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Government as Employer of Skilled Immigrants

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I. INTRODUCTION

Context

Governments are Canada's largest employers. The federal, provincial and municipal governments employ 3.6 million people. Public administration or general government operations alone (excluding education, health and business initiatives) employ almost 1.4 million people. As such, governments are major employers in many cities. In some provinces and territories, the public sector employs over a quarter of the work force.

Yet, despite being a key factor in net labour force growth and skilled workers forming the largest immigration category, immigrants are only about half as likely to work in the public sector compared to Canadian-born populations.

Why is this the case? Overall, there is a paucity of research focused on immigrants in the public service. This paper seeks to address this gap by asking the following questions: What do we know about immigrant employment in the public sector? Do governments have any practices or policies to encourage the employment of immigrants? What could governments do to prepare for and respond to demographic shifts in the labour force?

Objectives

The research for this paper sought to learn more about the conditions that influence various levels of government in employing skilled immigrants.

In particular, it sought to:

- Explore the reasons why governments should be leaders in immigrant employment
- Understand the conditions that influence behaviour on hiring immigrants (e.g. legislation, unions, citizenship or language requirements, political will)
- Identify good immigrant employment practices and approaches currently used by governments
- Provide credible findings that can be used to stimulate discussion about government immigrant employment practices

Terms used in this paper

For the purpose of this study, we consider “immigrants” to be people who were born outside of Canada who are now permanent residents of Canada. We define “skilled immigrants” as immigrants who are qualified for positions that require post-secondary education and previous work experience.

We use the term “visible minorities” as defined in the Employment Equity Act and by Statistics Canada. While some immigrants might be visible minorities, and some visible minorities might be immigrants, our use of this term is not intended to conflate the two.

The term “diversity” is generally used to encompass a variety of individual characteristics (gender, sexual orientation, disability, etc.). For the purpose of this report, we focus on diversity as immigrant and visible minority status. We use “inclusion” to refer to strategies and methods that organizations use to ensure that individuals are integrated and valued in the workplace.

The findings from this research will inform recommendations for governments, immigrant employment councils, settlement service providers, and other stakeholders.

Research Methods and Scope

Building on unpublished work that Maytree has done to date on this topic, the research relied on two main methods to discern responses to the above mentioned objectives:

1. A targeted literature review and a broad environmental scan examining websites and other public documentation at various levels of government across the country
2. Key informant interviews with employees at federal, provincial and municipal levels of government

We conducted informant interviews with employees in several federal departments; the provinces of Ontario, British Columbia, and Alberta; and the municipalities of Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, and Ottawa.

Along with its stated objectives, the research considered immigrant employment throughout the human resources “life cycle” – i.e., recruiting, hiring, integrating, promoting, and terminating or laying off employees.

The scope of this study includes the core public service or “public administration” and not government business enterprises such as crown corporations (e.g., Liquor Control Board of Ontario, Toronto Hydro) or policing. Public appointments and procurement policies and practices are also excluded from our analysis.

A preliminary review of the scholarly literature on this topic found only a handful of relevant articles. Similar-

ly, the internet did not reveal many written resources on government as an employer, much less an employer of skilled immigrants or visible minorities.

II. WHY SHOULD GOVERNMENTS EMPLOY IMMIGRANTS?

As noted, government is Canada's largest employment sector. As governments at all levels are encouraging immigration and are setting up programs to help recent immigrants get jobs commensurate with their skills, it would make sense if they also actively hired them. We identify four primary reasons why governments should employ immigrants:

1. To reflect the populations served;
2. To proactively address demographic trends;
3. To incorporate innovative and diverse perspectives; and
4. To acquire employees with needed skills, experience, and international connections.

Underlying this analysis is the conviction that governments have a special responsibility to be model employers, serving as examples to other employers. Governments are major employers, as well as providers of services, but they are more than that: they are public institutions and as such have a particular role in pursuing practices that reflect the public interest and uphold values of citizenship and participation. Governments are mirrors of the broader society, and their structures, cultures, staffing complements, and practices have the capacity to set the tone for other institutions and employers.

To reflect their constituencies

The public sector has a particular responsibility to reflect the communities it serves, and this reflection should ideally be seen up the hierarchy of the civil service, not just on the "front lines" of customer service. Indeed, representation is the key test on which the mandate of the public service stands. It is a precondition of governments being able to fully and faithfully reflect the concerns of the people it is called to serve.¹ As noted by one observer, "chronic under-representation of the large

¹ Bey Benhamadi, Governance and Diversity within the Public Service in Canada: Towards a Viable and Sustainable Representation of Designated Groups (Employment Equity), *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 69.4 (2003): 505-519.

segments of our population is a serious threat to our shared notions of participatory democracy.”²

The value of representation is not just symbolic. On a substantive level, under-representation deprives the Canadian public “of the significant contribution that a greater diversity of representation could have on the formulation of public policy at its highest levels.”³ And beyond representation, inclusion in the public service means that all individuals are given the opportunity to provide input and to influence how business is conducted.

Both the literature and interviews with government employees affirmed that employing immigrants is the responsible thing to do. In the words of one interviewee, “Public service has to speak to the public and reflect its diversity. We live in a complex world and need new thinking to tackle problems. It is critical.” The public service needs to reflect the diversity of the population served. To do so requires the development and maintenance of policy and practice, sustained over time.

“ We should reflect the population we serve; that’s good business; that’s good public service.”

Debbie Moretta, Ontario Public Service

“ [...] Corporations such as BMO know that in Markham your ATMs need to have instructions in Chinese – it just makes sense to their bottom line. You find ways to serve them. Governments have bottom lines too: do the right thing for all your constituents.”

Uzma Shakir, City of Toronto

“ Having a diverse workforce changes the nature of the quality of service, making it more sensitive and responsive to the diverse communities being served.”

Mel Cappe, former Clerk of the Privy Council, Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Public Service at Privy Council Office

² Paul Annamie, Under-representation in Canadian Public Institutions: Canada’s Challenge, *Canadian Issues*, Summer 2005, p. 19.

³ Ibid.

To address demographic trends

Canadians are aging, particularly in public administration. Between 1956 and 2006, the median age of the Canadian population went from 27.2 to 38.8 years, a gain of more than 10 years over a span of 50 years, and then to 40.6 in 2011.⁴ But the public sector is much older: the median age in federal, provincial/ territorial, and municipal government is 49.7,⁵ with thousands of federal public service employees expected to retire annually.

At the same time that our civil service is aging, immigrants comprise an increasing share of population and labour force growth. Over the 10-year projection period, 2011-2020, Canada is expected to receive close to 2.7 million immigrants on the basis of 0.75% annual growth (the same rate as 2001-2010). This will add 94,000 recent immigrants into the labour market each year.⁶ As the result of the projected “significant slowdown” in the domestic labour force, a consequence of baby-boomer retirement, new immigrants are anticipated to represent about 64% of the annual growth in the labour force over the next 10 years – up from 39% in the previous 10 years.⁷

Canadian governments will need to recruit from the growing immigrant populations to meet their need for talent in the public sector. There is a need to be competitive with private sector as an employer of choice, and a need to invest in human resources innovatively.⁸

In British Columbia, for example, the BC Public Service is the largest corporate workforce in the province. As cited in its most recent Service Plan,

By 2015, 45% of managers and 35% of bargaining unit staff will be eligible for retirement. Consistent with other employers, the BC Public Service is facing an aging workforce, but unlike other employers, the BC Public Service has a lower percentage of younger workers.⁹

4 Statistics Canada, Canadian Demographics at a Glance 2008. Retrieved from: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-003-x/2007001/4129903-eng.htm>. 2011 data is from Statistics Canada, Census Profile 2011.

5 Statistics Canada, Canadian Demographics at a Glance 2008. Retrieved from: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-003-x/2007001/4129903-eng.htm>

6 Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. Canadian Occupational Projection System 2011. Retrieved from: <http://www23.hrsdc.gc.ca/l.3bd.2t.1ilshhtml@-eng.jsp?lid=15&fid=1&lang=en>

7 Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, *Canadian Occupational Projection System 2011*. Retrieved from: <http://www23.hrsdc.gc.ca/l.3bd.2t.1ilshhtml@-eng.jsp?lid=15&fid=1&lang=en>

8 Treasury Board of Canada, Task Force on the Participation of Visible Minorities in the Federal Public Service, *Embracing change in the federal public service*, 2000.

9 BC Public Service Agency, Province of British Columbia, 2008/09–2010/11 Service Plan. <http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2008/sp/bcpsa/default.html#3>, accessed Nov 20, 2013.

The article goes on to say that the BC Public Service must reach out to a broader labour market “in order to maintain a vibrant and skilled workforce,” but it does not mention immigration or diversity as an asset or potential pool.

In its recent policy document *Proudly Working Together*, the Alberta Public Service asserts that it has “a responsibility to take action in response to an evolving world.” In particular – “workplace demographic trends within Alberta, nationally, and internationally will continue to impact the supply of labour.”¹⁰

In general, the public sector is aging, yet increasing diversity – including the hiring of immigrants – has not been identified as a means of mitigating this trend. The hiring imperative goes beyond merely including immigrants in workforce planning; it must recognize that immigrants will soon be the source of **all** net labour force

“Demographics are changing in our city. Council’s Equity and Diversity Policy serves as a tool to help keep our attention focused.”

Lois Emberg, City of Ottawa

growth. Immigration is expected to continue, and it will significantly impact the available workforce. Demographics have changed, are changing, and will continue to change. Equity and diversity policies will need to serve the development of hiring practices that pay purposeful attention to the immigrant population.

To incorporate innovative and diverse perspectives

The benefits of diversity and immigration to the private sector have been articulated and are increasingly well-known. Many employers have taken proactive steps to diversify their hiring, retention and promotion policies.

Similar to their counterparts in the private sector, public servants undertake many of the same tasks: they plan, develop proposals, find suppliers and vendors, market their services, and perform evaluations. They also make decisions along the way that can affect both the success of their initiatives and the reputation of their organization.

The underrepresentation of immigrants in the public service is a missed opportunity. As it does in the private sector, diversity helps public sector organizations meet the expectations of all its citizens and stakeholder groups: taxpayers, employees, suppliers and the community within which they operate.

¹⁰ Government of Alberta, *The Alberta Public Service Proudly Working Together: Our Focus for the Future 2012-2032* (Edmonton, 2012), p.1.

Empirical research suggests that diverse work teams are more likely to “think out of the box,” be creative, and come up with innovative solutions.¹¹ Employing immigrants in the public workforce strengthens creativity and innovation in decision-making, because more mental frameworks are being applied to finding solutions.

Moreover, immigrant government employees bring first-hand knowledge of the immigrant experience into the development of policies, practices and services offered to the public – 20% of whom are immigrants, and far higher in some jurisdictions. Immigrants have first-hand experience accessing services, and they also know how well – or not – the system addresses unique needs around language, credential recognition or bridge training. Governments are better able to anticipate and respond to citizen needs when the concerns of 1 in 5 citizens are regularly being brought to their attention by their own employees.

In the private sector, business has recognized that diversity efforts can strengthen their public image and reputation. In the same way, governments can improve their reputations through equitable immigrant employment. It demonstrates a symbolic commitment to diverse and equal access to power.

To acquire skills, experience, and international connections

Skilled immigrants are highly educated and have acquired professional experience abroad and/or in Canada. In 2011, 49% of recent immigrants aged 25-64 had a bachelor’s degree or above, compared to just 22% of their Canadian-born peers¹². In addition, approximately 60% of immigrants come to Canada through economic immigration programs,¹³ which means that they have been selected on the basis of their education, skills and professional experience. As a group, skilled immigrants comprise a highly qualified talent pool.

Employing immigrants in the public services is not, therefore, “just the right thing to do.” It is increasingly clear that there is a case to be made that hiring immigrants into the public service has economic or “bottom-line” implications.

Not surprisingly, then, some private sector organizations have taken the lead in terms of hiring immigrants and in making the connection between diversity and good business. Best practices are emerging from the banking sector, for instance.

11 McLeod, Lobel and Cox, Ethnic Diversity and creativity in small groups. *Small Group Research*, 27 (2), 2006, pp. 248-264.

12 Statistics Canada, Location of Study and the Labour Market Success of Immigrants to Canada, Descriptive Analysis, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-595-m/2011093/section/5-eng.htm>; accessed on October 6, 2014.

13 Citizenship and Immigration Canada, *Facts and figures 2012, Immigration overview: Permanent and temporary residents*, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2012/permanent/02.asp>

One of the benefits of including immigrants in the public service is that the range of solutions for citizens' concerns is expanded. This helps improve the quality of service offered by levels of government to their tax-paying constituents. This in turn contributes to results-based budgeting producing a clearer social and economic return on government efforts and services rendered.¹⁴

A base of government employees with international experience serves as a “natural bridge” to enter an increasingly globalized world.¹⁵ All levels of government are looking for international markets for locally produced goods and services. Understanding foreign cultures and markets, along with built-in networks of relationships are obvious advantages in the hiring of immigrants for the public service.

Similarly, immigrants can help governments understand their international partners. The advantages of this are obvious for the federal public service which engages most directly with foreign countries, through foreign aid, trade, international organizations, and international events such as the Olympics. This international talent already resident in

“Canada is particularly fortunate to have a population that is, in many ways, a microcosm of that world. It is a source of strength of the sort possessed by few other countries,”

Treasury Board of Canada¹⁶

Canada can also be used to serve domestic needs more efficiently.

Simply put, immigrants bring to a position their skills, education, professional experience, international connections, and more. They should be employed in a variety of areas in accordance with these unique bundles of assets.

¹⁴ Interview.

¹⁵ J. Gandz, *A Business Case for Diversity*. (2001) Retrieved from: http://www.rhdcc-hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/labour/equality/racism/racism_free_init/business_case-e.shtml

¹⁶ Treasury Board of Canada, Task Force on the Participation of Visible Minorities in the Federal Public Service, *Embracing Change in the Federal Public Service* (Ottawa, 2000).

III. WHAT BARRIERS OR CONDITIONS IMPACT GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES?

Employment in government is highly desirable among job seekers. For example, in 2012-2013, there were 311,693 employment applications in response to 1,175 federal government external position advertisements.¹⁷ Although there is no data indicating how many applicants to public sector positions are immigrants, it appears that immigrants are under-represented, and this problem does not seem to be limited to the federal public service.

When considering the desirability of government employment, under-representation among immigrants from Canada's top three source countries (India, China, and the Philippines) is at first surprising given the prestige of the civil service in these countries. A public sector job in India, for instance, is highly desirable because general impressions about salary, job security, generous medical and pension benefits, and access to housing loans are seen to place the employee in a position of economic and social well-being.¹⁸ When new immigrants arrive in Canada with a sense of insecurity about their future, government jobs are often considered desirable, potentially offering a sense of security during a time of instability and change.¹⁹

Statistics Canada employment information by industry and immigration status, however, reveals that immigrants are less likely than their Canadian peers to be employed in public administration and much more likely than their Canadian counterparts to be working in manufacturing or accommodation and food services.²⁰

Indeed, immigrants are about half as likely to work in public administration as are Canadian-born populations. According to 2006 Census data, 6.5% of Canadian-born workers were employed in the public administration compared to 3.3% of immigrants.²¹ An immigrant's likelihood of working in public administration increases with time in Canada. Among established immigrants (arriving before 1991),

17 Public Service Commission, *2012-13 Annual Report*, p. 4. <http://www.psc-cfp.gc.ca/arp-rpa/2013/index-eng.htm>

18 Multiple popular job-search websites expound the value of government employment, for example: <http://govtjobsportalblog.wordpress.com/2012/12/11/importance-of-government-jobs-portal-in-india/>; <http://www.selfgrowth.com/articles/importance-of-government-jobs-http://governmentjobsalerts.com/what-importance-getting-government-job-7081.html>.

19 Personal interviews with two skilled immigrants from India who applied unsuccessfully multiple times for government positions at various levels and are now gainfully employed in the private sector.

20 Statistics Canada, *Established Immigrants in the Labour Force*, 2006 <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/71-606-x/2007001/findings-resultats/4129554-eng.htm>

21 2006 Census; Table 97-564-XCB2006006.IVT. Public Administration includes five industry or NAICS codes: Federal government public administration, Provincial and territorial public administration, Local, municipal and regional public administration, Aboriginal public administration, and International and other extra-territorial public administration. Immigrants are also less likely than Canadian-born to work in the extended public sector which includes utilities, health care, postal service, and education sectors.

4.4% were working in public administration, compared to 2.4% of immigrants arriving 1991-2000, and 1.5% of immigrants arriving between 2001 and 2006.²²

Various factors work against the presence of immigrants in the public service. In this section, we identify six challenges:

1. Lack of data on immigrants in the public sector;
2. Retrenchment trends in the civil service;
3. Seniority and collective agreements;
4. Lack of political leadership and policy imperatives;
5. Requirements around citizenship, bilingualism, and credentials that adversely impact skilled immigrants; and
6. Lack of supports for immigrants in smaller communities.

Lack of data

When governments in Canada consider their own workplace diversity, it usually spans a wide range of facets and rarely has any particular emphasis on immigrants.

Persons interviewed in this research spoke of creating an inclusive climate and of welcoming diversity, but there were very few examples of tracking or measuring diversity.

Moreover, demographic data in governments is primarily obtained through voluntary employee surveys in which participants were asked to self-identify. Self-identification usually focused on the four employment equity groups (women, aboriginal peoples, members of visible minorities, and persons with disabilities), and also on sexual orientation, but not on immigration status. In the Ontario Public Service (OPS), for example, the voluntary employee engagement survey only started collecting demographic data in the past two iterations. The survey contains questions about race, ethnicity, disability, and age but nothing about immigration status or country of origin.²³

We found no instances of governments completing demographic information at

22 The 2011 National Household Survey offers more recent data on immigrants in public administration, but the quality is not as good and does not include data on period of immigration. According to the 2011 NHS data, 7.9% of Canadian-born workers were employed in the public administration compared to 4.5% of immigrants. 2011 National Household Survey; Table 99-012-X2011026.IVT

23 Interview.

the time of hiring, or of tracking career progression. As such, there is no knowledge of employment trajectories. As one interviewee stated, “People are just not paying attention to the particular trajectory of an immigrant professional” in the public service. Some governments relied on grievances or complaints to indicate progress in supporting workplace diversity. However, changes in the incidence of grievances or complaints do not necessarily correlate with changing workplace conditions because a more tolerant environment may encourage more grievances, and vice versa.

In some cases, “diversity and inclusion” offices and others have asked their colleagues in Human Resources to monitor what happens to minorities who apply: Did they get an interview? Were they hired? Promoted? And why or why not?

In the words of one diversity manager:

[There is] no point in us saying we are open to immigrants if we have so many barriers that work the opposite way. Apart from technical requirements, we should also flag all those things that might keep people out. [We should] make sure job descriptions reflect actual needs of the job [and] look for competencies.... [When we do this, it] is more ad hoc than systematic, [but it] should be Standard Operating Procedure.

Another interviewee noted, “How to measure in a non-intrusive way [is] always a challenge.”

In some instances, there does not seem to be any appetite for measuring and tracking diversity. The Government of British Columbia views diversity as an imperative across all lines of business rather than just in Human Resources.²⁴ As such, it has engaged in some corporate work on diversity, but it does not target any specific groups or identify any hiring targets. An interviewee from another government stated that people see themselves more as individuals and thus this government did not favour putting people into categories.

Retrenchment in the public sector

The general trend in Canada has been toward a reduction in the number of public employees in proportion to the overall population.²⁵ This trend stems from a combination of population growth exceeding growth in public service and “stable if not

24 Interview.

25 Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, *Demographic Snapshot of the Federal Public Service, 2012*, <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/res/stats/demo12-eng.asp#toc223>. In 2012, employees of the Federal Public Service (FPS) comprised 0.8% of the Canadian population, a lower ratio than those of the 1980s and early 1990s, which were very close to one percent.

declining public employment numbers.”²⁶ For example, overall employment in the federal public service peaked in 2010 and has since declined across all categories (casual, term, indeterminate, and student).²⁷ Between 1981 and 2010, only at the municipal level did the number of local government employees grow more rapidly than the population.²⁸ As such, opportunities for change in terms of government hiring practices might be found in municipalities more than at the federal or provincial/territorial levels.

Similarly, fiscal or ideological constraints may compel governments to look to shorter-term or contract positions to fill hiring needs rather than permanent or indeterminate hires. Indeed, several of the governments studied have a freeze on permanent or indeterminate hires and are even downsizing or closing entire departments. This has been particularly evident in the federal government where for fiscal year 2012-2013 hiring and staffing activities decreased by 30.1%, “and the population of the public service covered by the Public Service Employment Act decreased by 5.4%.”²⁹ In the same period, the number of indeterminate hires dropped to 1.2% of the total indeterminate workforce, the lowest level of activity in more than a decade.³⁰

One human resources manager stated that his office receives as many as a thousand applications for a single position. In such an environment, it is difficult for anyone to get into public service, no matter what their qualifications or demographic characteristics. To honour collective agreements, any new positions are more likely to be filled from within an organization rather than through external hiring. As one interviewee noted, “The nature of work in government is changing, so we have redeployment obligations.”

In such cases, there may be little scope to hire immigrants or increase workforce diversity. Internal hiring obviously limits the pool of potential applicants and may serve as a barrier to newcomers wishing to enter public service. Internal applicants also have the advantage of already working in the organization, familiarity with processes and workplace culture overall.

26 ENAP, L'Université de l'administration publique, *Canadian Governments Compared* <http://etatscanadiens-canadiangovernments.enap.ca/en/nav.aspx?sortcode=2.0.2.0>

27 Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, Population of the Federal Public Service by Tenure. <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/res/stats/snet-edef-eng.asp>

28 ENAP, L'Université de l'administration publique, *Canadian Governments Compared*.

29 Public Service Commission of Canada, *2012-2013 Annual Report*

30 Public Service Commission of Canada, *2012-2013 Annual Report*, Appendix 3 <http://www.psc-cfp.gc.ca/atp-rpa/2013/appendice3-annexe3-eng.htm#app3-1>

More generally, these are viewed as challenging times for the civil service, and diversity initiatives may be a casualty of retrenchment. When diversity is seen an “add on” or a “plus” to essential services, it becomes an early casualty of cutbacks.

Related to lack of growth in permanent hires for many orders of government is the issue of external consulting. Many governments hire out pieces of project work externally, and selection criteria varies from using personal connections to use of highly formalized application processes. Each of these extremes may work against immigrants who lack personal networks to public service or who do not know how to navigate application requirements.

Seniority and collective agreements

Seniority norms is another hurdle working against immigrants attaining public sector jobs, especially when governments are downsizing. According to some collective agreements used by some governments studied in this research, seniority trumps other qualifications, as long as applicants qualify for job, even if other qualified applicants scored higher than them in the interview. When hiring decisions are based on seniority within an organization, it can be difficult for immigrants whose experience lies not only in other organizations but also in other countries, and who are therefore likely to have less seniority than other government employees. Human Resource managers state that they are as open and transparent as they can be, but that they must operate within the parameters of their collective agreements.³¹

Unions themselves are under pressure, wishing to protect their existing membership while at the same time build bridges to diverse communities who will supply future workers. It is challenging for them to champion equity while safeguarding collective agreements that favour seniority.

Also, due to collective agreements, more recent immigrants are more likely to be hired on short-term contracts because these are the positions that are more likely to be posted externally. According to one municipal interviewee, for example, “Positions that go to the public are usually auxiliary (seasonal or short term). Maybe 80% of recruitment we do is at that level.”

Several governments have recently implemented internship programs for immigrants, usually involving paid work experience, and these have been challenged by unions. Hiring managers must create new positions instead, which entails consider-

31 Interviews.

able effort. Another interviewee suggested: “If government would create something similar like we have for summer students, we could use it for diverse communities.”

Lack of political leadership and policy imperatives

Some stakeholders clearly want their employers to collect more data on diversity, but they lack influential champions on this issue, and most lack legislative imperatives such as employment equity. Even within those governments with employment equity legislation (federal government, City of Toronto), immigrants have not been identified as a priority group. The City of Toronto will be expanding its employment equity groups to include Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, and Transgender (LGBT) communities, but there has been no discussion around immigrants.³²

In one municipality, diversity and inclusion staff attempted to gain direct support for the collection of diversity data from City Council. They felt that this was the best tactic for overcoming resistance they faced from human resources staff. Indeed, finding a “champion” within Council has proven effective in some cases. In Toronto, for example, the City’s Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee passed a

“ If Council provides direction, things can happen.”

Uzma Shakir, City of Toronto

motion to develop an Aboriginal employment strategy that was championed by Committee Co-Chair Councillor Mike Layton. Similar initiatives in Toronto and other municipalities could use their committee structures or citizen advisory groups to advocate for a focus on immigrants.

Several interviewees noted the “disconnect” between federal policy, which has primary responsibility for immigration, and other levels of government. It was felt that federal priorities were removed from “on the ground realities” and left gaps to be filled by lower orders of government. It was lamented that many of the challenges identified decades ago, such as foreign credential recognition, continue to plague newcomer communities, yet there is little redress at the policy level.

³² Interview.

Requirements around citizenship, bilingualism, and credentials

The federal civil service is governed by the Public Service Employment Act (PSEA) which specifies that preference in hiring is given to Canadian citizens. Under the provisions of the PSEA, the Public Service Commission ranks external applicants for appointments so that Canadian citizens are preferred over any candidates who are not citizens.³³ At the provincial level, a scan of the legislative frameworks governing hiring practices of provincial public service commissions (i.e., provincial public or civil service acts) found no province with a stated preference for citizens. Citizenship requirements can make sense for positions with national security considerations which is presumably not an issue for many positions in the federal civil service or the public administrations of provincial or territorial governments.

Further, the pathway to citizenship for permanent residents is becoming longer. As of late 2013, processing times for acquiring citizenship were 24 months for routine applications, and Bill C-24, the Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act (passed in June 2014) lengthens the waiting period for permanent residents wishing to become Canadian citizens from three years to four.³⁴ As such, it would not be unusual for an experienced civil servant who immigrated to Canada to be forced to wait four to six years before being able to be hired by the Governments of Canada. In the process, immigrants are likely to find an alternate career, and these governments will miss out on an experienced and professional talent pool.

Governments, most notably the federal government, may also have bilingualism requirements for some positions. Positions in the public service are classified in four ways: bilingual imperative, English essential, French essential or either French or English essential. Since 1978, the number of bilingual positions and bilingual employees in the core public administration positions has increased from 24.5% to 42.5% in 2012.³⁵ Bilingualism requirements may work against immigrants because on the whole immigrants outside Quebec are less likely than native-born Canadians to be fluent in two official languages.³⁶

33 Government of Canada, Public Service Employment Act - S.C. 2003, c. 22, ss. 12, 13 (Section 39) <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/P-33.01/index.html>

34 Government of Canada, *Processing Times: Grant of Citizenship* <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/times/canada/cit-processing.asp>; CBC, *New citizenship rules target fraud, foreign terrorism*, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/new-citizenship-rules-target-fraud-foreign-terrorism-1.2525404>

35 Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, *Annual Report on Official Languages 2011 – 2012*, Tables 1 and 2, <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/reports-rapports/ol-lo/11-12/arol-ralo/arol-ralo06-eng.asp>

36 Jean-François Lepage and Jean-Pierre Corbeil, *The Evolution of English-French Bilingualism in Canada from 1961 to 2011* (Statistics Canada, 2013), <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-006-x/2013001/article/11795-eng.htm>

Credentials assessments are another potential barrier faced by persons with international education. In Alberta, for example, it takes 16 weeks to have credentials assessments completed. The City of Calgary provides information to hiring managers regarding how to get professional qualifications assessed. To get around the delay, managers are permitted to hire conditionally while the assessment is being completed. The City pays for the assessments.³⁷

A final related reason to consider: about 42% of federal civil servants, and 72% of federal executives, work in the National Capital Region of Ottawa-Hull. However, only about 3% of Canada's new arrivals live in the National Capital Region.³⁸ Federal offices located in other cities may or may not have large immigrant populations to draw from. Given immigrant settlement patterns, immigrants interested in public service careers are more likely to find gainful employment in public service in large urban centres such as Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal, though only the former is a seat of provincial government. (On the other hand, it could be argued that if public service was well-recognized as an employer of immigrants, more immigrants might choose to settle in places where these positions are available.)

Lack of supports in smaller communities

Immigrants hired into positions in smaller communities may face challenges related to settlement and supports for their families. One interviewee noted the need for employment supports for spouses, stating, "Spouses can determine whether or not the employee stays because if they have a bad experience they will leave. I have seen it happen. Creating an employment support group like that doesn't take a lot of resources." Feeling comfortable in the community can range from having access to daily needs such as ethnic grocery items, appropriate hairstyling services, and multicultural events, to more complex needs such as inclusive public schools for children, suitable employment for spouses, and opportunities for community involvement.

37 Interview.

38 This is the total percent of permanent residents living in the National Capital Region in either Ontario or Quebec. Permanent residents are immigrants and protected persons who have not acquired Canadian citizenship. Citizenship and Immigration Canada, *Facts and figures 2012 – Immigration overview: Permanent and temporary residents* (Ottawa, 2012). <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2012/permanent/11.asp>

IV. SOME GOOD EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES USED BY GOVERNMENTS

Among the 40 most recent Best Employers for New Canadians award winners, five public service agencies were identified as meeting the selection criteria of best initiatives and programs to assist recent immigrants to Canada: Health Canada, City of Vancouver, Regional Municipality of York, City of Mississauga and Ontario Public Service.³⁹

Most of the practices mentioned in the profiles focus on helping immigrants to become more “employable” through internships, mentoring, bridge training, and the like, and do not run the course of the human resources “life cycle.” They profiled services offered to non-employee newcomers as much as actual employment practices.

In this research, we identified a number of good practices by governments employing immigrants. Some are very new, some are more anecdotal in outcome as opposed to any systematic evaluation. The first practices listed *directly* affect hiring: legislation, tracking hires, use of equity or inclusion lenses, and community outreach and marketing. Other practices in this section are *indirect* in the sense that they improve the overall employment climate for immigrants, either by supporting diversity, providing work experience to immigrants, or helping them to form professional networks.

Legislation

Governments exercise power through creating and administering public policies, and thus policies are an obvious and powerful tool. Though it does not address immigrants specifically, federal Employment Equity policy demonstrates the power of legislation in improving employment outcomes for four marginalized groups: women, aboriginal peoples, members of visible minorities, and persons with disabilities. (While many immigrants to Canada are visible minorities, many visible minorities are Canadian-born, and we do not intend to conflate the two groups. Visible minorities are, at best, a clumsy proxy for immigrant status.) Since the advent of employment equity, new hires among members of all four designated groups have increased, surpassing their current workforce availability.⁴⁰ Even members

³⁹ Canada's Top 100 Employers, www.canadastop100.com/immigrants/

⁴⁰ Diversity hiring must be considered within the context of workforce availability (WFA). “WFA for an Employment Equity designated group is the percentage of these citizens working in occupations in the Canadian workforce that correspond to occupations in the Federal Public Service (FPS), with the data being derived from 2006 Census statistics.” Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. Demographic Snapshot of the Federal Public Service, 2012. <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/res/stats/demo12-eng.asp#toc223>

of visible minority groups, who lagged behind the other categories for years, have increased their presence in the Federal Public Service from 12.6% to 13.3% for 2011-2012, slightly exceeding their workforce availability of 13.0%.⁴¹ This increase can be attributed largely to an increase in the level of new hires of members of visible minority groups: in terms of hiring for indeterminate and term positions (three months or more), members of visible minority groups experienced the largest employment increase, jumping 3.7% over the previous year. According to this data, 22.3% of indeterminate hires to the federal Public Service Commission (PSC) were visible minorities, though visible minorities comprised 12.4% of current workforce availability.⁴²

In brief, the latest published figures on employment equity in the Government of Canada show that women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and members of a visible minority group are well represented in the core public administration. To help departments integrate employment equity considerations into their human resources and business planning, each year the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat provides institutions with detailed departmental employment equity workforce analysis tables. In 2011, a new employment equity governance model was created to strengthen accountability and financial authority. This structure consists of three new “champions and chairs” committees that respectively represent the interest of visible minorities, Aboriginals and persons with disabilities. These equity groups were previously represented by three national employment equity councils.⁴³

Another example of how governments have influenced public sector employment with public policy is through its official bilingualism requirements. With these policies, the federal government has increased the representation of francophones in the federal public service, to the point that persons with French as a first language are actually over-represented in the public sector of Canada. They comprise 23% of Canada’s population,⁴⁴ but throughout the past decade, formed about 29% of federal public servants⁴⁵ as well as an increasing share of management-level jobs, rising

41 Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, *Demographic Snapshot of the Federal Public Service*, 2012, <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/res/stats/demo12-eng.asp#toc223>. A similar report tells a slightly different story. According to *Employment Equity in the Public Service of Canada 2011–12, Annual Report to Parliament*, members of a visible minority group increased their representation to 12.1%, almost attaining their workforce availability estimate of 12.4%. <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/reports-rapports/ee/2011-2012/ee00-eng.asp>

42 Ibid. These figures exclude specified term appointments of less than three months and appointments to separate agencies.

43 Email correspondence with Daniel Watson, Chief Human Resources Officer, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 17 January 2014.

44 Statistics Canada, Table 1, Number of people and proportion of the population reporting French by selected language characteristic, Canada, 2006 and 2011 http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-314-x/2011003/tbl/tbl3_1-1-eng.cfm

45 Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, *Demographic Snapshot of the Federal Public Service*, 2012, <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/res/stats/demo12-eng.asp#toc223>

to 30% in 2012.⁴⁶

We heard from several interviewees that support from policy-makers, particularly when backed by legislation, can lead to progress. Living examples of this are employment equity policies that affect the federal government and City of Toronto, and also the ripple effect of the Access for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) that is generating significant changes very quickly. To illustrate, in the City of Ottawa, Transit department falls under federal employment equity legislation because buses cross provincial boundaries. As a result, Transit is more diverse than other departments in the City of Ottawa.⁴⁷

Legislative requirements compel governments to take issues seriously. And they open the door for the creation of resources to assist with compliance. At the same time, openness to hiring diversity is unlikely to result from policy or edict alone but rather, in the words of one interviewee, “it is a generational cultural mindset, and we are seeing progress. [There are a] whole bunch of initiatives underway that are having an impact.”

In sum, policies around employment equity and bilingualism have had a measurable and concrete impact on the federal public service. Other governments could take similar initiatives to increase the representation of other groups – such as immigrants – in the public sector. To do so would be a matter of political will.

Tracking Immigrant Hires

The City of Ottawa is the only government in Canada we examined here that collects data on immigrant hires, and this data collection is very new, having only started in 2012. It is collected through an existing self-identification questionnaire process which had until that time focused on the four employment equity groups and the LGBT group. As stated on the form, their definition of “immigrant” is an internationally trained worker who was not born in Canada and who has lived in Canada for fewer than 10 years. Prior to this, the City of Ottawa used visible minorities as a proxy for immigrants but recognized that the two categories were not in-

“ We are trying to become more diverse and hire immigrants in the absence of any legislative framework like Employment Equity. The framework gives legs to the ability to hire diversity.”

Lois Emburg, City of Ottawa

46 Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, *Demographic Snapshot of the Federal Public Service*, 2012, <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/res/stats/demo12-eng.asp#toc223>

47 Interview.

interchangeable. With the reporting capability since March 2013, 55 new hires have identified themselves as immigrants. This formed 2.9% of all new hires, including summer students.⁴⁸

The other governments we examined did not track immigrant employment. Without this data, governments and other employers cannot measure progress on immigrant employment, and the organization is unlikely to prioritize the issue for any meaningful action.

Equity or Inclusion Lens

Named one of the Best Diversity Employers in Canada in 2013,⁴⁹ the City of Ottawa has an active plan to include immigrants in the public face of the city. In 2009 an Equity and Inclusion Lens was developed to aid city councillors and their staff, as well as city staff and management, to generate better solutions by incorporating diverse perspectives and to take steps to remove systemic barriers, promoting inclusion. The City of Ottawa includes “immigrants” as one of 11 diverse communities that would benefit from the Lens.⁵⁰

Ottawa’s Inclusion Lens is one training program for managers intended to help them both as employers and service providers. Some departments such as Community and Social Services have made a commitment to train all managers, as has Transit.⁵¹

In the City of Toronto, an equity lens was first developed in 2007,⁵² to include four functions: Diagnosis (for new policies or programs), Measurement (for existing policy and programs), Evaluation (identifies strengths and weaknesses), and Identifying and Celebrating accomplishments. At present, the focus is on developing a more robust version that will become part of the Corporate Framework, using strategic plan. Staff in the Equity, Diversity & Human Rights Division, located in the City Manager’s Office, have taken 11-12 core activities such as hiring, policy work, service delivery and developed a list of questions to be asked before proceeding with any work. The City Manager will make it a corporate mandate, and it will also be linked to the Workforce Plan. In the future, the lens will be used during the hiring

48 Interview.

49 Canada’s Best Diversity Employers 2013, <http://www.canadastop100.com/diversity/>

50 <http://ottawa.ca/en/city-hall/get-know-your-city/statistics-and-economic-profile/equity-and-inclusion-lens>; accessed July 14, 2013.

51 Interview.

52 City of Toronto, *Guidelines for the preparation of an “Equity Impact Statement” for inclusion in reports to City Council and its Committees, A Pilot Project on the implementation of the Equity Lens* (Toronto, 2007).

process as well.⁵³

Ontario Public Service (OPS) also has an Inclusion Lens. This Lens takes the form of an online tool designed to help “staff identify existing or potential barriers within OPS workplaces and service centres.” More recently, an Executive Recruitment Inclusion Lens and a section on Accessibility in Procurement were added to the tool. According to the website:

The Executive Recruitment Lens was created and launched to ensure that accessibility and diversity principles are applied and embedded into executive recruitment and the procurement section now helps OPS staff make informed decisions in the procurement of our goods, services, and facilities.... In 2012, the OPS Inclusion Lens was further embedded into core government decision-making processes such as the annual budgeting process.

In OPS, as a means of trying to ensure that staffing reflects the population served, efforts have been made in recent years to remove barriers to the recruitment process, from position postings to the screening of candidates. This has included “tips and tools” for managers as well as training. OPS accepts resumes rather than requiring a common application form, and the focus is on skills and competence more than credentials. Credentials are important only when they are required for a position, such as healthcare or accounting.⁵⁴

Community Outreach and Marketing

In a bid to attract immigrants to their workforces, governments may engage in community outreach and marketing. OPS engages in “targeted outreach” if trying to increase representation of a group or groups in the public service. This entails sending external postings to relevant professional associations, such as the Association for Black Lawyers, as well working in partnership with a private sector firm that forwards postings to 2000 organizations.⁵⁵

The City of Ottawa also engages in outreach to inform diverse communities about various jobs and career tracks with the city. They do this through working with community groups and participating in community events such as sporting events and

53 Interview.

54 Interview.

55 Interview.

career fairs.⁵⁶

In the Government of Alberta, the new “Ambassador program” is a cross-ministry team of diverse employees who discuss steps to promote the provincial government as a diverse employer and the groups it might target. Skilled immigrants could be one of the groups.⁵⁷

Mainstreaming or Embedding Diversity across Organizations

Diversity and Inclusion Offices across Canada are working against the idea that diversity is an “add on” or an extra. They are working to “mainstream” diversity across their organizations. The language of “embedding” good policies and practices across an organization was a common theme in interviews, though it always referred to work in progress and often only recently underway. For example, the OPS Diversity Office “is responsible for leading the OPS transformation toward a diverse, accessible and inclusive organization.” Its 2011 report states:

Recognizing that every ministry and every region has its own unique culture, the Diversity Office partners with and supports ministries, program areas, policy owners and key stakeholders **to ensure that diversity is embedded in everything we do as an organization.** (emphasis added)

OPS employs four key strategies to accomplish this, each of which is profiled in terms of relevant activities in the *Inclusion Now 2011* report:

- Informed, committed and competent leadership
- Behavioural and cultural transformation throughout the OPS
- Mainstreaming and integrating diversity into everything we do, and
- Measuring, evaluating and reporting on our progress and success

As found in this research, “diversity” more often referred to differences based on gender, ability, and sexual orientation as opposed to immigrant status or country of origin. However, embedding a commitment to diversity within an organization sets the tone for inclusion of those with multiple forms of difference.

⁵⁶ Interview.

⁵⁷ Interview.

“ People are thinking about it [diversity], even if it’s not happening yet. These are foundational pieces for action... Many corporate initiatives are aligning in the right way to push this agenda. The City is positioning itself nicely.”

Uzma Shakir, City of Toronto

Paid Internships

Internships are aimed at persons who are not employees of an organization in order to help them gain tools (connections, knowledge, work experience) to succeed on the job market. They are not aimed at existing employees, but participants may go on to find employment within the government, or elsewhere.

We identified several governments that have internship programs that either

focus on or include immigrants: Government of Canada, Ontario Public Service, City of Vancouver, City of Toronto, City of Ottawa, and City of London. The latter two began in 2013.

In partnership with Career Edge, the Ontario Public Service (OPS) has an Internship Program for Internationally Trained Individuals to help provide Canadian work experience for new Canadian professionals. More than 600 interns have been placed in 25 different ministries, Crown agencies, boards and commissions across the province. A survey of participants found that, within a year of completing internships, most were working. More than half of survey respondents had obtained contract or permanent positions within OPS.⁵⁸ A separate internship for Internationally Trained Engineers provides 12- to 15-month work placements to help internationally trained engineers meet Canadian licensing requirements.⁵⁹

Through its Equal Employment Opportunity Program, the City of Vancouver accepts work experience placements and job shadowing as well as informational interviews with managers. Placements are normally 2-4 weeks long, sometimes longer, full time and unpaid because they are part of a curriculum for community college students or individual taking government or community employment training programs.⁶⁰

The City of Toronto provides paid internships to internationally trained professionals through Career Bridge, a non-profit organization.

58 Interview.

59 Cited on Ontario website: Ontario Public Service Careers. <https://www.gojobs.gov.on.ca/JumpStart.asp#Internships>

60 Interview.

The City of Ottawa initiated the Professional Internships for Newcomers (PIN) program in the spring of 2013. These are temporary placements, with four having occurred at the time of the interview. This program managed by the City's recruitment and staffing team, including a staffing officer focused on outreach. The PIN Program is aligned to two of the City Council's Strategic Objectives.⁶¹

The Federal Internship for Newcomers (FIN) Program is an initiative of Citizenship and Immigration Canada that provides newcomers with Canadian work experience and training opportunities with federal government departments and agencies and private sector organizations. Interns are hired as casual employees for 90 working days, with the possibility of extension for an additional 90 working days. Internships are offered in categories such as: policy, administration, project management, computer science, communications, science and engineering. Mentors are provided to all participants.

The program description cites: "Additionally, this program supports public service renewal and diversity objectives across the federal government."⁶²

As of November 2013, 24 federal departments and agencies, plus six employer partners in private sector or other public sector (other orders of government) were participating in FIN. Since the program launched in September 2010, work placements have been provided to more than 266 newcomers. In 2011, the Program was expanded from Ottawa to the Toronto and Vancouver/Victoria areas, and offered over 60 placements across 20 departments and agencies.⁶³

In terms of outcomes, surveys of past participants found that 75% had found permanent employment within six months of completing their program, either in public service or the private sector. Within this 75%, the vast majority viewed their positions as being commensurate to their skills. These very positive outcomes lend tangible support to the idea that internships are a useful tool in helping immigrants secure employment.⁶⁴

Several "success factors" can be identified in FIN: securing senior level endorsement and champions; prescreening of candidates for employment readiness by partner organizations; and the presence of mentorship matches that may extend informally beyond the internship.

61 Interview.

62 Government of Canada, Foreign Credentials Referral Office Initiatives <http://www.credentials.gc.ca/fcro/initiatives.asp>

63 Interview.

64 Interview.

Mentoring

Several governments participate in mentoring initiatives, including the cities of Toronto, Vancouver, and Calgary. The City of Toronto is one of the leading contributors of mentors to the Mentoring Partnership, a program that brings together 13 community organizations, and the first public sector partner to reach the 1,000 mentoring matches milestone since the program began in 2004. Mentoring has gained traction across the organization, with 488 City staff in 42 of 45 divisions participating in mentoring, in all types of skills and professions. Among the 488 mentors, 234 have mentored more than once, and 11 have mentored more than 10 times. In addition to the mentor relationship, mentees have access to various municipal supports, including professional development opportunities. The City itself sends a strong message of support to mentoring by allowing its employees to count their mentoring time as work hours.⁶⁵

In addition, the governments of Vancouver, Calgary, and Edmonton participate in the mentoring program. In Vancouver, the catalyst for mentoring originated in the 2008 Mayor's Working Group on Immigration. The Working Group knew that employment was integral to settlement but observed that there were many public initiatives in this area. They pushed for a summit meeting on Immigrant Employment issues, an outcome of which was a partnership with the Immigrant Employment Council of BC around mentorship. The province also took an interest. The City of Vancouver is now into its third round of city mentorship program, matching city staff with professionals. This initiative has been "very well supported" by senior level of staff.⁶⁶

Through a partnership with the Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council (CRIEC), the City of Calgary is in its third year of mentorship. With more than 45 matches between city employees and internationally trained individuals looking for work, the city has expanded scope from hard-to-fill jobs to a wider range of occupations.⁶⁷

"Targeted approaches (such as mentoring) are the most successful... They may be small but they work."

Liz Freedman, City of Toronto

The benefits of mentoring are outlined in other documents. Mentoring is an indirect but concrete initiative that helps newcomers to build professional connections

⁶⁵ Interviews.

⁶⁶ Interview.

⁶⁷ Interview.

“ In my personal experience, managers who have participated in mentoring have a better understanding of the challenges and barriers faced by new immigrants. Having coached their mentees on resume writing, cover letters and interview skills, the mentoring experience enhances managers’ openness and appreciation of the skills and work experience of new immigrants and their tremendous potential as new employees.”

Rajpal Kohli, City of Vancouver

with civil servants that often lead to employment.

A 2013 study of professional mentoring matches across Canada and across sectors showed that mentees had improved economic standing 12 months after mentoring. On average, unemployment was 19% one year after mentoring, down from 73% at the time of mentoring. Full-time earnings increased by 62% to \$59,944, up from \$36,905 per year. Further, 71% of employed former mentees were working in their field, and 47% were employed at their appropriate level.⁶⁸

Employee Networks

Governments may also facilitate the organization of identity-based employee organizations to help strengthen and support its diversity. Within the Ontario Public Service (OPS), “employee networks” are voluntary, employee-driven associations organized around shared interests, challenges and a common bond or background. Networks help members of under-represented groups to feel supported, engaged and included in the workplace. Not restricted to any ministry or department, they serve to bring together OPS employees from across the public service.⁶⁹

In OPS, there are Pride (LGBT), Aboriginal, Black, Francophone, South Asian, East Asian, New Professionals, and Disability networks. The East Asian Network Group is the largest group, with more than 2,900 members. According to the *Toward Inclusion* report, a Diversity Council brings together representatives of the networks who meet to address common challenges, share ideas and practices, and act as resources for each other.

Employee networks have encouraged OPS to collect data on diversity across the enterprise. They have begun to ask that OPS collect demographic data from start to finish,

68 ALLIES, *The results are in: Mentoring improves employment outcomes for skilled immigrants*. (2010)

69 OPS Diversity Office, *Toward Inclusion, 2011 OPS Diversity Annual Report* (Toronto: Queen’s Printer for Ontario, 2011), p. 10.

even though OPS is not mandated by any legislation such as employment equity.⁷⁰

We did not find employee networks or affinity groups in any other governments examined here.

Case Studies

City of Ottawa: Reflecting the Community it Serves

Employing immigrants requires sustained and multifaceted engagement by governments – from intention and in-principle direction, to the development of policy frameworks and mandated practices, and finally performance measurement and evaluation of policy and practices implemented. The City of Ottawa, named one of the best diversity employers in the country in 2013⁷¹, demonstrates this sustained engagement.

Policy Direction

The City of Ottawa has developed an active plan to include immigrants in the public face of the city. As far back as 2006, it cited in its Accountability Agenda the goal of “Ensuring that the City’s Workforce Reflects the Community it Serves.” To this end, The City of Ottawa established **employment equity initiatives** to attract and retain talented individuals. It also employed an **outreach strategy** to enhance diversity among job applicants via local media (radio and career ads in targeted community newspapers). At the same time, a **diversity training program** was developed to assist management and employees to effectively manage and value a diverse workforce.⁷²

Further the City created an **Equity and Diversity Policy** which staff credits with helping them to focus on the city’s changing demographics.⁷³

Systemic Alignment

In 2009 an **Equity and Inclusion Lens** was developed to aid city councillors and their staff, as well as city staff and management, to generate better solutions by incorporating diverse perspectives and to take steps to remove systemic barriers,

70 Interview.

71 <http://www.canadastop100.com/diversity/>; accessed July 14, 2013.

72 2006 City of Ottawa Annual Report, http://ottawa.ca/en/city-hall/accountability-and-transparency/annual-report/2006-city-ottawa-annual-report-0/2006-annu-0#P96_9327

73 Interview.

promoting inclusion. City Manager Kent Kirkpatrick suggested that “the Lens will enable us to be *systematic, consistent and coherent* in our efforts to promote equity and inclusion.”⁷⁴ City staff are mandated to train all departments in the use of the Lens over time.⁷⁵

Significantly, the Equity and Inclusion Lens specifically includes immigrants, as a category distinct from “visible minorities.”⁷⁶ It includes several relevant strategic objectives as well as specific performance measures.⁷⁷

Outreach Strategy and Practices

City staff members engage in outreach to inform diverse communities about various jobs and career tracks with the city; working with, and participating in the events of various community groups.⁷⁸ The city’s information portal for immigrants encourages immigrants to apply for city jobs.⁷⁹

Most recently, the City of Ottawa is embarking on a partnership with the federal government’s Federal Internship for Newcomers (FIN) Program to create its own Professional Internship for Newcomers (PIN) Program and has allocated staff to focus on outreach from this program.⁸⁰

Evaluation and Measuring Success

As a means of *measuring performance* to support recent immigrants’ labour market integration, “the City tracks and reports the number of recent immigrants who gain Canadian work experience at the City.”⁸¹ In 2012, the City added “new immigrant” (within the last 10 years) and LGBT to their self-identification questionnaire, which previously only focused on the four Employment Equity groups.⁸²

Overall, the City of Ottawa has acted upon the basic principle that *governments should reflect the diversity of the populations which they serve*, seeking to meet the expectations of citizens and stakeholders. It began by setting a policy direction, then systematically aligning the organization, implementing programs, and measuring impact.

74 <http://ottawa.ca/en/city-hall/get-know-your-city/statistics-and-economic-profile/equity-and-inclusion-lens>

75 Interview.

76 <http://ottawa.ca/en/city-hall/get-know-your-city/statistics-and-economic-profile/equity-and-inclusion-lens>; accessed July 14, 2013.

77 http://ottawa.ca/sites/ottawa.ca/files/attachments/ottpage/strategic_plan_2011_14_en.pdf; accessed Nov 8 2013.

78 Interview.

79 Interview.

80 Interview.

81 http://ottawa.ca/sites/ottawa.ca/files/attachments/ottpage/immigrants_en.pdf; accessed July 14, 2013, p.11.

82 Interview. At the time of interview: “Since we went live with this in March [2013], 55 new hires have identified themselves as immigrants.”

City of Montreal's Internships Give Newcomers First 'Canadian' Experience

New immigrants to Canada face a challenging Catch-22 when trying to find jobs commensurate with their skills and experiences: They can't get a job without Canadian experience but they can't get that experience without a Canadian job.

The City of Montreal, which is the largest employer in Montreal and the surrounding suburbs with more than 25,000 employees, recognized this barrier was preventing many bright and talented individuals from fully participating in the Quebec labour force.

To help newcomers, as well as recent graduates, overcome that barrier and help the City be more reflective of the population it serves, the City launched an internship program — the Professional Sponsorship Program ([Programme de parrainage professionnel](#)) — in 2006.

Since then, 262 people have participated in the program. Of those, 142 have found permanent jobs after their internships, of which 108 were with the City of Montreal.

The program includes a six-month paid internship with the City of Montreal and aims to increase the workforce integration of ethnic and visible minorities, who account for nearly 85 per cent of participants. To be eligible for the program, applicants must have a post-secondary degree or diploma and less than one year of work experience in Quebec in a field related to their education.

The work placements include a wide variety of positions and give participants the opportunity to develop their skills in a stimulating job related to the field in which they trained.

One foreign-trained engineer was hired as a trainee building inspector intern and was paired with a City employee who mentored him. After several weeks of coaching and on-the-job training, the intern was able to work successfully on his own and then was hired on a permanent basis after the internship.

The mentoring and training component of the internship program are key to its success. Not only do new entrants to the Canadian workforce need to learn the technical ins and outs of the job, but they must also learn to adapt to a new workplace culture.

To that end, mentors and interns both receive diversity and cross-cultural communication training. The training helps them become more aware of their own perception of cultural differences and better understand where the other person is coming from. It also teaches them to communicate using negotiation, mediation and problem solving.

“This program promotes intercultural and intergenerational understanding while promoting careers in Montreal’s public service,” said Mary Deros, a member of the City’s executive committee responsible for diverse communities, at the launch of the sixth and most recent internship cohort in September 2011.

In addition, the program promotes the exchange of expertise, meets the needs of the workforce and prepares a new generation for skilled, in-demand jobs, she said.

The program is funded by Emploi Québec, which provides a wage subsidy equivalent to the provincial minimum wage, the City of Montreal, which tops up the wage to the job-appropriate compensation level, and Quebec’s Department of Immigration and Cultural Communities, which finances an annual evaluation as well as training for mentors and mentees.

Anonymous Job Applications Help Overcome Hiring Biases

Do hiring managers really need to know how old a job applicant is, or if she has children? What about where the applicant was born or what he looks like? Anonymous job applications, which exclude personal information that is not related to an applicant’s qualifications or experience, are one way that leading employers are trying to focus on choosing the best person for the job.

Various forms of anonymous job application procedures have been tried in many places around the world, including in the public sector – for example, in the local governments of Helsinki (Finland) and Gothenburg (Sweden). Belgium prohibits the inclusion of personal information on applications for public sector jobs. And it is a particularly welcome innovation in German cities.

In Germany, job applicants traditionally list a number of personal characteristics in their applications that are not related to their qualifications, such as place and date of birth, nationality, and marital status. In addition, it is common practice to attach a photo, which makes characteristics like race, gender and age quite obvious to potential employers.

In 2010-11, the city of Celle was one of eight public and private sector employers that took part in a pilot project initiated by the federal government's Office Against Discrimination. The pilot project aimed to test how anonymous job application procedures could reduce biases in hiring.

Previous research conducted by the Office Against Discrimination indicated that bias in hiring was most likely to happen in the initial stages of the hiring process. Often, a brief glance at an applicant's name, gender or age was enough for human resources staff to discard an application. In particular, these biases affected people with a migrant background, women with children, and older workers. This confirmed studies conducted in other countries showing that employers are influenced by these types of biases. The pilot therefore focused on the initial stage of hiring – the job application.

During the pilot, the participating employers tried a variety of methods to try to prevent these biases from influencing the review of applications – including blacking out personal details such as name, age, gender, and marital/family status, or using standardized application forms developed for the project. In the end, using standardized forms proved to be the most efficient method.

“The anonymous application process means that whether you will be invited for an interview depends only on your qualifications and not looks, gender, age or background,” says Christine Lüders, head of the federal government's Office Against Discrimination.

Indeed, this pilot showed results similar to those conducted in other parts of the world – ethnic minorities and women are demonstrably more likely to be invited to an interview. “I was skeptical at first,” says Jockel Birkholz, the head of Celle's human resources department. But he admits, “In the traditional process, I glanced at the photo, the CV, the marital status – there were biases despite all attempts at objectivity.”

Anonymous job application procedures are being credited with improving the hiring process. Mayor of Celle, Dirk-Ulrich Mende says, “We are now looking more at qualifications during the hiring process. This is the case for both leadership and apprenticeship positions. Many people who we've hired [with anonymous job applications] wouldn't have been chosen before. And all of them have succeeded.”

It has been embraced by the human resources department, which finds the process more efficient. The standardized application forms make it easier for human

resources staff to review the applications. “We can narrow down the candidates faster because we concentrate on a few important criteria,” explains Birkholz. This has become increasingly important as the city is often flooded with job applicants. Mayor Mende believes this is because the anonymous procedures have helped the city improve its reputation as a good employer.

The pilot was so successful that the city of Celle decided to continue using anonymous application procedures after the pilot ended. And this good idea has now spread to Göttingen, Hannover, Mainz, Mannheim, Offenbach and Nürnberg and to eight German states.

“The anonymous application process clearly leads to more transparency, objectivity, and equal chances during the decision-making phase and is an important building block towards a workplace without discrimination. We will continue with this process,” pledged Mayor Mende.

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V. CONCLUSIONS

Canada is committed to maintaining high levels of immigration for the foreseeable future and has an increasing focus on immigrants as skilled workers. Yet data indicates that immigrants are underrepresented in the public sector, and it is unrealistic to expect them all to be hired into the private sector, especially when the public sector is larger. In the context of an aging and less diverse civil service across most of the public sector, governments should be leaders in reducing employment barriers, rather than lagging behind the private sector. Governments should, at the very minimum, create pathways for immigrants to participate in public service careers.

Many civil servants are passionate about providing opportunities for immigrants, and there is anecdotal evidence from the interviews that individual initiatives do

“Our approach is a very natural one, reflecting the community. Immigrants are part of our community and we want to have them working here.”

Pat Firminger, Government of Alberta

exist amidst the dearth of formal programs. There appears to be wide variation in thinking about and planning for diversity in the public sector, with some individuals pushing to make present policies and practices more inclusive. Some jurisdictions are very intentional in targeting immigrant communities for government hiring, whereas others do not appear to be thinking about it.

Ample evidence exists showing that future labour force growth will come from immigration, and but there is not much indication that most governments are acting on this evidence. Similarly, there is a body of knowledge that makes the case that “hiring diversity” benefits employers in a variety of ways. This knowledge does not appear to permeate government hiring processes. As such, the basic information needs to be communicated within governments so that those who are engaged in hiring, marketing, and community engagement can incorporate this knowledge into their work.

A key finding of this research is that many governments speak the language of diversity but, even among the few that are tracking diversity in hiring and employment, they are not focused on immigrants per se.⁸³ A prerequisite or foundational piece for any understanding of immigrant employment in the public service must necessarily begin with marking a starting point and continuing to measure over time.

⁸³ The City of Ottawa is the sole exception, with self-identification of immigrants beginning in 2012.

Recent research from the Canadian Institute for Diversity and Inclusion suggests that “hard metrics that relate back to the strategies and key objectives of the organization are critical.”⁸⁴ While governments are developing policies and practices that pay attention to hiring and retaining immigrants, few are measuring the impact of those initiatives. There is simply no way to monitor governments’ performances on employing immigrants without measurement. In the absence of systematic data collection, all knowledge is based on anecdotal evidence.

“By bringing in fresh perspectives, whether from youth or immigrants or others, there is a labour force advantage to be gained. Moreover, with an aging workforce, governments need new employees, even if overall numbers continue to decline. Prioritizing immigrants into the future gives us a great opportunity to diversify our workforce and address imbalances.”

Susan Brown, City of Toronto

What is the actual impact of the various “good employment practices” identified in this report? Some of the ones included in this report are too new to evaluate, but all of these can at some point be measured, including legislation, political and public will, HR practices and approaches, incentives, targets and monitoring, and training. The continuum would begin with applications received compared to workforce availability, interviews secured, hires made, length of service, promotion, and termination. Going forward, further research will be needed on the impact of immigrant-focused employment practices.

In the meantime, it is hoped that this report has drawn attention to the under-representation of immigrants in the public service as well as the multiple reasons that governments should be focused on employing more immigrants. Launching new programs in the midst of resource constraints is a challenge, but the examples of good employment practices by governments in Canada demonstrate that it can be done. As well, other employers can learn from the “early adopters” and do not need to start from scratch on this front.

⁸⁴ Canadian Institute of Diversity and Inclusion, *What Gets Measured Gets Done: Measuring the Return on Investment of Diversity and Inclusion* (Toronto, 2013), p.18.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW TEMPLATE

1. Does your department/ministry/government have any employees who are immigrants, especially recent immigrants (arriving within past 10 years), in skilled positions?
2. We want to learn more about how you recruit and hire. How and where do you advertise for openings? Can you describe the interview panel and how members are selected? What can you tell us about the interview and selection process? Can you share any specific results or outcomes?
3. Once someone is hired, their concern shifts to workplace integration and perhaps promotion. What if any employment practices are in place to support skilled immigrants in terms of their integration and promotion? Can you share any specific results or outcomes? Can you provide any examples or stories?
4. Is your department/ministry/government using or creating any good employment practices aimed at immigrants? Please describe.
5. Do you face any challenges to employing skilled immigrants, including challenges that pertain to legislation, unionization, or policies such as citizenship requirements? Please describe.
6. What could governments do to improve immigrant employment in their own workforce? (What pieces are missing?)
7. What are some reasons that government should be a leader in employing immigrants?

APPENDIX B: LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

Wayland Consulting would like to thank the following individuals who participated in research interviews or provided organizational reports. Their participation was instrumental in the creation of this report.

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Lois Emberg, Manager, Diversity and Inclusion

City of Calgary

Cheryl Goldsmith, Business Partner, Talent Acquisition

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Phillipe Proulx, Employment Equity and Outreach, Public Service Commission of
Canada

Carson Quell, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages

Tanya Servoie, Parliamentary Affairs, Public Service Commission of Canada

Daniel Watson, Chief Human Resources Officer, Treasury Board Secretariat

Other

Mel Cappe, former Clerk of the Privy Council, Secretary to Cabinet and Head of
the Public Service at Privy Council Office and current Professor, School of Public
Policy and Governance, University of Toronto

