

# Immigration Strategy



## **Labour Market Framework**

In October 2008, the Government of Yukon released the Labour Market Framework. In order for Yukon to take a more strategic approach in addressing labour market needs in the territory, the framework outlined five strategies that needed to be developed:

- Comprehensive Skills and Trades Training Strategy;
- Immigration Strategy;
- Labour Market Information Strategy; and
- Recruitment Strategy and Employee Retention Strategy.

Four strategy documents have been produced (the Recruitment Strategy and Employee Retention Strategy were combined into one). This is the document for the Immigration Strategy.

Summary documents of each of the four strategies, as well as an overview, are also available.

*Ce document est également disponible en français.*

2010

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## Message from the Minister

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to Yukon's Immigration Strategy.

This landmark strategy is a territory-wide initiative that represents the culmination of more than a year of collaboration with key immigration stakeholders. Immigration stakeholders will continue to work with Yukon government to jointly implement, monitor, and evaluate the strategy.

On behalf of the Premier and the Yukon government, I thank the members of the Immigration Strategy Working Group for their passion and dedication throughout the development of this important document and the supporting action plan.

The Yukon government invests over \$4.7 million annually in post-secondary education and training initiatives throughout the territory. Efforts to develop the local labour market and to support Yukoners in achieving their education and career aspirations are an important part of the work the government does.

Increasingly, however, it is apparent that local labour markets and the existing skills in the territory aren't sufficient to support the growing economy. The skills shortages that the territory is facing are predicted to increase with anticipated economic growth and an aging population. Immigration has the capacity to play a central role in supporting the high quality of life and economic opportunities that Yukoners now enjoy.

With the strategic plan outlined in the document before you, Yukon will be able to anticipate and respond to labour market needs. A healthy labour market will support a stronger and more diverse economy that serves all Yukoners.

The Department of Education encourages your comments and questions on the Immigration Strategy, both now and during the implementation process.



Patrick Rouble  
Minister of Education

## Message from the Immigration Strategy Working Group

Thanks to immigration, we enjoy a rich cultural life in Yukon. Our workforce, our neighbourhoods and our schools are diverse places and the territory is better off as a result, both economically and socially. In order to maintain immigration's positive impact on Yukon, both now and in the future, we must be strategic in our planning to deliver responsive and sustainable immigration programs and services.

Immigration. Why is it important to Yukon? How can we improve our approach to immigration in a way that best suits the needs of the labour market? What kind of workplace supports do employers and their immigrant employees need to play a meaningful role in our economic growth? What settlement services exist and how do we improve access? These are some of the many questions that came up during the creation of the Immigration Strategy.

The Immigration Strategy represents the product of a collaborative dialogue amongst key immigration stakeholders. Such a dialogue supports the creation of sustained and effective investment in the labour force and in our community. The intent of this strategy is to build relationships, effect positive change and create awareness of the immigration issues Yukon faces today.

Thank you for taking the time to read this important strategy for supporting immigration in the territory.

The Immigration Strategy Working Group



*Education Minister Patrick Rouble with members of the Immigration Strategy Working Group.*

## Immigration Strategy Working Group

The Immigration Strategy Working Group formed in early 2009 after an open invitation was announced to participate on the working group at the 2008 Labour Market Symposium. The working group consisted of representatives from business, non-government organisations, cultural groups, educational providers, federal and territorial governments, and Council of Yukon First Nations staff.

For various reasons some representatives were not able to maintain their participation in the working group throughout the development of the strategy and action plan, but their contribution to the development of the strategy and action plan was essential.

### ***Signatories to the Immigration Strategy Accord***

Organisation
<i>Association franco-yukonnaise</i>
Association Hispanic Yukonesa
Canadian Federation of Independent Business
Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor)
Canadian Tire
Japanese Canadian Association of Yukon
Teachers of English as a Second Language in Yukon
Tim Hortons
Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce
Yukon College
Yukon Filipino Association
Yukon government
Yukon Tourism Education Council

## Executive Summary

The Immigration Strategy is a Yukon government sponsored initiative that was developed by a broad group of labour market stakeholders to serve the vision of the Labour Market Framework: to build an inclusive and adaptable labour market that meets the demands of a strong and diversified economy and provides opportunity for a better quality of life for Yukoners. For the next ten years, the Immigration Strategy will guide the implementation of a strategic vision for Yukon immigration.

The Immigration Strategy begins by articulating why Yukon needs a strategy and the Immigration Strategy's relationship to the Labour Market Framework. In essence, taking a strategic approach to immigration will ensure that Yukon's immigration needs are met in a sustainable and responsive manner.

In order to orient the reader to the Immigration Strategy, an overview is provided of the document, followed by a discussion of the importance of immigration, a brief explanation of immigrant numbers and source countries, and a discussion of one of Yukon's most significant immigration initiatives, the Yukon Nominee Program.

A central component to the development of the Immigration Strategy was the involvement of working groups in the development of the strategy. This interest-based approach is outlined in the section discussing the development of the Immigration Strategy and the work of the Immigration Strategy Working Group. The Immigration Strategy development was a collaborative process that drew on the expertise of many individuals with a breadth and depth of immigration knowledge.

The discussion of challenges and opportunities for Yukon in terms of immigration make up a substantial part of the Immigration Strategy. These challenges and opportunities are highlighted in the context of labour force integration and regional characteristics informing Yukon's labour needs. Language skills, foreign credential recognition and Canadian work experience have a significant impact on the labour force integration of immigrants. Employment rates, the impact on geography on labour market diversification, population structure and immigrant retention are explored as regional characteristics to be taken into consideration in planning for immigration in Yukon.

The strategic goal and objectives set forth in the Immigration Strategy are the blueprint to further enhance and develop Yukon's immigration programs and services. The single goal of the Immigration Strategy is: to support a responsive and sustainable approach to Yukon immigration.

This goal is supported by the following six objectives:

1. be responsive to industry and business labour force needs through the improvement and monitoring of the Yukon nominee program;
2. assist more immigrants to engage in Yukon's labour market opportunities by providing better information and services;
3. ensure the provision of settlement services is inclusive for all newcomers, including temporary foreign workers and Yukon nominee program participants;
4. provide immigrants with the resources and training they need to seek further education to work in their chosen field or to access better employment opportunities;
5. support immigrant communities within Yukon by helping them to increase their capacity, their profile and the services they offer their membership; and
6. increase immigrant retention rates by promoting the benefits of immigration and celebrating multiculturalism.

The expected implementation outcomes of the Immigration Strategy are as follows:

- employer labour force needs will be met;
- the labour market will retain immigrants; and
- there will be reduced immigration levels if unemployment rises.

The Immigration Strategy would not be complete without a discussion of performance measurement for the implementation of the strategic direction. Monitoring, evaluation and the governing assumptions are outlined in the latter part of the document. Because implementing the Immigration Strategy is a complex endeavour involving many stakeholders and projects, accountability is essential to effective performance measurement. While the Immigration Strategy will provide direction for territorial immigration programs and services over the next decade, it will be supported and implemented through a shorter-term action plan. Monitoring will include regular reviews of the Immigration Strategy Action Plan in order to ensure the objectives continue to be aligned with the needs of the Yukon labour market.

The Immigration Strategy draws upon the discussions explored within the document to conclude that globalisation and the changing economy must inform Yukon's approach to immigration. If Yukon is to effectively meet labour market demands, it must ensure that the approach to immigration is flexible and adaptable and does not preclude the continued efforts to integrate groups that are traditionally under-represented in Yukon's labour force. The way forward is through the development of immigration programs and services that allow Yukon to ensure a sustainable and responsive approach to immigration, thereby supporting the vision of the Labour Market Framework.

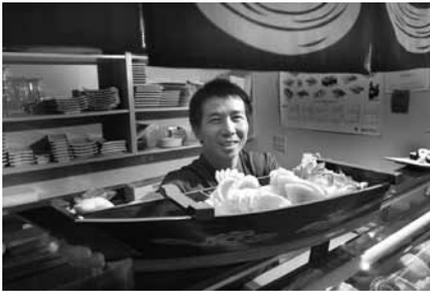
## Introduction

### ***Why a strategy now?***

*In October 2008, the Yukon government released the Labour Market Framework, a discussion paper that plotted a route to develop strategies to ensure an inclusive and adaptable labour market for the territory. The Labour Market Framework vision is to build an inclusive and adaptable labour market that meets the demands of a strong, diversified economy and provides opportunity for a better quality of life for Yukoners.*

The Labour Market Framework identified a need for a strategic approach to immigration in Yukon. This Immigration Strategy is intended not only to address Yukon's current and future needs in terms of immigration, but also to complement and support the four other labour market framework strategies identified: comprehensive skills and trades training, recruitment, retention and labour market information.

Yukon government/C.Archbould



Taking a strategic approach to immigration will ensure that labour market needs are met in a responsive and sustainable manner. The Immigration Strategy also looks

into the future and will function as a long-term, proactive planning tool for the next ten years. Having a plan to move forward is essential in coordinating and focusing effective and efficient programs and services in the face of change. In addition to its planning and implementation functions, the Immigration Strategy will also serve as a guide to ensure that adequate monitoring and evaluation of new immigration initiatives takes place.

### ***Immigration strategy overview***

The Immigration Strategy document begins by describing the Yukon Nominee Program, a program central to immigration activity in Yukon and many of the actions outlined in the Immigration Strategy Action Plan. Once a clear understanding of the Yukon Nominee Program is established, this document details the Immigration Strategy methods, research and outlook. This section is followed by a discussion of challenges and opportunities Yukon faces both economically and socially and how immigration could help support the territory's labour market.

The strategic goal and objectives of the Immigration Strategy are discussed in the penultimate section. The single goal of the Immigration Strategy is: to support a responsive and sustainable approach to Yukon immigration.

The expected implementation outcomes of the Immigration Strategy are as follows:

- Employer labour force needs will be met
- The labour market will retain immigrants
- There will be reduced immigration levels if unemployment rises

The strategic goal and objectives of the Immigration Strategy are designed to advance the Labour Market Framework vision for an inclusive and adaptable labour market that meets the demands of a strong, diversified economy and provides opportunity for a better quality of life for Yukoners.

The Immigration Strategy document concludes with an examination of the monitoring, evaluation and assumptions necessary for effective and efficient performance measurement.

### ***Why immigration?***

There is a good reason why Canada welcomes more net immigrants per capita than any other country in the world: immigration is critical to the health of the Canadian economy. It is forecast that Canada's dependency on immigration will not diminish any time in the near future and that there will be increased economic pressures to recruit and retain immigrants. Citizenship and Immigration Canada forecasts that "Immigrants are expected to account for all net labour force growth by 2011, and for all net population growth by 2031."<sup>1</sup> This means that if the Canadian economy is to continue to grow and diversify, and that if Canada is going to continue to prosper, then immigration must play a central role in supporting economic development.

If immigration fails to meet employers' needs to fill a variety of skilled and semi-skilled jobs, there will be serious implications for the Canadian economy, both in the short- and the long-term. A consistently insufficient supply of labour translates into increased pressure to raise wages and prices which can create economic instability. Also, without the labour force to staff business, government and non-profit offices, critical programs, services and goods will not meet consumer demand.

### ***Who is immigrating and from where?***

According to 2006 Census data, 19.8 per cent of people living in Canada are immigrants, which represents 6,186,950 of the total Canadian population of 31,241,030, almost one in five.<sup>2</sup> In Yukon, 9.9 per cent of people were born outside Canada.

In Yukon, the number of federal Temporary Foreign Workers admitted annually between 1999 and 2008 varied from a low of 90 to a high of 235, with an average of 144. The number of permanent residents arriving in Yukon between 1999 and 2008 has varied from a low of 50 to a high of 111, with an average of 70.<sup>3</sup>

These numbers reflect both the rural nature and the small population of Yukon. Canada's current national immigration numbers are significantly higher with 250,000 immigrants arriving annually.<sup>4</sup> In the last 15 years, Canada has welcomed a total of 3.5 million immigrants.<sup>5</sup>

Census statistics on the countries of origin of Yukon immigrants indicate that European-born immigrants made up the largest proportion of immigrants to Yukon from 2001–2006 at 48 per cent, followed by Asian-born immigrants at 26 per cent.<sup>6</sup> In 2009, figures from the Yukon Nominee Program indicated that the leading countries for immigrants to Yukon are the Philippines (44 per cent), China (16 per cent) and Germany (8 per cent).<sup>7</sup>

## The Yukon Nominee Program

*The Yukon Nominee Program, operated by the Yukon government under an agreement with Citizenship and Immigration Canada, has played a significant role in increasing immigration to the territory. This regional immigration program, much like other Nominee Programs across Canada, nominates in-demand business entrepreneurs, as well as skilled and semi-skilled workers, for expedited permanent residency.*

The Yukon Nominee Program (Figure 1) was first established in 2001 with a Business Stream administered by the Department of Economic Development. The Business Stream is

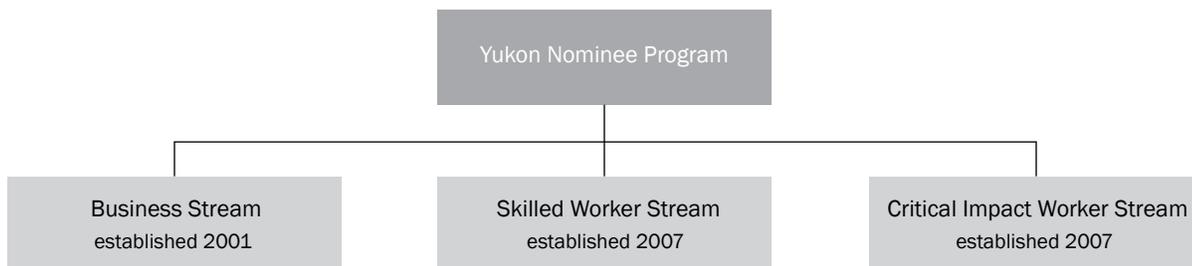
designed to attract business expertise and investment capital to the territory. As of November 2009, 17 of 34 applications received were approved under this program. Seven business people/entrepreneurs are currently living in Yukon as a direct result of the Business Stream.



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In 2006, a Skilled Worker Stream of the Yukon Nominee Program was developed to meet the needs of Yukon employers experiencing difficulty in finding qualified local or national applicants to fill jobs that require a high level of education and skill. The term “skilled workers” refers to those individuals employed under National Occupation Codes O, A and B. These are occupations in management or occupations that usually require university education, college education or apprenticeship training.

**Figure 1. Yukon Nominee Program**



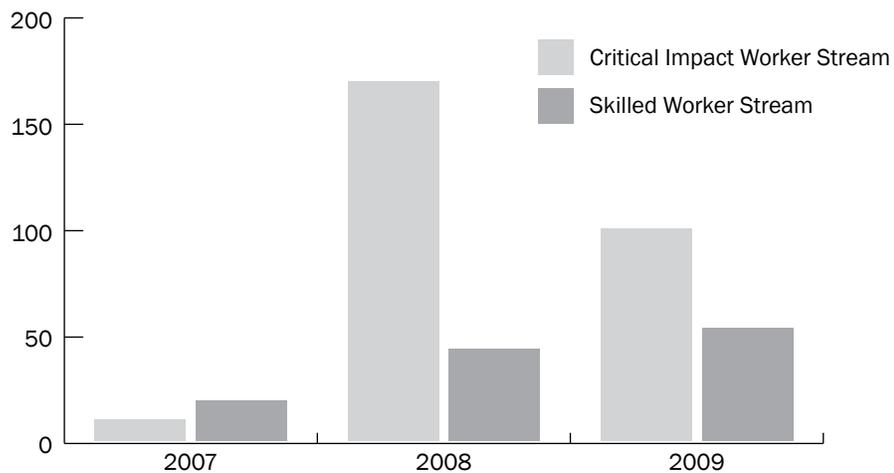
The Skilled Worker Stream is administered by the Department of Education. As of January 2010, 124 applications to the Skilled Worker Stream were received, 102 of which were approved. Applications to the Yukon Nominee Program’s Skilled Worker Stream increased approximately 23% from 2008 to 2009, despite the economic downturn. This increase is largely due to sector-specific shortages that represent jobs in early childhood education, culinary arts, computer programming, interactive media development, as well as supervisory positions in retail, food service and cleaning.

A Critical Impact Worker Stream was a pilot project added to the Yukon Nominee Program in 2007, in response to significant growth in the Yukon economy and a severe shortage in available local or Canadian semi-skilled workers. The term “semi-skilled workers” refers to those individuals employed under National Occupation Codes C and D. These are occupations that usually require secondary school and/or occupation-specific training or on-the-job training.

The Critical Impact Worker Stream, like the Skilled Worker Stream, is administered by the Department of Education. As of January 2010, 320 Critical Impact Worker applications (with a total of 138 dependents) were received by the Department of Education, 246 of which were approved.

Upon the introduction of the Critical Impact Worker Stream, the Yukon Nominee Program was inundated with applications. Since then, the severe labour shortages of semi-skilled workers have been addressed and current application numbers reflect a leveling out of demand for semi-skilled labour. Over 160 applications were received in 2008 (the peak year for applications) and over 100 applications were received in 2009 (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Applications to Yukon Nominee Program, 2007–09**



The popularity of the Yukon Nominee Program Skilled Worker and Critical Impact Worker Streams is apparent both through an analysis of data and anecdotally. Local employers praise the Yukon Nominee Program for addressing the local semi-skilled labour crisis in 2007–08, allowing them to keep their doors open and maintain a high quality of service. Local employers also praise the program because it has dramatically increased their employee retention rates, providing them with a better return on their investment in employee training.

For both Critical Impact Worker and the Skilled Worker applications, employers are required to demonstrate that they have sought to fill existing vacancies drawing from the Yukon or Canadian labour pools. Before employers' applications to the Yukon Nominee Program can be accepted for review and processing, they must provide proof that they have advertised locally and nationally for 30 days within the last three months in an attempt to alleviate their labour shortages. If no need is demonstrated, applications to the Yukon Nominee Program will not be approved. If no Canadian citizen is available or qualified for the job, then the application is considered for a foreign worker.

## Development of the strategy

### ***A strategy developed by stakeholders for stakeholders***

The Immigration Strategy has been developed by key immigration stakeholders representative of the local business community, Yukon and federal governments, immigrant-serving organisations, cultural groups, education providers and Council of Yukon First Nations staff. This group of stakeholders worked together as the Immigration Strategy Working Group.

The Immigration Strategy Working Group's most significant challenge was the time-consuming process of developing the Immigration Strategy and supporting documents.

The main outcomes of the process included:

- a high degree of consensus around the table;
- a high degree of information sharing amongst stakeholders which clarified misunderstandings;
- greater appreciation of issues amongst stakeholders;
- stakeholders building partnerships;
- an increase in creative solutions and new initiatives;
- joint formulation of labour market information requirements to support the needs for planning and evaluation.

### ***The research***

To support the creation of the Immigration Strategy, the Immigration Strategy Working Group commissioned research at a local and a national level. Through discussions, surveys and information sharing, the Immigration Strategy Working Group members were able to identify existing services and needs in order to create an Immigration Strategy Action Plan that would be reflective of Yukon's labour market needs.

### ***The outlook***

Given the historic boom and bust cycle of Yukon's economy, it is anticipated that labour market needs will continue to fluctuate. As such, Yukon's immigration policies and programs must be responsive in order to create a sustainable solution whenever the labour force supply does not match labour force demand.



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While Canada and much of the world are currently experiencing the tail end of a cyclical economic downturn, labour markets are expected to recover. When economic recovery occurs, the aging population, retirements and low birth rates will add pressure to tight labour markets and intensify labour shortages in specific occupations and regions. Jurisdictions with the lowest unemployment rates will be disproportionately affected and skilled workers will likely be lacking in all regions. This, in turn, has the potential to limit economic growth.

Once the economy is fully recovered from the current downturn and/or large industrial projects get underway, the need for skilled and semi-skilled immigrants will only increase. A strategic approach to immigration that can anticipate labour market growth will ensure a healthy economy.

## **Challenges and opportunities**

### **Labour force integration**

In an ideal world, all immigrants would get jobs in their field of study and/or preferred occupation shortly after arrival. Unfortunately, in too many circumstances, this is not the case. In fact, respondents to the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada cited lack of language skills, lack of recognition of foreign credentials and lack of Canadian work experience as the most severe impediments to labour force integration for recent immigrants to Canada.<sup>8</sup> The following section examines these three elements and how they relate to work force integration in Yukon, exploring both the challenges and opportunities they present.

#### *1. Language skills*

##### *The challenge*

Language acquisition is a critical step in the process of immigrant settlement. Without language, one's ability to access employment, health care and social supports is greatly diminished. In Yukon, only permanent residents and refugees are eligible for free English language classes, which are supported by funding from Citizenship and Immigration Canada. There is a need to explore alternate resources to support refugee claimants and immigrants to Canada on temporary work permits (including nominees under the Yukon Nominee Program) who do not qualify for free English classes.

##### *The opportunity*

Enhancing language training opportunities for immigrants and increasing free access will help to maximise the potential of an immigrant's credentials and help them to better adapt to living in Yukon. Language skills also open the door to safer, more respectful workplaces in which an immigrant's rights and responsibilities as an employee are clearly understood.

***If foreign-trained professionals are unable to engage in the workforce because their credentials aren't recognized, their integration and quality of life — as well as Yukon's economy — are affected.***

#### *2. Foreign credential recognition*

##### *The challenge*

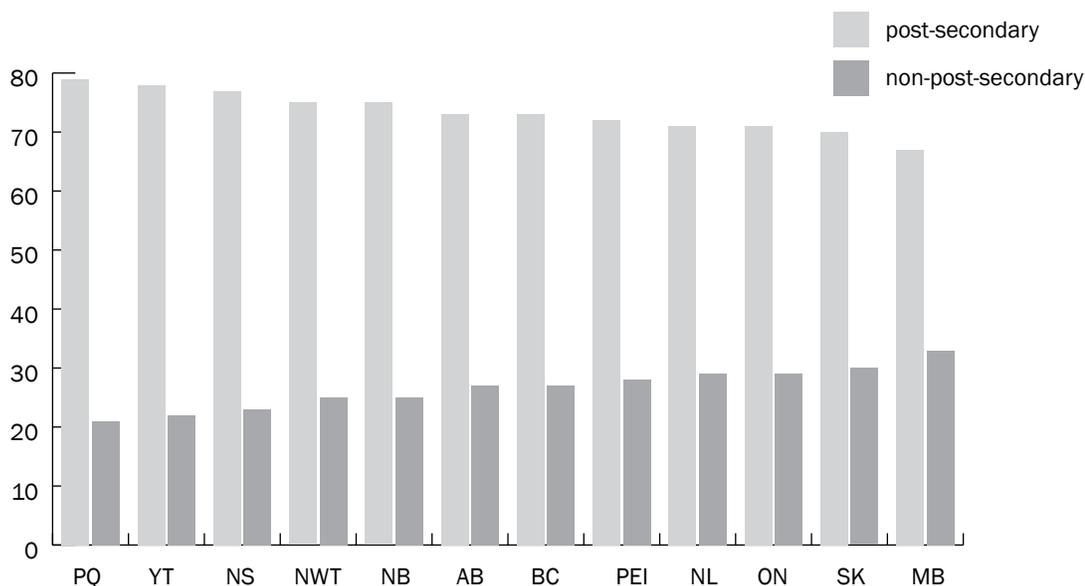
In addition to lack of adequate language skills, the failure to have credentials recognised can have a significant impact on how an immigrant integrates into the workforce. If foreign-trained professionals are unable to engage in the workforce due to problems with foreign credential recognition, their integration and quality of life as well as Yukon's economy are affected.

The term "brain waste" refers to situations in which immigrants work in occupations lower than those for which they are qualified. An example would be an immigrant with a degree working in a job that requires high school graduation or less. Such brain waste is estimated to cost the Canadian economy \$2.4 billion a year.<sup>9</sup> In addition to the lost opportunity presented by brain waste, immigrants who cannot integrate into the labour force using their existing skill set are likely to leave, which represents a significant loss to the economy and a waste of both regional and national resources.

Today's immigrants to Canada have more education than those who arrived a decade ago. Data from Citizenship and Immigration Canada indicates that in 2006, 32.8% of immigrants

admitted to Canada had a bachelor, masters, or doctoral degree, compared with 20% of immigrants admitted in 1997.<sup>10</sup> In January 2010, 71% of Yukon Nominee Program applicants had some level of post-secondary education or training.<sup>11</sup> According to the Citizenship and Immigration Canada data in Figure 3, Yukon immigrants had the second highest post-secondary education levels in Canada.

**Figure 3. Permanent Residents (18+) by Education (2008)**



From *Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications: Perspectives from Provinces*, by Government of Manitoba, Labour and Immigration, 2010. Note: Citizenship and Immigration Canada landings data prepared by Government of Manitoba, Labour and Immigration.

Based on the number of immigrants making their home in Yukon, their level of post-secondary education and/or their need for further education and training, the need for foreign credential recognition services is anticipated to increase in the near future.

*The opportunity*

Yukon, like other Canadian jurisdictions, needs to optimise the value that foreign-trained professionals can bring to the labour force. Immigrants arriving in Yukon with specialised, in-demand education need support to engage effectively in the labour market.

Addressing foreign credential recognition issues in Yukon will assist immigrants in utilising their post-secondary education and training to help alleviate skills shortages in the territory. This will help to maximise both the skill potential and the productivity of immigrants to Yukon and mitigate brain waste.

**3. Canadian work experience**

*The challenge*

The question of Canadian work experience is problematic for many immigrants. Without relevant Canadian work experience, immigrants often cannot secure work in their field in this country. As a result, securing a job that engages the full capacity of their existing skill set is a challenge for many immigrants. To complicate matters further, acquiring Canadian work experience is often dependent on language abilities and foreign credential recognition.

*The opportunity*

Increasing meaningful workforce engagement for immigrants is critical to realise the full benefits of immigration. Whether through work transition, or mentoring and intern programs for immigrants, helping immigrants gain Canadian work experience in their field of education and training will benefit both the economy and immigrants.

**Regional characteristics**

Yukon is a unique jurisdiction with characteristics that present many challenges and many opportunities. Employment rates, the impact of geography on labour market diversification, population structure and immigrant retention are some of the topics explored in the following section.

**1. Unemployment rates***The challenge*

The challenge with unemployment is that rates fluctuate based on local, regional, national and international influences, and as such, so do the needs of the labour market. For example, in early 2010, Yukon's unemployment rate was one of the highest in the country, while previously, Yukon had enjoyed one of the lowest unemployment rates in Canada for several years.

One of the significant challenges with the territory's low unemployment periods is that, especially during times of economic recovery and growth, Yukon will likely experience more extreme skills shortages than jurisdictions with higher levels of unemployment. If Yukon is not prepared for the economic recovery, low unemployment rates, combined with existing skills shortages, will have a potentially negative effect both fiscally and socially. In the long term, large-scale industrial projects such as mines and pipelines could put significant pressure on Yukon's labour force if unemployment rates are low.

*The opportunity*

Immigration presents a positive solution to Yukon's labour force needs. Where no skilled workers exist locally or elsewhere in Canada, immigrants can bring new depth and breadth to Yukon's labour pool. Where labour market demands can be met by the existing pool of labour, levels of immigration can be reduced to ensure the labour market is not flooded with too many workers.

**2. The impact of geography on labour market diversification***The challenge*

As of June 2009, Yukon's population was 34,157. The population of Whitehorse, where most immigrants settle in Yukon, was 25,636.<sup>12</sup>

Despite Yukon's small population, the scope of Yukon's labour market is quite broad. This is because Yukon's isolated geography requires the provision of certain kinds of programs and services deemed as essential. This is largely due to the fact that the nearest metropolitan centres are over one thousand kilometres away. As such, provision of essential services puts significant pressure on Yukon's existing pool of skilled and semi-skilled labour.

*The opportunity*

Immigration presents an opportunity to address Yukon's unique labour force needs as they

pertain to the territory's geographic isolation. Encouraging sustainable and responsive immigration programs and services will assist in bringing immigrants to Yukon who have the skills needed. Immigration, together with the creation of targeted local skills training for Yukoners who are under-represented in the workforce, will help to increase the pool of available skilled and semi-skilled workers.

### 3. Population structure

#### *The challenge*

As birth rates continue to decline and life expectancy continues to rise, the population's average age continues to increase. In recent years, the territory's population has grown older.<sup>13</sup> Within Yukon's population, the 45–64 and 65+ age groups have maintained increases since the 1996 census, while the 0–14 and 15–44 age groups have declined.<sup>14</sup> This aging of Yukon's population follows the national trend and reflects the aging of individuals in the baby boom generation.

Yukon's aging population will increase the need for immigration twofold: first, as workers retire and leave the labour force they will need to be replaced. Second, the age cohort that is or will be relying most heavily on health care is growing. This growth is predicted to result in increased pressure on health-care services which could lead to labour shortages. Because Canada's population as a whole is aging, recruiting workers from other jurisdictions will not be an option.

***The rate of population aging in Canada and Yukon is predicted to have significant consequences.***

One important factor to consider in terms of population aging is that while immigration can serve to meet immediate and future labour market needs, immigration cannot stop or reverse the aging of the population. In 2006, Canada's median age was about 39 years old while Yukon's median age was 38.<sup>15</sup> Statistics Canada's recent estimates show that with no immigration at all, the median age of Canada's population would reach about 47 years by 2050. If Canada maintains existing immigration levels, the median age of the population will reach about 46 years by 2050.<sup>16</sup>

The rate of population aging in Canada and Yukon is predicted to have significant consequences. As the population gets older, there will be increased pressure on pension programs and health insurance plans as the ratio of contributors to beneficiaries shifts.<sup>17</sup> Such imbalances in the old age dependency ratio could have an unbalancing effect on the economy, if not managed appropriately.

#### *The opportunity*

Immigration can help Yukon meet its current and future labour market needs, but to handle the challenge of population aging correctly, pan-Canadian cooperation is required. The Yukon government participates in the federal/provincial/territorial roundtable responsible for population aging and will continue its work with other jurisdictions across the country, as well as the federal government, in order to mitigate population aging and its effects.

Maximising the labour force engagement and pre-retirement years of Yukon's older workers through targeted training and flexible retirement programs presents an opportunity. Such initiatives will ensure sufficient per capita labour force engagement to maintain a sufficient tax base, which in turn will support essential social programs in the future.

#### 4. Retention

##### *The challenge*

No jurisdiction wants to be a rest stop on the way to a better destination. Retention is a major concern of jurisdictions across Canada. A failure to retain immigrants represents a lack of return on investment of settlement services, lost tax income and potential brain drain.

##### *The opportunity*

While Yukon has a low rate of immigration compared to more southern jurisdictions, most immigrants that come tend to stay.<sup>18</sup> Yukon's isolated geography and extreme climate do not seem to affect retention rates, despite the fact that the number one source country for immigrants under the Yukon Nominee Program, the Philippines, is a warm and densely-populated country.

Recent data suggests the reason Yukon enjoys such a high rate of immigrant retention is because recent immigrants stay for the good jobs (45%) and because they feel welcome in Yukon (44%). A further 37% of recent immigrants to Yukon stay because of community and family ties.<sup>19</sup>

Although detailed information on Yukon immigration retention is not available, the combined rate for Yukon and NWT is 85 per cent. Put into the national context for retention, this number is high. Only British Columbia and Alberta have higher retention rates, at 88 per cent and 86 per cent respectively. Retention rates are substantially lower in Atlantic Canada and in particular Newfoundland and Labrador, which has an immigrant retention rate of 40 per cent.<sup>20</sup>

This kind of retention suggests that resources invested in training and building capacity in Yukon's immigrant population will provide both a short-term and a long-term return on investment.

## Strategic goal and objectives: a guide to action

Based on the challenges and opportunities described above, the Immigration Strategy Working Group developed the following goal and strategic objectives, which will guide the implementation of the Immigration Strategy:



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### **Goal: Support a responsive and sustainable approach to Yukon immigration**

**Rationale:** The key goal of the Immigration Strategy is to create immigration-related policies and supports that allow for a responsive and sustainable approach to bringing foreign workers into Yukon's labour force. The needs of the labour market constantly evolve. An adaptable and solutions-oriented approach to immigration will ensure that current and future labour market needs are met while not creating surplus labour.

### **Objectives**

The following objectives were developed to support the goal of the Immigration Strategy:

#### **1. Be responsive to industry and business labour force needs through the improvement and monitoring of the Yukon Nominee Program.**

**Rationale:** The Yukon Nominee Program has assisted local employers in remedying critical skilled and semi-skilled labour shortages. The continued support and refinement of this immigration program will not only help local business navigate through skills shortages when they occur, it will also have a positive impact on the economy and the quality of life of all Yukoners.

#### **2. Assist more immigrants to engage in Yukon's labour market opportunities by providing better information and services.**

**Rationale:** Information and services that assist would-be immigrants to relocate to Yukon will benefit the territory. Immigrants bring skills and business expertise that enrich Yukon's economy. Better access to information on investment and existing skills shortages will make the transition easier for immigrants, thereby enhancing immigration's role in supporting Yukon's economy. Support for diversity and cross-cultural training within the community of Yukon employers will help ensure attraction, integration and retention of immigrant workers.

#### **3. Ensure the provision of settlement services is inclusive for all newcomers, including temporary foreign workers and Yukon Nominee Program participants.**

**Rationale:** Providing better access to language training and other settlement services for all immigrants is central to accessing the skills and expertise of the immigrant workforce. Both immigrant youth and adults need assistance in settling into life in Canada to realise their full potential in the Yukon workforce. Cooperation between governments and stakeholder groups will be instrumental in realising this objective.

- 4. Provide immigrants with the resources and training they need to seek further education to work in their chosen field or to access better employment opportunities.**

**Rationale:** Whether through bridging programs, workshops on worker rights and responsibilities, cross-cultural employment skills or foreign credential services, providing immigrants with the resources and training they need to engage effectively in the labour force benefits everyone – immigrants and native-born Canadians alike. Workers fully engaged in the labour force improve the economy’s capacity for diversification, do not burden social systems and contribute to the territory’s tax base.

- 5. Support immigrant communities within Yukon by helping them increase their capacity, their profile and the services they offer their membership.**

**Rationale:** Yukon’s immigrant communities have an important role to play in settlement and retention of immigrants. Immigrants who adapt to life in Yukon and integrate into the labour force are more likely to be retained.

- 6. Increase immigrant retention rates by promoting the benefits of immigration and celebrating multiculturalism.**

**Rationale:** Yukon currently experiences high immigrant retention rates and the maintenance of this trend is desirable. Retaining immigrants represents a significant positive outcome. Retention ensures the effective utilisation of settlement resources and immigrant skills.

## Performance measurement

*The implementation of the Immigration Strategy is a complex endeavour involving several primary service providers undertaking multiple projects. Accountability will be critical to measuring performance.*

Attainment of the goal (to support a responsive and sustainable approach to Yukon immigration) will be evaluated by measuring achievement of identified outcomes. The expected implementation outcomes of the Immigration Strategy are as follows:

- Employer labour force needs will be met;
- The labour market will retain immigrants; and
- There will be reduced immigration levels if unemployment rises.

Expected outcomes have also been identified for each objective.

In order to create an inclusive and adaptable labour market that meets the demands of a strong, diversified economy and provides opportunity for a better quality of life for Yukoners, support from several stakeholders will be required. Potential stakeholders include but are

not limited to: the Yukon government departments of Education and Economic Development, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, education providers, local businesses, industry associations, immigrant serving groups and immigrant associations.



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### **Monitoring and evaluation**

While the Immigration Strategy itself is a ten-year document, the Immigration Strategy Action Plan will be revisited every year to ensure that implementation continues to support Yukon's economy in the best way possible. The Immigration Strategy Action Plan identifies the actions under each strategic objective, the new activities that support implementation, the monitoring methods and the evaluation parameters. The action plan also puts new activities into the context of existing immigration programs and services by explaining how new initiatives will respond to current and emerging labour market challenges and by providing a brief overview of current immigration-related training programs and services. Some initiatives under the action plan will be put into effect immediately and will have a short-term focus, whereas other initiatives will have a long-term focus on systemic change.

In order to assist with the monitoring and evaluation of the Immigration Strategy implementation, the Immigration Strategy Working Group will be succeeded by an implementation committee. This new committee will include (but not be limited to) members from the Immigration Strategy Working Group as well as new stakeholders. It will be important that the committee has representatives from all levels of governments, including First Nation governments, local businesses, industry associations, educational institutions, training providers and non-profit organisations.

A logic model has been developed in cooperation with the Immigration Strategy Working Group that outlines expected outcomes of the Immigration Strategy implementation. The logic model will be an important tool by which the implementation committee will measure performance.

Monitoring and evaluation will focus on measuring the outcomes from actions taken as per the direction provided by the Immigration Strategy Action Plan. Outcomes will be reviewed by the Immigration Strategy implementation committee in order to determine what has worked, what lessons have been learned and what improvements can be made to programs and services through updates to the Immigration Strategy Action Plan.

As for the evaluation, a methodical assessment of the implementation and results of the action plan will be done after a longer period of implementation (i.e., between three to ten years). This evaluation will examine to what extent goals and objectives have been fulfilled as well as the efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the Immigration Strategy action plan over the long term.

## Assumptions

*Specific assumptions about the economy and labour force have been made to guide the development of the Immigration Strategy. Assumptions are critical factors not controlled by the strategy, but which influence its implementation and chances for success.*

This Immigration Strategy is based on the assumption that there will continue to be long-term shortages of skilled and semi-skilled workers and that large-scale industrial projects could have significant economic implications for Yukon's labour market.



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At the same time, the Immigration Strategy approach is to be responsive and sustainable based on the assumption that there are national and global economic pressures that are outside of Yukon's control. It has already been mentioned that cyclical economic downturns and recoveries experienced by national and global labour markets do not historically have immediate, large-scale impacts on Yukon. However, these outside factors need to be recognised as potential contributors to local labour market fluctuations and the Immigration Strategy Action Plan needs to respond accordingly.

Also, the Immigration Strategy assumes that labour mobility will continue to increase, particularly with the implementation of Chapter 7 of the Agreement on Internal Trade and the Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications.<sup>21</sup> Labour mobility, both nationally and globally, will continue to have an impact on the inward and outward flow of skilled and semi-skilled workers in Yukon.

## Conclusion

*Today's labour market is becoming increasingly globalised and this needs to be addressed at the local level. Internal economic and demographic pressures, combined with increased labour mobility, are changing how Canada and Yukon approach immigration. Immigration will continue to be necessary if Yukon's workforce is going to meet labour market demands. This is certainly true for the rest of the country as well.*

Immigration from abroad alone cannot be counted on to fill all vacancies or solve all labour market problems. Ongoing work with under-represented groups, such as persons with



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disabilities, youth, women (in trades), First Nations and older workers is critical to ensure social and economic success for the territory. Recruitment and retention, provision and dissemination of adequate labour market information and development of essential skills and training opportunities that ensure all Yukoners can contribute effectively to their communities must be coordinated through other existing Yukon government strategies.

Planning must be flexible to take into consideration a variety of possible economic futures. In particular, immigration policy must be able to respond quickly to meet immediate labour market needs, if large projects come onstream.

Moving forward with an agenda to ensure that immigration to Yukon is both sustainable and responsive is the path to a sound social and economic future. This Immigration Strategy is one more step toward realising the territory's vision for an inclusive and adaptable labour market that meets the demands of a strong, diversified economy and provides opportunity for a better quality of life for Yukoners.

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21. The Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT) was signed in 1994 by the Government of Canada and the provincial and territorial governments. Chapter 7 of the AIT says that any qualified worker in an occupation in one province or territory must be granted access to similar employment opportunities in any other Canadian jurisdiction. The chapter targets three main barriers that prevent or limit the interprovincial movement of workers: residency requirements; practices related to occupational licensing, certification and registration; and differences in occupational standards.



