

TRIEC 2020 Ontario Pre-Budget Submission

Submitted to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs

INTRODUCTION

Ontarians and their government recognize that immigrants are vital to our economic growth and ongoing prosperity. They bring skills, innovation, new perspectives, and international business knowledge to our province – which means they have the potential to make a significant contribution to Ontario's *Open for Business* policy and overall job growth.

The recently announced Regional Immigration Pilot program to help businesses and employers in small and rural communities recruit and retain international talent further demonstrates the Ontario government's commitment to realizing the potential that immigrants can bring across the province. At TRIEC, we applaud this initiative.

WHERE ONTARIO STANDS TODAY

As a province, we have some way to go to fully leverage the skills and experience that newcomers to Ontario bring. In 2016, the **unemployment rate** for university-educated newcomers was **12.4%** in Ontario, compared to **4.5%** for people born in Canada¹. Further, university-educated immigrants are **more likely to be underemployed** than their Canadian-born counterparts.

Underemployment and the wage gaps that immigrants face are very costly. If the employment and wage levels of immigrants matched that of people born in Canada, there would be an estimated \$50 billion increase in the GDP.²

For women, the situation is more dire. University-educated **newcomer women** in the GTA earn around **50%** the of their Canadian-born counterparts - this has hardly changed in 15 years.³

The economic imperative is clear. When immigrants and new Canadians are able to contribute their skills and experience, this leads to more jobs and a more prosperous province for all of us.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For Ontario to realize the full potential contribution of immigrants to our province, we need to support newcomers in their transition to the local job market. This is particularly important for the growing number of skilled immigrants coming through the province's

¹ Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016204

² RBC Economics, Untapped Potential, 2019

³ TRIEC, State of Immigrant Inclusion in the Greater Toronto Area Labour Market, 2018

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Immigrant Nominee program, one which the Ontario government hopes will almost double in size.⁴

In order to ensure immigrants can fully contribute their skills, education and expertise to the province, the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council is putting forward two recommendations.

- 1. Continue to support the integration of highly skilled immigrants into Ontario's job market by ensuring sustained support for the effective and continued delivery of proven employment bridging programs.**

Effective bridging programs support immigrants in their transition to jobs in Ontario. Bridging programs, funded by the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development are designed to “bridge” the international training, education and experience of immigrants with what is needed to practice in Ontario. They have been proven to be a highly successful way of ensuring that immigrant professionals can enter the labour market quickly and secure jobs that are commensurate with their education and experience. TRIEC Mentoring Partnership (TMP), funded through the Bridging program stream, illustrates the measurable impact and ROI of such programs.

TRIEC Mentoring Partnership (TMP)

Delivered in collaboration with established employment and settlement agencies, TMP matches an immigrant with a mentor in their field of expertise or occupation. Pairs spend about 18 hours together over three months. The mentor helps their mentee understand Canadian workplace culture and how the job search works in Canada. Most importantly, the mentor must connect the mentee with at least five other people in their professional network. When 70% of jobs are not advertised, building a professional network is essential to job search success.

The results of TRIEC Mentoring Partnership are outstanding. An independent evaluation found that:⁵

- TRIEC Mentoring Partnership participants were 2.45 times more likely to be in good quality employment after 3 months than individuals in a comparison group who did not participate in TMP;
- TMP participants were 4 times more likely to have expanded their professional network after 3 months, compared to the comparison group;

⁴ Correspondence from Ontario Economic Development Minister Vic Fedeli to federal Immigration Minister, Marco Mendicino, December 2019.

⁵ Blueprint ADE, TRIEC Mentoring Partnership External Evaluation, 2019

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- TMP's impact is highest for female newcomers and those who were unemployed.

For businesses, TRIEC Mentoring Partnership brings new opportunities to find the highly skilled employees they need to grow their businesses. Seventy-two percent of mentors report that they are more likely to hire a highly skilled immigrant after participating in the program. Businesses become much more aware of immigrant talent and are able to better include immigrants in the workplace, leading to increases in productivity, innovation, and connections to new global markets.⁶ According to the independent evaluation cited above, employers noted that TMP presents an important opportunity for their staff who participate as mentors to give back to their communities and to sharpen their coaching and leadership skills. TMP also aligns well with corporate diversity strategies and provides an effective, if non-traditional, talent pathway.

2. That the government of Ontario continue to support the work of the Ontario Fairness Commissioner to reduce red tape so that immigrant professionals can more quickly contribute to our province's job market and grow our economy.

Cutting red tape can lead to efficiencies and help immigrants contribute to the economy at full potential. International credential recognition is an ongoing, laborious challenge for Ontario's newcomers. As a result, many new Ontarians are not able to participate in the job market to their full potential. Ontario is not Open for Business for these educated, highly skilled, and in-demand individuals.

The Office of the Fairness Commissioner is a highly effective body that works to ensure that the registration practices of regulated professions and trades are transparent, objective, and **fair** for anyone applying to practice his or her profession in Ontario. We look forward to the appointment of a new Commissioner to continue this work.

In making these two recommendations, TRIEC remains mindful of the fiscal challenges facing Ontario, and the need for every person and organization to contribute to addressing the reality we all face.

CONCLUSION

Immigrant professionals have made the choice to come to Ontario and contribute to our province. Let's make sure they have the best opportunity for success. When Ontario's skilled immigrant professionals succeed, we all do.

⁶ McKinsey & Company, Delivering through Diversity, 2018

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ABOUT TRIEC

TRIEC champions the talent and experience that immigrants bring to the Greater Toronto Area. We support organizations to become more inclusive, and help newcomers expand their professional networks and understand the local job market. We collaborate with leaders and organizations to build a GTA where immigrant professionals can contribute to their fullest potential.

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