



The Importance of Municipal – Employer Partnerships in Newcomer Integration

Municipalities and employers have important roles to play in attracting and retaining newcomers. They can be more effective in helping newcomers settle into life and work in Canada if they collaborate.



Why does it matter?

Alberta's labour supply is threatened by declining birth rates and the retirement of baby boomers. The province therefore anticipates a shortage of 96,000 workers by 2023. While some of this demand can be met through training programs and efforts to engage underrepresented populations in the workforce, much of the demand will need to be met by immigration.

Immigrants contribute to the fabric of Canadian society in many ways, bringing with them creativity, opening doors to investment opportunities overseas, and helping attract foreign investment. For example, immigration rates positively impact trade levels between Canada and immigrants' countries of origin, and countries that are well represented in Canada's immigration landscape provide more foreign direct investment into Canada.

Municipal governments and employers can play a key role in improving outcomes for immigrants and helping them settle into life in Canada. They can work together to meet the top needs of newcomers, including creating affordable housing, improving transportation options to assist newcomers in getting to and from work, helping provide child care services for employees, and improving library services.

How can municipalities and employers work together?

As a first step, it is important that employers let municipalities know when they are planning on hiring newcomers, how many newcomers the community can expect, and from which source countries they will be arriving, so that the municipality can plan accordingly. If employers are not sure who to contact, they can get in touch with the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of the municipality. For a list of CAOs, visit the Alberta Municipal Affairs [Municipal Officials Search](#) page.

Municipalities can establish a committee that includes employers, libraries, local service providers, schools and even newcomers themselves, to help coordinate and promote social and civic integration by



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providing newcomers with information about life in Canada, offering support for enhanced community connections (e.g. through recreation programs), and working with local settlement agencies to support the integration of the entire newcomer family. AUMA has a Terms of Reference Guide that can help establish an effective committee. Visit <http://wic.auma.ca/> to download this resource.

By working together, municipalities, employers and community organizations can more effectively provide services to newcomers, such as by offering language classes and providing employees with enough flexibility to accommodate their attendance at these classes (e.g. over the lunch hour or after work).

Employers can further assist newcomers by developing and engaging community-based mentoring programs, providing advanced job training and cultural sensitivity training, accelerated recognition of foreign work experience and educational credentials, and supporting educational/licensing exams through financial support and flexible scheduling. Hiring and making newcomers feel welcome and valued in the workplace will not only help alleviate labour and skill shortages, and it can also help increase sales revenue, result in higher customer numbers, the ability to provide services in multiple languages, provide access to diverse local and global markets, and overall boost competitiveness.

Municipal governments and employers can also collaborate to develop an affordable housing strategy. To achieve this, municipalities can integrate sound housing policies into their community planning efforts, and support the creation of inclusive neighbourhoods through appropriate zoning and land-use by-laws.

As well, access to transportation often affects where newcomers live and work, and can help them feel connected to their community. Employers could partner with municipalities to provide subsidized public transit for new immigrants to help them get to and from work. In smaller communities where public transit may not be available, employers could provide transportation services for employees or work with the municipality to set up affordable housing units near the work site.

Immigration is everybody's business. By working together, municipalities and employers can create conditions for success and help improve outcomes for newcomers. For more information, please visit <http://wic.auma.ca/> or email wic@uma.ca.

Sources:

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