

**BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION  
DOCUMENT ON A NEW  
IMMIGRATION STRATEGY FOR YUKON**

**2020 – 2030**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Department of Economic Development is pursuing the development of a new Immigration Strategy for Yukon to guide policy and program over the next decade. The new strategy will present a renewed vision for immigration in Yukon and lay out an action plan to ensure that immigration programming in Yukon continues to be responsive to the needs of our economy and our communities. Since the Yukon Immigration Strategy was drafted ten years ago, the territory's economy has grown and changed. We are updating the strategy now to ensure it meets the evolving needs of Yukon's employers and communities.

The ongoing COVID-19 has highlighted the need for a robust immigration system with foreign workers providing essential services to Yukoners in challenging times.

In drafting the next strategy, Yukon has an opportunity to position itself as a desirable settlement destination for newcomers, and to strategically target newcomers most likely to enhance the territory's economy, respond to community development needs and strengthen the diversity, social and cultural fabric in Yukon. The strategy will cover existing programs like the Yukon Nominee Program and Yukon Business Nominee Program, along with potential new programs to assist Yukon employers and to continue to grow our economy with the help of immigration.

An important component in developing the new strategy is to meet and speak with Yukoners to identify needs and priorities, both immediate and in the future, that could be addressed and met through a new strategy.

To achieve this, the department is planning a series of engagement events with stakeholders from Yukon's business community. It also plans to engage with municipal governments from across Yukon; Yukon First Nation governments and agencies that provide services or interact with immigrants in Yukon including L'Association Franco-Yukonnaise and the Multicultural Centre of the Yukon.

To help prepare stakeholders and partners for a conversation on a new strategy, the department has prepared the following discussion paper. This document contains background information on the federal framework for immigration programming in Yukon as well as an overview of the current demographic picture in Yukon. It also includes some themes for discussion and some suggested questions for consideration.

The themes, areas for discussions and potential questions are starting points for conversation and not meant to limit discussion. Through this engagement the department is looking to hear directly from Yukoners about how immigration programming can contribute to the health and resiliency of Yukon's economy and its communities.



## GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

The economic impact of COVID-19 has demonstrated the need for strong immigration policies within the Yukon. Many business sectors continue to rely upon participants in the government of Yukon's immigration programs to sustain essential services. Foreign workers have been supporting front-line workers, food supply chains, child care and care facilities. In the September 23, 2020 Speech from the Throne, Governor General Julie Payette stated that immigration "remains a driver of Canada's economic growth". Now and for our future a healthy labour market is essential to achieving the Yukon government's enduring priorities of helping Yukoners thrive, investing in communities and cultivating a diversified economy. As one tool available for the strengthening of Yukon's labour force, modern and responsive immigration programming can play an important role in helping the government to achieve its priorities.

## AGREEMENT FOR CANADA-YUKON CO-OPERATION ON IMMIGRATION

The [\*Agreement for Canada – Yukon Co-operation on Immigration\*](#) defines the respective roles and responsibilities of Canada and Yukon relating to Permanent and Temporary Residents wishing to reside in Yukon. It is this agreement that gives Yukon the ability to select candidates for immigration through territorial streams, with the federal government retaining final determination on who is allowed to enter and establish in Canada. The Yukon Immigration Strategy is limited in scope because of the parameters of the agreement with Canada and the [\*Immigration and Refugee Protection Act\*](#) and Regulations. Yukon and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) are preparing to negotiate a new five-year joint agreement. A date has not yet been set to begin negotiations.

## FEDERAL IMMIGRATION PROGRAMS

Employers and foreign workers can access immigration programs through a variety of federal programs including various work permits allowing work on a temporary basis in Canada with or without a job offer; study permits that allow limited work, and programs that offer permanent residence. Applications for these programs are made directly to the federal government which makes the decision on their merits. Nearly half of all international immigrants to Yukon arrive through a federal program such as the Live-in Caregiver Stream or through family sponsorship.

## TERRITORIAL IMMIGRATION PROGRAMS

Through the [\*Agreement for Canada – Yukon Co-Operation on Immigration\*](#), Yukon is responsible for administering the Yukon Nominee Program (YNP) and the Yukon Business Nominee Program (YBNP). Under the YNP, Yukon is allocated 300 persons annually. In 2019, Yukon nominated 162 persons through the program. Since 2007, when the program was launched, the YNP has assisted over 400 employers address labour shortages, welcoming 1,636 nominees (2,898 people including family members). Under YBNP, prospective newcomers prepared to contribute a minimum of 300,000 to their business in Yukon, and who have a minimum verifiable net worth of \$500,000 to ensure their business' viability, are eligible for nomination. Since 2004, 24



businesses have been established through the YBNP. Nominees have invested over \$23 million into their businesses and 41 candidates have been nominated for permanent residence.



## YUKON COMMUNITY NEEDS

Many industries in Yukon's communities are seasonal, including mining, tourism and hospitality services. Yukon's Nominee Program is essential in addressing labour market shortages and enhancing economic development in Yukon's rural communities. Communities are presently developing capacity in areas that would benefit greatly from the potential to work with international knowledge, skills and/or networks of an international perspective; namely, agriculture, food security, telecommunications, mining and mine reclamation, renewable energy, transportation, tourism, logging, and government services.



## AREAS FOR DISCUSSION

### Yukon and the North

In drafting a new strategy, we must keep in perspective geopolitical factors such as the impact of climate change, arctic sovereignty, the demand for natural resources, and the consequences of not actively managing the development of Canada's North.

Through this strategy, we have an opportunity to identify and create programs to attract and retain skilled and beneficial newcomers; to better utilize immigration as a tool to strengthen our labour market in Yukon, boost economic growth, and position Yukon to meet these increased strategic and demographic pressures.

Strengthening the labour market will support long-term economic growth and diversity for the territory, to the benefit of all its residents. It will help Yukon increase its competitive edge and bolster Canada's position in the North.

In conjunction with Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework, a long-term immigration strategy would allow Yukon to both anticipate some of these upward demographic pressures but also, critically, set the "terms" for future immigration to Yukon. In this context, Yukon could set out a framework for a potential future Pan-Northern Immigration Strategy by working in partnership with the federal government, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

There is an opportunity for Yukon, through a new immigration strategy, to advance several immigration policy positions that were not considered in the 2010 strategy. These include:

- Setting the terms for a future Northern Immigration Strategy;
- Branding Yukon as an ambitious, open, economically vital jurisdiction, building for the future; and
- Reorienting Yukon's approach to immigration from a reactive one to a proactive one that actively seeks out needed skills.

#### Questions for Discussion:

- In creating a strategy for economic immigration in Yukon over the next decade, what top three areas should Yukon prioritize?

### Economy

In the past ten years Yukon's economy has been in the midst of a robust expansion. Strength has been broad based, with a number of economic indicators showing improvement including employment, income, population and retail sales. Between 2010 and 2019 Yukon's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased by \$364.8 million<sup>1</sup>.

The COVID-19 crisis of 2020 has presented challenges to Yukon's economic growth. Tourism and hospitality industries have experienced financial pressures as a result of travel restrictions



and periods of mandatory closure. From March 2020 to August 2020 the Government of Yukon deployed a number of economic support programs to provide financial assistance to Yukon residents.

In 2019 the Yukon unemployment rate was 3.6%, the lowest in the country. As of September 22, 2020 the 2020 unemployment rate was 5.1%<sup>2</sup> and continues to be the lowest in the country.

From February to May of 2020 Canada-wide unemployment rates surged to a record high of 13.7%<sup>3</sup>. The August 2020 Labour Force Survey, released by Statistics Canada, indicates that current national employment rates are rising across Canada in response to lessening of restrictions on travel and public gatherings. In particular, employment is increasing at a faster pace in the service sector than in the manufacturing sector. The Department of Finance is forecasting a flat Yukon economy for the remainder of 2020 followed by strong economic growth from 2021 through 2024<sup>4</sup>. Yukon's recovery now and post-COVID-19 will depend on adequately staffing the service sector roles to respond to increasing business needs in the hospitality and tourism sectors.

Historically employers have reported difficulties in finding and retaining reliable labour as there are few workers available. Within Yukon occupations which report labour shortages include: food counter attendants, cashiers, light duty cleaners, hotel front desk clerks, grocery clerks and early childhood educators and assistants. The labour shortage is even more challenging in smaller communities and for seasonal employers.

Prior to February of 2020 employers found it increasingly difficult to fill job openings, with the number of vacant jobs exceeding the number of unemployed. This increased competition for labour has led to rising wages and created cost pressures in other sectors. It is anticipated that during Yukon's continuing economic recovery businesses will continue to experience these challenges.

It is also anticipated that the number of people looking for work will continue to fall and that the number of employers looking for workers will continue to increase. Job vacancies shot up over the summer of 2018 with between 850 and 900 unfilled jobs in the second and third quarters. There were not enough Yukoners to fill the current and forecasted labour shortage, both in skilled and semi-skilled occupations and it is expected that this will remain the case in the immediate future.

Yukon's mining industry has been showing strength in 2020. The Minto mine resumed ore shipments in January of 2020 and the Eagle mine achieved full commercial production in July, 2020. Current high mineral prices indicate that mining will be a strong contributor to economic activity going forward. Current forecasts show the value of mineral production increasing from \$170 million in 2019 to nearly \$1.4 billion annually by 2024<sup>4</sup>. Those high mineral prices are also expected to drive a significant amount of mineral exploration work.

Tourism was a growing part of Yukon's economy pre-COVID-19 with international border crossings rising to over 500,000 annually in 2018 and 2019<sup>5</sup>. The number of international



border crossings were down by over 90% in the first six months of 2020. Tourism is not expected to recover to pre-pandemic levels until 2023 at the earliest<sup>4</sup>. Recovery of the tourism industry will rely on the ability of businesses to meet their labour market needs with local workers.

## Demographics

As of March 2020, Yukon's population stands at 42,152, with 78% of the population residing in Whitehorse and 22% in the communities.

According to the 2016 Census of Canada (the next Census is scheduled for 2021):

- 86.2% of Yukoners were born in Canada (non-immigrant);
- 13.8% of Yukoners were born outside of Canada (immigrants);
- Most common countries of birth of immigrants in Yukon are the Philippines (22.9%), The United States (12.6%), and the United Kingdom (11.7%).
- More than half of all immigrants in Yukon arrived through the Yukon Nominee Program, with nearly 73% of nominees arriving between 2011 and 2016. The balance of immigrants to Yukon arrived through Federal immigration programs, mostly as Live in Caregivers or Family class.

## Projections

Population projections by the Yukon Bureau of Statistics in 2020 estimate that Yukon's population in 2040 would rise to 55,730 – an increase of 14,378 from the 2019 population of 41,352 Yukon residents. Of this total projected population in 2040, the projections estimate that 11,762 Yukoners would be 65 years and older while 35,135 Yukoners would be 15- to 64-year old and 8,833 Yukoners would be 0 to 14-years old.

According to the 2016 Census, nearly 30% of Whitehorse's workforce is over the age of 55 and research from Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada suggests that up to 4,500 people in Whitehorse are likely to retire in the next decade.

Research from the Conference Board of Canada released in 2019 shows that the Canadian-born population and under-represented groups such as women, Indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities that will participate in the labour force, on their own, are not sufficient to fully replenish the 13.4 million workers who will leave the labour force over the next 20 years.

Immigration is crucial to the future labour force and economic wellbeing of the country and of our territory.

### Questions for Discussion:

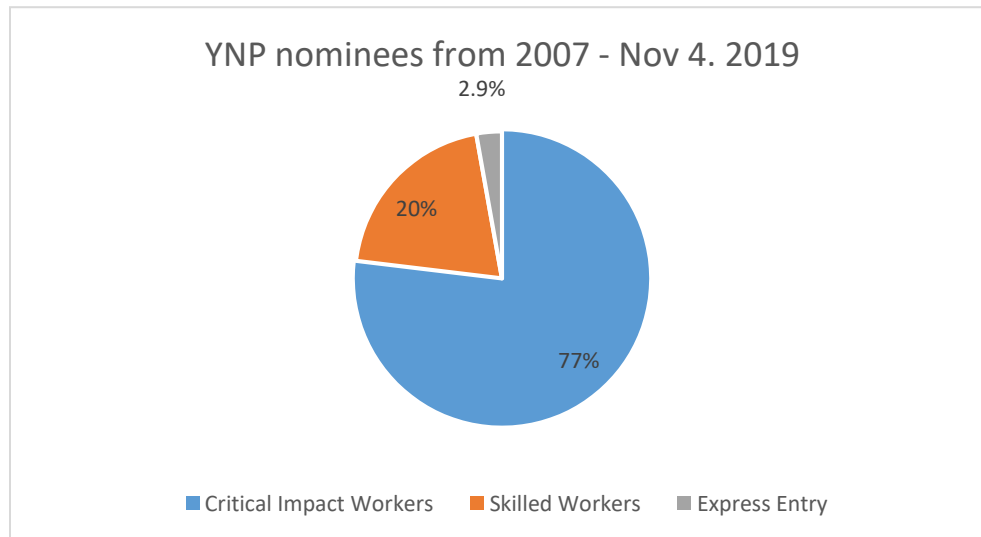
- Is the Yukon Business Nominee Program adequately addressing the succession needs and concerns of Yukon small business owners searching for an exit plan?
- If not, where are the issues?



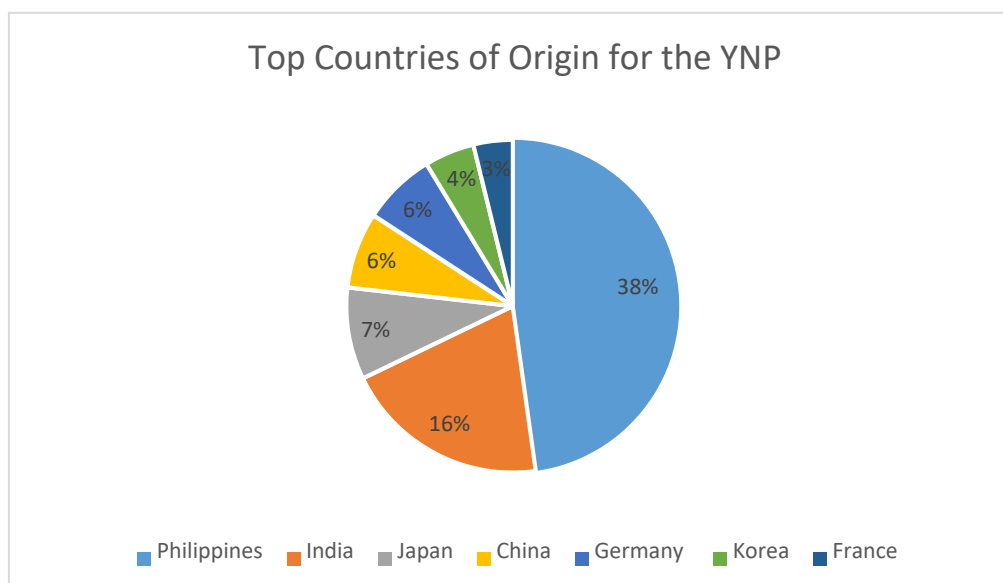
## Immigration Programming in Yukon

### *Yukon Nominee Program*

The Yukon Nominee Program (YNP) is the most popular immigration program offered by Yukon government. Since the program started in 2007, the YNP has assisted 385 employers to address labour shortages by nominating 1,295 principal applicant nominees through its critical impact, skilled worker and express entry streams.



Philippines and India are the two largest source countries for nominees to the YNP.



Most nominees are in the food service, tourism and hospitality, and early childhood education sectors.

### Top Ten Occupations

Skilled Workers/ Express Entry	Critical Impact Workers
Early Childhood Educators and Assistants	Food Counter Attendants, Kitchen Helpers and Related Occupations
Cooks	Light Duty Cleaners
Carpenters	Cashiers
Air Pilots, Flight Engineers and Flying Instructors	Retail Salespersons and Sales Clerks
Restaurant and Food Service Managers	Grocery Clerks and Store Shelf Stockers

Source: Yukon Nominee Program Database

#### **Express Entry**

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) introduced the Express Entry program in 2015 to manage the entry of skilled workers into Canada. The program is intended to meet labour demand through a fast, and flexible economic immigration system. Yukon launched a complementary Express Entry stream within its Yukon Nominee Program, which mirrors the federal program. Yukon Express Entry nominations are based on valid job offers for permanent, full-time work from eligible Yukon employers.

Under Yukon Express Entry, the department assesses candidates against the federal requirements to ensure that nominated candidates have a greater likelihood of being approved by IRCC when they apply for permanent residence. IRCC increased the number of annual nominations for Yukon by 60 for Yukon Express Entry candidates, bringing the annual allocation for all Yukon Nominee Program streams to 250.

#### **Business Nominee Program**

Yukon offers a Business Nominee Program (YBNP) which has successfully attracted business entrepreneurs to the hospitality, service, tourism, arts and agricultural sectors in Dawson, Mayo, Faro, Haines Junction and Whitehorse. Since 2004, 24 businesses have been established through the YBNP. Nominees have invested \$17.86 million into their businesses and 41 candidates have been nominated for permanent residence. Participants are required to contribute a minimum of \$300,000 to their business in Yukon, and have a minimum verifiable net worth of \$500,000, to ensure their business' viability. They receive a work permit while they establish their business before applying for permanent residence.



### ***Yukon Community Pilot***

Under the existing Yukon Nominee Program employers can hire foreign nationals for full-time permanent jobs, which does not address the problem of seasonal labour shortages. Yukon employers can use the federal Temporary Foreign Worker Program to address short-term labour shortages but it is expensive and requires a 3 to 12-month processing time.

A new pilot program is being launched in January 2020 to meet Yukon's economic development and labour market needs. The Yukon Community Pilot is a new stream under the Yukon Nominee Program that will allow more flexibility for both employers and nominees in specific Yukon communities. The new approach will provide nominees with a work permit for a specific community, rather than a specific employer, and allow them to work for several employers in the same community. The pilot project reflects the unique labour market conditions in Yukon communities and is responsive to the needs of employers for seasonal workers.

### ***Potential Immigration Initiatives***

In addition to the existing programs, Yukon is considering a Yukon Strategic Human Capital Stream which would target a relatively low number (maximum 50 foreign nationals) of highly skilled individuals registered on the Federal Express Entry profile without a job offer from a Yukon employer. It would give Yukon more opportunity to recruit talent already registered in the Federal Express Entry database for future labour market needs while pursuing high impact talent.

### ***Immigration Branch Staff Training and Capacity Building***

Building the capacity of new and current staff is an essential part of future immigration program implementation as there is currently no Immigration Refugee and Citizenship Office (IRCC) in Whitehorse.

With one of the tightest labour markets in Canada and our significant distance from other major centers in the country, we want to ensure that Yukon government immigration staff are equipped with the knowledge and cultural awareness to effectively deliver services and programs to Yukoners.

The department has invested in on-going training for Immigration Unit employees to equip them to better assist Yukoners and newcomers regarding the complexities of immigration.

### ***Foreign Credential Recognition***

Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) is the process of verifying that the education obtained by a person in another country is equal to the standards established for Canadian workers.

The process for Canadian credentials to be recognized in Yukon is a complex issue. Apart from the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, there are no regulatory bodies in Yukon. However, Yukon Government Community Services works with the provincial registrars to issue licenses for certain regulated occupations and Yukon Health and Social Services provides general



information to internationally trained health care professionals. A person holding foreign credentials, including Canadians, usually needs to become licensed in another jurisdiction.

At a national level, FCR is overseen by both Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). IRCC co-chairs, along with the Yukon co-chair, the national Settlement Working Group, which oversees the development of foreign credential recognition. Yukon is also a member of the FCR national working group run under ESDC.

Government designated organizations are set up to assess credential equivalencies in education and training. Yukon Government signed an MOU with the International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES) to share Yukon related statistics. Alberta hosts the International Qualifications Assessment Services (IQAS) and World Education Services (WES) in Toronto can provide assessments in both official languages. Pre-arrival assessments are promoted to those coming to Canada.

#### Questions for Discussion:

- Are existing Yukon Nominee Streams meeting the labour market demands in Yukon?
- In not, where are the gaps?
- How can Yukon government improve the Yukon Nominee Program?
- What are the restrictions in the program that are hindering employers' access to labour?
- What new initiatives should Yukon government consider?
- What skill sets will be required in Yukon over the next decade?
- How can Yukon improve the foreign credential recognition process?

## First Nations and Yukon Immigration

As we welcome newcomers to Yukon, it is important to remember that revitalizing, maintaining and celebrating First Nations knowledge, language and culture are core to a modern Yukon.

There are 14 Yukon First Nations and eight language groups, as well as Aboriginal groups from Northwest Territories and British Columbia with traditional territory in Yukon. According to the 2016 census 23.3% of Yukon's population in private households identified as Aboriginal. They are important partners in the governance of the territory.

First Nations' traditional territories cover almost all the land in Yukon. Eleven Yukon First Nations signed modern treaties between 1993 and 2005. These First Nations make laws and decisions on their settlement land and for their Citizens. The Government of Yukon works with all Yukon First Nations to deliver programs and services to Yukoners and manage the territory's land and resources.

Many Yukon First Nations have development corporations and are engaged in significant economic ventures. There are opportunities to explore with Yukon First Nation governments



and development corporations, opportunities to leverage immigration programming for the purpose of advancing partnerships with, and meeting the talent needs of these governments and corporations.

#### Questions for Discussion:

- What opportunities exist for immigration programming to support the economic development needs of First Nation governments in Yukon?

## NEXT STEPS

This discussion paper will be used to guide the consultation process for the development of a new immigration strategy. The results of the consultation will be summarized in a “What We Heard” report and guide the drafting of the renewed Immigration Strategy for Yukon. The department will continue to inform stakeholders of progress on the strategy drafting process.

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<sup>1</sup> Yukon Statistical Review 2019, July 2020. Yukon Bureau of Statistics. [https://yukon.ca/sites/yukon.ca/files/ybs/2019\\_annual.pdf](https://yukon.ca/sites/yukon.ca/files/ybs/2019_annual.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Year-to-date Stats, September 22, 2020. Yukon Bureau of Statistics.

<sup>3</sup> Labour Force Survey, August 2020, September 04, 2020. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200904/dq200904a-eng.htmf>

<sup>4</sup> Interim Fiscal and Economic Update, October 2020. Government of Yukon Department of Finance, October 1, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> CANSIM 427-0001, Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=2410004101>

