education, job title and role within the company than on how the work was done or what was accomplished.
- Many internationally trained workers are not aware that Alberta should be their point of entry into the country if they wish to work in the petroleum industry.

3. Credential recognition - Is an internationally trained engineer still an engineer in Canada?

One of the challenges associated with job search for internationally trained engineers is that the practical experience of an internationally trained engineer may be much broader and less specialized than that of Canadian trained engineers due to the way that engineering is practiced in their home country. As a result, in some cases, the best "match" for an internationally trained engineer may not be an engineering position at all.

4. The majority of internationally trained workers understand that they will need to prove themselves to the industry.

Many internationally trained workers understand that taking jobs within their field beneath their qualification and experience levels is likely and they do not view this negatively. It is often perceived as an opportunity to enhance their English, to gain Canadian experience and to develop an understanding of the workplace culture without being overstressed from a technical perspective. However, companies often dismiss these professionals' resumes as being "overqualified."

5. Internationally trained workers are mobile.

Internationally trained workers indicate they are willing to move if they are offered a job in their field. They are also interested in fly-in/fly-out and rotational schedules.

6. Attitude is key - differences in attitude impact the success in securing employment.

Internationally trained workers who found employment in their chosen field had positive attitudes and were personable and outgoing, though they were not necessarily the most competent in terms of technical and speaking skills. Internationally trained workers who were successful in securing employment in the industry also tended to seek out assistance related to their job search early and followed the advice given.

7. Job search advisors could benefit from accurate information about the petroleum industry, its recruiting processes, its workplace culture and its careers.

Immigrant-serving agencies have good general information about the labour market and common job search practices; however, their ability to assist internationally trained workers find employment in the petroleum industry is hindered by their lack of understanding of the industry and its jobs.

8. Immigrant-serving agencies face operational and funding challenges.

- Like all other businesses across Alberta, recruiting and retaining staff is a challenge for immigrant-serving agencies.
- Agencies report huge numbers of applicants for their programs — going through hundreds of applicants for a program that accepts 15 participants is an enormous, ongoing task.
- There is a sense that immigrant-serving agencies are competing with each other for programming dollars, partnerships with industry and for work placements/internships for their clients.
- Immigrant-serving agencies have been creative in addressing some of the barriers they face in providing services for their clients. For example, some of the restrictions placed on access to language assessment have caused some agencies to develop their own assessment tools. These customized assessment tools may be appropriate and effective for their purposes but may not be suitable for broader application. This practice has also added to the growing confusion about the existing tools including their applications.
- The majority of immigrant-serving agencies indicated that they are dealing with settlement support for temporary foreign workers even though these workers are not within their client mandate.

9. A wide variety of tools and resources have been developed to assist in the employment and integration of internationally trained workers.

There are numerous assessment tools for language, prior learning, transferable skills, etc.; however, for the most part, the petroleum industry is unaware of them.

10. There is an abundance of projects focused on enhancing the transition of the internationally trained labour supply into the labour force.

As the interest in accessing this labour supply increases, so do the projects and work associated with this area, resulting in an abundance of information and a rapidly evolving field of study. A multitude of stakeholders are approaching the subject from a number of different perspectives and gems of information relevant to the petroleum industry exist within most of the work underway. The challenges are: taking a coordinated approach to reduce duplication; keeping up to date with the sheer volume of activity; assimilating the learnings relevant for the petroleum industry; and disseminating the information to the industry to effect positive change. There is also concern that the petroleum industry may not have been effectively engaged in the research and development of tools that could be of value to them.



TARGETING INTEGRATION FOR SUCCESS IN THE WORKPLACE

Is it a Performance Issue or Workplace Issue?

The general observation derived from the research on the integration of internationally trained workers is that the tendency, to date, within the petroleum industry has been to focus on “fixing” the internationally trained worker so that he/she will fit into the occupation, industry and company. If issues arise in the workplace, it has typically been dealt with as a performance issue. Only recently has integration been recognized as a *workplace* issue as opposed to an *individual performance* issue. This seems to be occurring within the oil sands sector where there has been a large influx of foreign workers who are now attaining a critical mass with enough influence to shift the focus of their integration as a broader workplace issue.

Integration into the Petroleum Industry and its Occupations

Activities to enhance integration of internationally trained workers into an occupation are often included in the pre-employment and bridging programs developed by immigrant-serving agencies and post-secondary institutions. When the occupational training has been designed specifically for, or to include the petroleum industry, aspects related to the industry’s workplace and its culture are incorporated. The greatest challenge to ensuring the cultural training is relevant for the petroleum industry is access and utilization of accurate information. While some programs benefit from using instructors possessing industry experience, in-depth petroleum industry knowledge amongst immigrant-serving agencies varies. Compounding the problem is the fact that describing culture is difficult and standard information/curriculum content about the petroleum industry culture is not readily available.

Integration into the Company/Work Team

Most of the petroleum industry’s larger companies provide their employees with some “cultural-sensitivity” or “valuing-diversity” training. However, it appears that the concepts related to cultural sensitivity and valuing diversity have not been incorporated into companies’ everyday recruitment and integration practices. It is our assessment that there is not the critical mass of internationally trained employees within most companies to move cultural or diversity awareness into broader organizational practices.

The research found that orientation and integration activities for the general employee population vary across industry companies. Only a few companies were able to describe activities designed to assist with the integration of internationally trained workers into their companies. Some of these activities include formal mentoring, one-on-one accent reduction coaching and assigning a relocation consultant to assist with integration into the community. Other companies identified informal activities such as the development of casual/social mentoring relationships that support the integration of their internationally trained workers. Opportunity clearly exists to formalize and enhance orientation and integration programs.

Multi-national petroleum companies identified formal activities such as pre-assignment cultural assessments and integration planning for moving employees into offshore and/or foreign assignments; however, none of these companies indicated they were using similar activities to enhance the integration of internationally trained workers employed within Canada. It does indicate, however, that these companies likely have some effective tools, processes and resources in place that could be modified for integration of the internationally trained worker into the Canadian workplace.

There is a growing critical mass of internationally trained workers in the oil sands sector. Even though a number were employed through foreign recruitment, it is anticipated that the oil sands sector will take the lead on improving integration of all internationally trained workers. Some companies have started to incorporate English as a Second Language (ESL) and technical skill upgrading, as well as accreditation preparation for their workers. Employers have also partnered with Keyano College to offer workshops to support community integration.

SYNTHESIS AND GAP ANALYSIS

TODAY'S REALITY

At the core of the research findings for this project is that, today, internationally trained workers who have immigrated to Canada/Alberta and have relevant petroleum industry experience are **not** getting through the petroleum industry's regular recruitment process at any significant rate.

THE GOAL

The desired result of this project is a set of strategic priorities and recommended activities that facilitate internationally trained workers already in Canada getting through the petroleum industry's mainstream recruitment process so that industry employers can capitalize on their skills and talent.

There was a common desire expressed by both labour supply and labour demand stakeholders to move beyond research and into implementable solutions. The research findings of this project closely align with other published research conducted within Canada and specifically within Alberta. As a result, there is little interest in continuing to validate problems but significant interest in focusing available resources on developing and implementing solutions.

GAPS THAT PREVENT ACHIEVING THE GOAL

An analysis of the primary and secondary research findings identified a number of current gaps preventing a match between the petroleum industry demand for workers and the supply of internationally trained workers.

There are gaps in **industry's readiness to hire internationally trained workers**.

1. Although the potential value of hiring and integrating internationally trained workers within some sectors of the petroleum industry is recognized, a business case needs to be developed which clearly articulates the return on investment for tapping into the labour pool of internationally trained workers currently residing in Alberta. In addition, to date no industry leader has emerged as a champion to educate and challenge industry business leaders to take action and utilize the potential within this labour pool.
2. The information currently available on the internationally trained labour supply within Alberta does not provide the petroleum industry with a sufficient understanding of the potential skills and experience this pool could provide. As a result, employers do not recognize Alberta's supply of internationally trained workers as a potential labour resource for industry. This includes not only the skills and experience they offer but also other key characteristics of this labour supply such as their willingness to relocate for employment, loyalty and willingness to prove themselves in more junior positions. For the most part, the petroleum industry perceives incongruence between the skills they require and those that are coming into the country and the province through immigration.
3. Some sectors within the industry are not involved in activities that would enhance their readiness to hire from the internationally trained labour pool. Geophysical, service and drilling sectors do not have adequate information to conduct longer-term workforce planning and develop a more proactive approach to recruitment.
4. Small and medium-sized companies do not have the internal capacity to tap into the pool of internationally trained workers.
5. Recruiters within the petroleum industry do not have adequate knowledge, time, resources and/or access to information and tools to "translate" an internationally trained worker's resume and identify transferable skills. They also lack awareness of existing models, tools and resources that could enhance and manage some of the perceived risks associated with hiring internationally trained workers.
6. While most of the larger companies' human resources departments are aware of labour market trends, company personnel who have authority to make hiring decisions are less informed.
7. There is a lack of awareness of existing pre-employment programs that could facilitate the recruitment of internationally trained workers.
8. Generally speaking, petroleum companies are not effective at orientating and/or integrating internationally trained workers into their workplaces.

There are also **gaps that prevent internationally trained workers from successfully securing work in the petroleum industry** – even if they have appropriate education and experience.

9. Internationally trained workers' expectations related to finding employment in their field of expertise differ significantly from their actual Canadian job search experience. The immigration process leads immigrants to believe that their skills and experience are valued and in demand; yet when they apply for jobs in Canada, employers often do not understand their foreign education, skills and experience and, therefore, undervalue them. This disconnect can be partially attributed to how the internationally trained workers present themselves in their resumes and their lack of understanding of the:
 - o Canadian petroleum industry, its employment opportunities, job titles and descriptions and effective job search practices.
 - o “Cultural competency” required to be successful in the Canadian/industry workplace.
 - o Industry's working conditions, nature of work, business environment (e.g. teamwork) and industry terminology (e.g. graveyard shift).
10. Internationally trained workers currently reside predominantly in urban centres in Alberta which is not where the industry's most prolific labour demand is located (i.e. oil sands). However, Fort McMurray has significant infrastructure issues and, therefore, the solution is NOT for internationally trained workers to relocate there until they secure employment.

While there are a variety of immigrant-serving agencies, as well as tools and resources designed to facilitate the transition of internationally trained workers into the labour market, a number of **gaps exist between these agencies, tools and resources and the business needs of the petroleum industry**.

11. There is a lack of coordination amongst all the work that is being done to assist internationally trained workers transition into the labour market. Research conducted for this project indicates duplication of work and competition for funding and industry support. In addition, the petroleum industry indicated that it is difficult to distinguish which immigrant-serving agency is doing what and for whom. Fragmentation of services also impacts the internationally trained workers access to accurate information needed to make appropriate decisions about the “best” programming for their personal situation.
12. Language/communication is an issue that prevents internationally trained workers from securing employment in the industry, and prevents industry from benefiting from this skilled labour supply. Currently there are no language standards for industry occupations nor is there an industry-recognized language assessment tool that could be used to address this gap.
13. There is a lack of petroleum industry career and cultural information designed to meet the needs of this targeted labour supply.
14. Industry is not involved in the development of tools and resources that could be used to assist in managing the perceived risks related to hiring internationally trained workers.
15. In general, immigrant-serving agencies do not have a good understanding or access to accurate information about the petroleum industry, its careers and recruitment practices to effectively assist internationally trained workers. This gap also prevents immigrant-serving agencies from effectively providing labour supply solutions to the petroleum industry.
16. Most pre-employment programming is occupation-specific as opposed to industry-specific, which makes it difficult to provide petroleum industry-specific cultural competency development and skills upgrading. Exceptions to this include the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society's (or CCIS) Rig Technician program and training supplied through Keyano College, which provides greater opportunity to focus on the oil sands.
17. The majority of work experience programs for internationally trained workers do not meet the business needs of industry employers. Most work experience placements have been designed from the internationally trained workers' perspective, providing exposure to the Canadian workplace and an opportunity to gain some Canadian work experience. They also tend to be relatively short-term and are free to the employer. The petroleum industry identified greater value in placements where the candidate's skills and experience are matched with the company's needs and the placement is long enough to adequately assess the candidate's “fit” with the company. The petroleum industry has indicated a willingness to pay for longer placements.



OVERVIEW OF STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES

In an effort to present potential solutions for the gaps identified, the following strategic priorities and recommended activities have been developed with input from key stakeholders. These recommendations have been put forward for the Petroleum HR Council to consider in planning future project work.

A foundational principle of the activities presented is that a substantial body of information and resources currently exist. Activities undertaken to address gaps and issues can be built upon or adapted from existing practices, tools and resources rather than starting anew. Best practices of similar work have been identified and aligned with the activities and presented as text boxes. These best practices demonstrate how a practice has been applied, sometimes in other industries or geographic locations. Although there are not a lot of petroleum industry-specific practices available to date, the best practices presented are foundations that can be built upon or customized to better meet industry needs.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

A combination of research and analysis conducted by the project consultants and stakeholder input identified three strategic priorities to better align the petroleum industry with the labour resource provided by internationally trained workers already residing in Alberta/Canada. They include:

1. Bridging information gaps that currently exist between the petroleum industry, immigrant-serving agencies and internationally trained workers.
2. Enhancing the petroleum industry’s willingness and readiness to recruit and integrate internationally trained workers.
3. Enhancing internationally trained workers marketability and employability into the petroleum industry.

The following table summarizes the rationale for determining the strategic priorities identified above.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	RATIONALE
<p>1. Bridging information gaps.</p>	<p>A key finding of the Alberta Immigrant Integration into the Petroleum Industry project is that there are knowledge and/or comprehension gaps between the petroleum industry and the internationally trained labour supply pool including agencies and organizations that service them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers need to better understand the services and programs of the immigrant-serving agencies that align with providing labour supply to the industry. • Immigrant-serving agencies need to better understand the petroleum industry and its careers so that they can work with internationally trained workers looking for employment in the industry. <p>There also is a need to gather information that will assist in creating an understanding of the magnitude and potential this labour pool offers.</p>

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	RATIONALE
<p>2. Enhancing the petroleum industry’s willingness and readiness to recruit and integrate internationally trained workers.</p>	<p>At the end of the day, if industry does not hire from this labour pool, all other work becomes incapable of producing any significant results. Therefore, dealing with barriers to industry’s willingness and readiness is critical. Key to enhancing industry’s willingness and readiness is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and promoting the business case including the return on investment for this labour supply; and • Providing industry with the tools and resources to assist with effective recruitment and integration of internationally trained workers.
<p>3. Enhancing internationally trained workers marketability and employability into the petroleum industry.</p>	<p>Even though the industry’s willingness and readiness to hire internationally trained workers is key to taking advantage of this labour pool already in Alberta, research also indicated that there are gaps in the internationally trained workers’ readiness for employment in the industry.</p> <p>Specifically, internationally trained workers could benefit from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A tool that measures the alignment of their language/communication competency level with industry requirements; • Opportunities to develop petroleum industry cultural competency; and • Opportunities to better align their technical skills and qualifications with industry demand.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

Achieving the goal of the strategic priorities and recommended activities is dependent upon the following fundamentals:

- Petroleum industry needs to be committed to hiring from this labour supply pool.
- Industry involvement in the design of implementation plans for the recommended activities is key to ensuring industry needs are met.
- Activities need to be industry-specific in order to address petroleum industry needs but also need to recognize the differences across the industry sectors and conventional and unconventional components of the industry.
- Build on existing resources and best practices as opposed to reinventing the wheel.
- Move to action in a timely fashion. Industry and other stakeholders indicated that there is waning tolerance for continued research into the issues and problems. They are interested in participating in solutions. Canada’s reputation as a country of choice is being negatively impacted by internationally trained workers experience in trying to secure employment in their field of expertise.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #1: BRIDGING INFORMATION GAPS THAT CURRENTLY EXIST BETWEEN THE PETROLEUM INDUSTRY, IMMIGRANT-SERVING AGENCIES AND INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED WORKERS.

1.1 GATHER INFORMATION ON THE INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED LABOUR SUPPLY THAT IS RELEVANT TO INDUSTRY EMPLOYERS.

This recommendation involves gathering two types of information:

1. Statistical information to better inform an industry-wide supply/demand analysis, which would include information on internationally trained workers such as:
 - o Education discipline and level; industry experience; country of education and experience; point of entry into Canada; and secondary migration into Alberta (including date and location).
 - o This is a foundational activity and can be tied in with the development of the business case (refer to Activity 2.1) as it provides the information required by industry to make solid decisions about hiring from this labour supply pool.
2. A database of oil and gas specific candidates for those employers ready to hire internationally trained workers.
 - o Internationally trained workers would self-report their qualifications, skills and experience through a database specifically designed for internationally trained workers possessing petroleum industry experience.
 - o Database design and support would need to ensure that the information gathered is useful and accessible to petroleum industry recruiters.
 - o We are cautioned from the experience of other groups that, although it is intended to facilitate recruitment, development of a candidates database does not necessarily result in increased hiring of internationally trained workers by employers.
 - o Caution is also necessary to avoid potentially overloading immigrant-serving agencies by expecting them to facilitate candidate screening for entry into database.

Emerging Practice Profiled:
Inclusion Network provides a centralized resource for employers seeking Aboriginal candidates. The Inclusion Network is a national job board designed for aboriginal candidates to post their resumes and employers to post employment opportunities. Employers can also search the database to identify suitable aboriginal candidates.

Best Practice Profiled:
Career Bridge offers a pre-screened database of immigrant professionals from the Toronto and Vancouver areas which employers can access to hire candidates for internship positions.

1.2 CREATE A CENTRALIZED SOURCE OF PETROLEUM INDUSTRY RELEVANT INFORMATION, TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR INDUSTRY EMPLOYERS AND INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED LABOUR SUPPLY.

1. Develop one-stop shopping (web-based) for:
 - o **Industry:** information about qualified internationally trained candidates and immigrant-serving agencies whose programs are aligned with and support industry requirements. This can be particularly useful for small to midsize employers with limited human resources support and capability.
 - o **Immigrant-serving agencies and internationally trained workers:** information about the petroleum industry, its careers, its culture, its recruitment practices, as well as connection to employers and jobs.
2. Coordinate the interaction between petroleum industry employers and relevant work designed to assist with the transition of internationally trained workers into the labour market.

Best Practice Profiled:
Hireimmigrants.ca in Toronto area and **5 Step Solution** in B.C. are websites providing centralized sources of employment-related information, resources and tools directed toward **employers**.

Best Practice Profiled:
TRIEC in Toronto area and **Looking Ahead** in B.C. are websites providing centralized sources of employment-related information, resources and tools directed toward **both employers and immigrants**.

1.3 COORDINATE A FORUM THAT BRINGS PETROLEUM INDUSTRY AND IMMIGRANT-SERVING AGENCIES TOGETHER TO PROMOTE DIALOGUE AND A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF HOW THEY CAN WORK TOGETHER.

A series of forums that would facilitate dialogue on topics such as:

- Programs and resources that exist within immigrant-serving agencies that can support petroleum industry's business needs.
- The opportunity to tap into the Canada-wide labour pool of internationally trained workers.
- The petroleum industry, its culture, recruitment processes and labour demands.
- The tools and resources available that could mitigate the perceived risks associated with hiring internationally trained workers (e.g. language/communication competency assessment tools).

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #2: ENHANCING THE PETROLEUM INDUSTRY'S WILLINGNESS AND READINESS TO RECRUIT AND INTEGRATE INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED WORKERS.

2.1 DEVELOP AND COMMUNICATE A BUSINESS CASE FOR THE PETROLEUM INDUSTRY TO RECRUIT AND INTEGRATE INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED WORKERS.

Industry executive buy-in is critical to effecting change, and a business case is critical to creating industry executive buy-in.

The business case must:

- Be industry specific;
- Present a compelling drive to action;
- Provide a long-term perspective on the labour challenges faced by industry today;
- Include comparative financial information to demonstrate return on investment, and hiring costs of different labour pools;
- Educate the reader with respect to the characteristics of the labour pool (e.g. mobility, loyalty, motivations); and
- Reflect the realities of the different industry sectors as well as the differences between conventional and unconventional industry activity.

Best Practice Profiled:

RBC is recognized in the Canadian business community for its leadership in diversity. The drive for diversity stems from solid business reasons that are clearly and consistently articulated. Within RBC, leadership starts at the top with their CEO actively participating and driving accountability for progress throughout all levels of the organization. RBC also plays an active role educating the business community about the business case for diversity and challenging business leaders toward immigrant employment and full human capital utilization. RBC has developed a comprehensive business case published on their website titled "[The Diversity Advantage: A Case for Canada's 21st Century Economy](#)".

2.2 IDENTIFY SENIOR BUSINESS LEADERS AND EQUIP THEM TO ACT AS CHAMPIONS WITHIN THE INDUSTRY.

Identify one or more senior executives within the industry that will actively speak out in support of the business case to recruit and integrate internationally trained workers into the petroleum industry. Senior business leaders possess significant influence throughout their own organizations and the broader business community but more importantly, have respect and credibility with those making hiring decisions.

2.3 DEVELOP A WORKSHOP, TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO ENHANCE PETROLEUM COMPANIES’ CAPABILITY TO HIRE AND INTEGRATE INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED WORKERS.

Workshop content, employer tools and resources to enhance:

- Understanding of the business case for hiring and integrating internationally trained workers into the petroleum industry.
- Understanding of the potential this labour pool presents to the industry and addressing myths and perceived risks associated with hiring from this labour pool.
- Recruitment:
 - Sourcing qualified candidates;
 - Resume screening (identifying transferable skills); and
 - Cross-cultural interviewing.
- Integration:
 - Orientation;
 - Mentoring;
 - Development-planning approach to addressing potential language and cultural concerns; and
 - Cross-cultural/diversity training.
- Dealing with racism in the workplace.
- Educating and supporting operations managers responsible for hiring decisions.
- Linkages to existing resources such as International Qualification Assessment Services (IQAS), best practices, pre-employment training and other services offered by immigrant-serving agencies.

Best Practice Profiled:
Enbridge has developed a program that provides internationally trained engineers hired into the company the support of a relocation consultant to assist with integration into the community; a “buddy” to assist with integration into the company; and a communication specialist to assist with accent reduction.

Once available, the Petroleum HR Council’s labour market forecasting model can be presented as a workforce planning tool for the industry.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #3: ENHANCING INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED WORKERS MARKETABILITY AND EMPLOYABILITY INTO THE PETROLEUM INDUSTRY.

3.1 CREATE BETTER ALIGNMENT BETWEEN THE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE/ COMMUNICATION COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT TOOLS AND INDUSTRY NEEDS.

The desired outcome of this recommendation is to establish standards and a common tool for assessing language/communication aligned with petroleum industry needs.

- Determine best tool based on availability, accessibility (may need to be commercially available), effectiveness and repeatability.
- Obtain a better understanding of work currently underway and its applicability to the petroleum industry.

Best Practice Profiled:
SAIT, in Calgary, uses Canadian Language Benchmark Assessment (CLBA) to assess international students’ ability to enter mainstream technical programming. Students must attain a minimum score of CLBA 8 in order to enter regular programs. Those students scoring less than CLBA 8 must first enroll in English language upgrading programming.

3.2 DEVELOP INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRAINING THAT TARGETS INDUSTRY'S LABOUR SUPPLY/DEMAND GAPS AND CURRENT PROGRAMMING GAPS.

Develop two industry-specific training programs:

1. Transition internationally trained engineers into Process/Steam Operator occupations.
 - Process/Steam Operators require power engineering technology certification and are in high demand within oil sands.
 - The transition provides internationally trained engineers a career option that pays well and has progression opportunities.
 - Assess the success and learnings from this training and identify other in-demand occupations such as trades for subsequent training programs.
2. A petroleum industry "Bootcamp."
 - A short-term course that provides candidates with an introduction to the Canadian petroleum industry culture.
 - Target candidates possessing technical and industry experience who require industry-specific language/communication skills.
 - Develop an understanding of industry's cultural; safety awareness/training; regulatory systems (role of EUB, etc.); and business practices/ procedures (shareholder expectations, reserves booking), etc.
 - Used as either pre-employment training and/or support offered to companies for newly hired internationally trained workers to complement company-specific orientation.

Best Practice Profiled:

Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS) has successfully run a Drilling Righand Training Program in Calgary to equip internationally trained workers for entry into the drilling and well servicing sectors of the petroleum industry. The key to the success of the program has been employer commitment to assist in candidate selection as well as the inclusion of industry recognized training through ENFORM and a work experience component.

Other key considerations to be incorporated into training programs:

- Provide training to develop supply for available jobs in the oil sands. Training should be conducted in urban centre locations where the majority of internationally trained workers currently live.
 - Utilize fly-in/fly-out options.
- Address petroleum industry needs by providing:
 - Longer placements so that companies can realize a return on their investment as well as have adequate time to assess the candidate's suitability for permanent employment.
 - Effective matching of candidates skills and experience with company needs.
 - Paid placements/internships.
- Opportunity exists to capitalize on "Workforce Partnership Funding," the Alberta government funding for collaborative industry solutions to address labour shortages.

Best Practice Profiled:

BOWEN's Immigrant Works in Calgary is a facilitated recruitment process that matches qualified immigrant professionals with paid internships of up to 12 months. Once placed, BOWEN provides both employer and intern with cross-cultural communication training and coaching, as well as on-going support required to ensure successful integration and a productive internship.

CONCLUSION

Currently industry sees hiring internationally trained workers as “risky business” when, in fact, more serious risk lies in not learning how to tap into this underutilized labour pool. With projected labour shortages the petroleum industry will need to recruit differently as traditional sources of talent are becoming more limited and expensive. The industry’s usual way of attracting workers is no longer viable – unsustainable increases in operating costs are proof.

This report recommends stakeholder endorsed strategic priorities and activities which outline opportunities for the petroleum industry to collaborate with immigrant-serving agencies, educators and government to take advantage of the pool of internationally trained labour supply currently residing in Alberta. The Petroleum HR Council has the mandate and is in the position to assist by developing and/or connecting industry with the information, tools, resources and services to increase the employment and retention of internationally trained workers already living in Alberta.

Though recruitment and integration of internationally trained workers is not the entire solution to the labour shortage, it is a necessary component of a comprehensive recruitment strategy in the future. Employers who develop the skills and capability to effectively recruit and integrate internationally trained workers into their workforce will have a clear advantage in the competition for skilled employees.

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