

Potential Employment Opportunities for Pacific Island Migrant Workers in Canada to Assist Economic Development

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Abstract

The World Bank has previously outlined an economic development case for expanding labour mobility in the Pacific Region. Following from this, the labour markets in some developed countries are now partially open to Pacific Island workers. However, there may be other and greater opportunities for integration of regional labour markets in other industry sectors. The World Bank has proposed that it should be left to private and public sector employers to identify where these opportunities are, while the Governments of respective countries should play a facilitating role. Nevertheless, to promote a constructive dialogue it would be helpful to have some indications of the prospects for this integration with respect to some specific countries and selected industry sectors. This paper fulfils this indicative role by outlining relevant employment opportunities for Pacific Island migrant workers in specific Canadian industry sectors. It has consequently contributed to informing the World Bank's policy agenda of promoting the circular migration of labour within the Asia-Pacific region.

Field of Research/Paper Track: Labour economics, Development economics

Background

Many industry sectors within the Canadian economy have a long history of utilising temporary foreign workers (TFWs) as an important source of labour to help minimise labour shortages they face. In recent years Canada has experienced a historically high level of permanent immigration driven by expanding employment opportunities. Therefore, this has spilled over into temporary migration as backlogs and delays in processing applications have held back the permanent immigration.

Thus, during the past decade, the yearly number of temporary immigrants has grown from 50,000 to 250,000; exceeding the number of permanent immigrants. Temporary immigration is limited to two years. However, once in Canada many temporary immigrants find ways of remaining in the country. As in Australia, the temporary migrants have become a significant source for permanent immigration. Amongst the Canadian population, support for immigration has remained consistently high even though there have been falls in the earnings of native born Canadians across birth cohorts (Beaudry & Green 2000). Strong support for immigration has also been maintained despite there being significant reported declines in the earnings of recently arrived immigrants (Green & Worskick 2004).

The policies relating to immigration within Canada have experienced considerable modifications. Some relevant reforms that have occurred in recent times include:

1. An increase in the intake of immigrants entering under the points system

2. Reweighting the points allocation system according to the personal characteristics of applicants
3. Introduction of the Canadian Experience Class, which was designed to make it easier for applicants who have completed education or acquired previous work experience within Canada to achieve landed immigrant status and become permanent residents
4. Introduction of the Quebec Immigrant Selection System and the Provincial Nominee Programs (PNPs)

A temporary foreign worker within Canada is defined as an individual to whom Immigration Canada has issued a work permit to live and be employed within the country, (Byl 2010). Canada is expected to admit approximately 100,000 immigrants, who will qualify under the federal skilled worker program to work within the country. Canada's federal skilled worker program provides for the largest single stream of immigration of foreign workers into Canada. The federal skilled worker program is centred around a points based metric system of evaluation, where criteria such as the age, adaptability, level of education (including acquired qualifications), language ability, and relevant work experience of an applicant are used to assess his/her likely potential to successfully migrate to and settle in Canada. Currently, the threshold for admission into Canada stands at 67 points, which represents the points score that a foreign applicant must attain in order to be allowed to seek employment opportunities within the country as part of the federal skilled worker program.

With this growth in temporary migration, the Canadian Government has moved to speed up the cumbersome process for temporary entry. The critical factor is the so called Labour Market Opinion (LMO), an assessment of how the recruitment would impact Canadian residents. Recently, however, approved employers can apply an Expedited Labour Market Opinion (E-LMO) that allows them to recruit workers without meeting the more stringent conditions of the standard LMO.

Introduced in 2007, this scheme is still a pilot project and is restricted to employers in British Columbia and Alberta. It is also restricted to a list of occupations that are deemed to be in shortage in these two provinces. This list does not include only skilled occupations but also a range of lower skilled occupations including food service personnel, hospitality room attendants, residential cleaning, retail salespersons, industrial meat cutters, and manufacturing and processing labourers.

This relaxation of skill requirements might signal a significant departure from the traditional preference for mainly skilled workers. However, it is too early to judge the effect of this initiative. An E-LMO is not sufficient for entry to Canada. In addition, foreign workers need a resident visa and they have to satisfy an immigration officer that they are likely to leave Canada when their visa expires. Limited prospects of obtaining permanent residence after two years of working and residing in Canada also influences low-skilled migration workers to use temporary migration programs. The existing arrangements do not provide many avenues for low-skilled workers to seek permanent residence. When there appears to be persistent shortages of some categories of low-skilled workers, as is the current situation, this will limit employers' use of the temporary foreign workers.

Another recent innovation, the introduction of the Canadian Experience Class—, to facilitate the processing of applications for permanent residence from within Canada, might change this. However, so far it is uncertain if and how this gateway will apply to low-skilled workers. The Canadian government released recent policy statements which seem to indicate that they are wary about promoting the prospects of temporary low-skilled workers gaining

permanent resident status. Instead, the Canadian Government has proposed a four year cap for work on a temporary visa. Having reached this cap, a migrant worker would then be barred from getting another permit for six years. Even the province that has made most use of the program, Alberta, has some reservations about the longer term benefits of large scale temporary migration.

Canada has a long-standing scheme for temporary low-skilled workers, namely the Seasonal Agricultural Work Program (SAWP). The SAWP was established in 1966 and allows for the entry of foreign workers (from Mexico and some Commonwealth Caribbean countries) for the purpose of seasonal agricultural work to help minimise labour shortages within the Canadian agricultural sector. SAWP requires Canadian employers to ensure that minimum working conditions are maintained for foreign workers. Canadian employers using SAWP must also ensure the provision of other services, such as housing assistance, for the foreign employees they recruit. Most generally regard it as a model guest-worker scheme. It has served as the blueprint for the Australian and New Zealand pilot scheme. SWAP is now a well-established and accepted program and could in principle be expanded allow for the entry of Pacific Islanders. Alternatively, the favourable experience with SWAP might persuade the Canadian Government to introduce a SWAP type program for other industries suited to the employment of Pacific Islanders.

As mentioned previously, there are currently a number of temporary foreign worker programs within Canada for migrant workers. Some of these include the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program and the “Temporary Foreign Worker Program,” which includes the Low Skilled Worker Pilot Project (Byl 2010). Below is more detailed information about some of the temporary foreign worker programs available in Canada. A more detailed discussion of some of these temporary migrant worker schemes thus follows.

Provincial Nominee Programs

Each of the Canadian provinces have their own individual provincial immigration programs (known as Provincial Nominee Program (PNP)). These act to promote immigration policies that cater to meet a province’s specific needs. This provides the provincial authorities with more influence and control in the identification and selection of particular groups of economic immigrants intending to settle in their respective provinces.

In 2010, an estimated 90,000 economic immigrants will be nominated or selected by authorities in the Canadian provinces. Quebec is the only province which has the right to specifically select and nominate the immigrants who will be permitted to seek employment opportunities and settle there. Quebec is also forecast to make approximately 45,000 selections in terms of its foreign worker intake in 2010. This represents an increase from the 31,000 temporary foreign workers recorded for the province in December 2009. Comparatively, Ontario was reported to have 95,000 short term migrant workers while British Columbia had 69,000 in December 2009. Alberta also experienced a significant increase in the number of migrants on temporary work visas, with the number of these foreign workers rising from 16,000 in 2005 to almost 66,000 by December 2009.

All of the other Canadian provinces (with the exception of Quebec) possess the right to nominate immigrants as part of their migrant intake programs. In 2010, and for the foreseeable future, the numbers of immigrants granted permanent residence under a PNP or selected by the Province of Quebec is anticipated to increase.

Under the provincial programs, qualified employers are typically able to nominate prospective workers for an expedited process which, upon receiving approval from the province, allows for an application for permanent residence to proceed as part of a processing stream that entirely bypasses the otherwise rather lengthy federal immigration selection process. It is possible for a qualified employer sponsored applicant to initially receive short

term but renewable work permits that can be processed outside of Canada or in some instances at entry ports. Provincial authorities can process his/her application for permanent admission and subsequently federal authorities can complete security checks and screenings.

In the Canadian provinces other than Quebec and Manitoba, the Provincial Nominee Programs (PNPs) generally require an employer to sponsor the application of a foreign migrant worker in order for him/ her to enter and seek employment opportunities. In the absence of employer sponsorship which also has government approval, an application is unlikely to be approved or maybe looked over as lower priority, in favour of applications which have received employer sponsored approval.

To be considered as an eligible sponsoring employer, most of the PNP's stipulate that employers must exhibit and prove that they have made sufficient effort to offer competitive remuneration and working conditions to recruit local Canadian workers for the relevant occupations. There are also variations amongst the different Canadian provinces in the employment terms and conditions that are required to enable the sponsorship of a migrant worker for a specific occupation.

According to PNP guidelines, the position that a foreign worker intends to fill must comply with the terms of a specific pilot project designed for a specific critical skill shortage as identified within a particular province. Alternatively, the position the foreign worker fills must generally conform to a National Occupation Classification skill level of A, B, or O. Pilot programs within the Canadian provinces are generally designed for low skilled workers and often have limited scope. There are also often differences in the pilot projects for low skilled occupations in the various Canadian provinces.

The duration of work permits issued for low skilled occupations is limited to a period of two years and under the current regulation can not be extended. The duration of validity of Canadian work permits issued to skilled workers, however, can be extended. There are currently discussions between the Canadian Federal government and the provincial authorities to extend the duration of work permits issued for low skilled migrant workers.

Some Canadian industries, such as the construction sector in British Columbia and Alberta's oil sands sector, have been quite dependent on the Provincial Nominee Program to fill labour shortfalls they have experienced.

The processes involved in facilitating the employment of a temporary migrant worker in Canada generally includes the following:

1. The foreign worker must receive a job offer and enter into an approved contract of employment with an eligible Canadian employer
2. The foreign worker must prove that he/she adequately satisfies any requirements (in terms of training/education, qualifications, prerequisite licensing, experience, etc.)
3. The foreign worker is then required to acquire labour market opinion confirmation from Human Resources Development Canada (HRSDC) for some occupations and in the case of some types of workers. The need to obtain a positive labour market opinion from the HRSDC is believed to have been established in order to protect permanent Canadian residents from competition from foreign workers. Consequently, local Canadian employers seeking to hire overseas are generally required to guarantee that a permanent Canadian resident worker can not be found to fill the relevant vacancy. As part of this process the HRSDC often investigates the availability of permanent residents to fill the position and whether the hiring of foreign workers to fill specific vacancies would be beneficial to existing Canadian permanent residents. The HRSDC is also responsible for ensuring that the rates of remuneration,

occupational standards and working conditions for the temporary foreign worker(s) is comparable to what a Canadian permanent resident would be entitled to receive if his/she were employed in the same role. In some instances, the HRSDC also makes additional stipulations. This process may therefore lead to delays in the processing of the foreign worker's application, which may last from a couple of days to six months, depending on the employer's location and the intended type of occupation. In cases where the HRSDC provides a positive labour market opinion, the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) may subsequently issue a work permit.

4. The foreign worker must obtain an appropriate work visa, which may entail further processing delays.

Low Skilled Pilot Project Worker Program

The Canadian government originally implemented the Low Skilled Pilot Project Worker Program to assist in reducing labour shortages within the construction sector of the Greater Toronto Area. However, various other industries across Canada including industries within Alberta's hotel and meat processing sectors have utilized the program. As a temporary admission program for migrant workers, the Low Skilled Pilot Project Worker Program has a significantly different scope to the Temporary Foreign Worker program but still follows some similar processes.

Canadian companies that need positions to be filled by workers who require minimal education and training and where an ongoing shortage of workers for a designated occupation has been appropriately certified by the local labour market generally use the Low Skilled Pilot Worker Program. On the basis that there is an employment contract between an eligible employer and foreign migrant worker, the program issues a work visa for a maximum duration of 24 months. It is not possible to re-issue these work visas until the migrant worker has returned to their home country for a minimum period of four months.

The process involved in hiring temporary foreign workers as part of the low skilled pilot project is listed below:

1. An eligible Canadian employer must make a job offer and enter into contract of employment with the foreign worker. As part of the employment contract there must be provisions for the Canadian employer to fund the return air fare of the migrant worker and also in some cases provide appropriate housing for the foreign worker.
2. The foreign worker is then required to acquire labour market opinion confirmation from Human Resources Development Canada (HRSDC). This may lead to delays in the processing of the foreign worker's application which may last from a couple of days to six months depending on the employer's location and the intended type of occupation.
3. The foreign worker must obtain an appropriate work visa, which may entail further processing delays deriving from the need for the migrant worker to complete a full medical examination, etc.

Tourism Industry in Canada

The slowing of the Canadian economy which has occurred since the 2008 economic downturn has served to reduce the severity of labour shortages within the country throughout 2009 and 2010. However, as the economy begins to recover more rapidly from the decline which the global financial crisis induced, demand for tourism services is likely to grow

considerably. This will lead to more imbalances between the demand for and supply of labour within the sector, thereby inducing further labour shortages across the industry.

Several factors are anticipated to induce the future projected labour shortages within the Canadian tourism industry. This includes the fact that demand for labour in the sector is expected to grow during a time when the labour force is tipped to experience significant changes in composition and growth. The predominant labour source which the Canadian tourism sector has relied upon traditionally has been younger workers. In recent times the rate of entry of younger workers into the labour force has fallen. This has been combined with increasing competition from other Canadian industry sectors to attract younger workers.

Strong growth in expenditure on goods and services within the industry is anticipated to induce the increased demand for labour which is projected to occur within the Canadian tourism industry over the next twenty-year period. The food and beverages sector is forecast to record the largest increase in potential demand for labour. According to the forecasts, by 2025 this sector alone could potentially require over 1.2 million full time employees. This represents a significant increase from the estimated 908,000 full time workers who were reportedly employed within the sector in 2006.

Table 2: Potential Labour Demand in Specific Sectors of Canada's Tourism Industry (Jobs)

	2015	2020	2025
Accommodation Sector	269,899	282,156	297,129
Food & Beverage Services Sector	1,011,698	1,084,661	1,160,857
Total Labour Demand	1,281,597	1,366,817	1,457,986

Source: *Canadian Tourism Research Institute and the Conference Board of Canada (2010), 'The Future of Canada's Tourism Sector: Economic Recession Only a Temporary Reprieve From Labour Shortages'*

As Table 2 indicates, the largest increase in potential labour demand is forecast to occur in the food and beverage services industry. According to the projections, the sector itself could employ more than a million full year-workers by 2015 and over 1.16 million full-year workers by 2025. In the case of the Accommodation sector of the Canadian tourism industry, the forecast growth in labour shortages between 2015 and 2025 is more modest but still significant with nearly 270,000 vacancies projected for 2015 and a shortfall of more than 297,000 workers anticipated for 2025.

Table 3: Potential Labour Demand in Specific Sectors of Canada's Tourism Industry (Jobs, Compound Annual Growth Rate)

	2011–2015	2016–2020	2021–2025
Accommodation Sector	2.0%	0.9%	1%
Food & Beverage Services Sector	1.9%	1.4%	1.4%

Source: *Canadian Tourism Research Institute and the Conference Board of Canada (2010), 'The Future of Canada's Tourism Sector: Economic Recession Only a Temporary Reprieve From Labour Shortages'*

In addition, growth in the demand for labour in both the Accommodation and the Food & Beverage Services sectors of the Canadian tourism industry anticipate to remain strong up to 2015, and then appears it will ease slightly between 2016 and 2025. These trends are clearly visible in the data presented in Table 3.

The figures derived from the projections for the potential growth of labour supply in the Accommodation along with the Food and Beverage services sectors as depicted in Table 4 below indicate that of the two sectors, the food and beverage services industry is believed to have the greatest anticipated increase in labour supply over the period from 2015 to 2025.

Table 4: Potential Labour Supply in Canada's Tourism Sector (jobs)

	2015	2020	2025
Accommodation Sector	260,536	267,588	274,904
Food & Beverage Services Sector	976,669	993,205	1,018,550
Total Labour Supply	1,237,205	1,260,793	1,293,454

Source: *Canadian Tourism Research Institute and the Conference Board of Canada (2010), 'The Future of Canada's Tourism Sector: Economic Recession Only a Temporary Reprieve from Labour Shortages'*

Table 5: Potential Labour Supply in Specific Sectors of Canada's Tourism Industry (Jobs, Compound Annual Growth Rate)

	2011–2015	2016–2020	2021–2025
Accommodation Sector	1%	0.5%	0.5%
Food & Beverage Services Sector	0.9%	0.3%	0.5%

Source: *Canadian Tourism Research Institute and the Conference Board of Canada (2010), 'The Future of Canada's Tourism Sector: Economic Recession Only a Temporary Reprieve from Labour Shortages'*

Potential Labour Shortages in the Tourism Sector

The tourism sector, like many other industries within the Canadian economy, is experiencing a trend towards tighter labour markets. The forecasts indicate that the potential labour shortage in the Canadian Accommodation, as well as the Food and Beverage sectors, is likely to become even greater over the next fifteen year period. The figures also signal that the food and beverage services industry in particular has the greatest potential to be very vulnerable to labour shortages.

Table 6: Potential Labour Shortages in Specific Sectors of Canada's Tourism Industry (Jobs)

	2015	2020	2025
Accommodation Sector	9,353	14,568	22,225
Food & Beverage Services Sector	35,029	91,456	142,307
Total Labour Shortages	44,382	106,024	164,532

Source: *Canadian Tourism Research Institute and the Conference Board of Canada (2010), 'The Future of Canada's Tourism Sector: Economic Recession Only a Temporary Reprieve From Labour Shortages'*

The results of the forecasting as revealed in Table 6 indicate that there will be a considerable increase in the magnitude of labour shortages likely to occur within the Food and beverage services sector along with the Accommodation sector in the time span between 2010 and 2025. As a proportion of labour demand, the extent of the labour shortage is anticipated to be most severe within the food and beverage industry, which according to the projected figures could suffer a shortfall of around 142,000 workers by the year 2025.

In the years leading up to the recession of 2008-09, like many other Canadian industries, the tourism sector experienced tight labour markets. Relatively weaker economic conditions since the 2008-09 down turn have therefore served to provide some temporary easing in labour market conditions within the tourism industry. However, the projections indicate that labour shortages will increasingly become more significant over the course of the next 15 year period.

There appears to be some consistency across the various regional areas of Canada with regard to the occupations within the tourism industry that are anticipated to experience labour shortages. More specifically, potential labour shortages are forecast to be more acute front line customer service jobs and more physically demanding occupations such as hotel room attendants. In addition, the recruitment of suitable workers for these occupations generally requires longer lead times, making the recruiting process more difficult. It also increases the likelihood that less suitable employees with inappropriate skills or a lack of sufficient training may be selected to fill these vacancies. As a result of these factors, some vacancies for these positions remain unfilled, particularly in some of the Western Canadian provinces.

As indicated in Table 7 below, the Food and Beverage and the Accommodation sectors of the Canadian tourism industry contain the top five occupations that are most likely to face labour shortages over the next twenty year period. The data presented indicates that the most evident shortage of workers is forecast to occur amongst kitchen helpers and food-counter attendants with a shortage of over 13,000 workers forecast for 2015, with this figure (almost tripling and) growing to above 33,000 in 2020 and almost 50,000 by 2025. Significant labour shortages are also anticipated to occur amongst food and beverage servers over the next 5-15 year period with a shortfall of over 42,000 workers in this role expected by 2025.

Table 7: Potential Labour Shortages in Specific Occupations within the Tourism Industry (Jobs)

	2015	2020	2025
Food-counter attendants and kitchen helpers*	13,120	33,478	49,564
Food and beverage servers*	11,928	27,782	42,655
Bartenders*	2,478	5,606	8,784
Total labour shortage	27,526	66,866	101,003

*Note: The figures for these occupations include the combined labour shortages from the food and beverage and accommodation sectors, where applicable.

Source: *Canadian Tourism Research Institute and the Conference Board of Canada (2010), 'The Future of Canada's Tourism Sector: Economic Recession Only a Temporary Reprieve From Labour Shortages'*

The Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council conducted a survey of tourism industry stakeholders in which 75 percent of businesses in the Food and Beverages Sector reported that they anticipated labour related issues to be a significant a company constraint over the next three to five year period. Interestingly enough, 63 percent of businesses surveyed in the study from the Canadian Accommodation sector believed they would experience similar labour impediments over the same time span.

Therefore, the survey expects substantial labour shortages within the Canadian tourism sector to occur due to an anticipated increase in demand for tourism goods and services, combined with a forecast decline in growth of the Canadian labour force. It is estimated that by 2025 the Canadian tourism industry may experience a labour shortage to the magnitude of nearly 165,000 workers within its Accommodation and Food and Beverage sub-sectors. In addition, the impending retirement of a lot of workers belonging to the baby boomer generation, the rates of which are due to escalate towards the middle of this decade, is likely to further exacerbate the extent of labour shortfalls.

Mining Industry in Canada

Based on population projection data from Statistics Canada, over the next decade the number of people in Canada who will be at an age where they can leave the labour force will significantly exceed the number who will enter it. The data also expects the number of older workers leaving the Canadian workforce to accelerate from 2011 as the first waves of workers from the Baby Boom generation start to reach retirement age and consequently begin to exit the Canadian workforce.

The Canadian mining sector experienced strong economic growth for the majority of the ten year period leading up to sharp contraction that occurred from September 2008 due to the impact of the Global Financial Crisis. However, buoyed by continued strong demand for resources from developing countries such as China, India, Brazil and Russia and also due to the impact of non-metal commodities, considerable economic recovery within the Canadian mining industry is already occurring.

Human resources challenges facing Canada's mining industry are likely to significantly adversely affect the potential economic growth of the sector. Although the Canadian mining sector has been successful in recent years in increasing the workforce participation rates of women, older workers, and immigrants within the mining workforce, it is anticipated that it will become increasingly difficult to sufficiently meet the demand for workers within the industry in coming years. Some of the contributing factors which are believed likely to lead to the expected future labour shortages within the Canadian mining industry include the aging workforce and a likely lower number of workers available in the labour force. Therefore, although the sector has been relatively effective in elevating participation rates amongst previously under-represented groups, it is becoming increasingly evident that the labour shortfalls will intensify as more older workers retire from the workforce.

The figures outlined in the Table below indicating the future hiring needs for the Canadian Mining sector, reveal that there will be continuous future growth in demand for workers within specific semi and unskilled occupational groups. The number of workers required for each of the occupational groups listed in the Table is forecast to more than triple in the eight year period between 2012 and 2020. The fastest rate of growth in terms of the number of workers required for each of the occupational groups also appears to be greatest in the five years between 2015 and 2020.

Table 8: Cumulative Hiring Requirements for the Canadian Mining Industry – By Broad Occupational Categories and Relevant Mining Occupations

Occupation	2012	2015	2020
Construction trades helpers and labourers	304	553	1029
Other trades helpers and labourers	51	89	158
Mine labourers	305	538	1014
Labourers in mineral and metal processing	544	1027	2260
Total	1160	2257	4461

Source: Mining Industry Human Resources Council [MIHR] (2010) ‘*Canadian Mining Industry Employment and Hiring Forecasts 2010- A Mining Industry Workforce Information Report*’

Thus, the Canadian mining industry’s human resources’ challenges represent potential impediments to the sector’s future growth and competitiveness. The Mining Association of Canada confirmed this by publically identifying human resource challenges as one of the top six main issues that the industry has to contend with. Faced with an aging workforce and looming labour shortages, employers within the Canadian mining sector must act proactively to best access and maximise all available sources of labour in order to stand the best chance of effectively addressing these human resource challenges and meet the industry’s future hiring needs.

Long term workforce planning within the Canadian mining industry is more difficult than is the case for other sectors due to the more volatile nature of the mining industry. The highly volatile nature of employment in the mining sector is directly linked to commodity prices and is inversely related to productivity improvements. As a result, the low levels of growth in the Canadian labour force combined with rapidly aging workforce mean that the Canadian mining industry is likely to experience significant labour shortfalls in the coming years and will face considerable challenges in trying to find appropriate workers to fill emerging vacancies.

Immigrant workers consequently represent an important source of labour for many Canadian industries, particularly with regard to meeting their future workforce requirements. In this respect, immigrant workers are expected to account for a larger proportion of labour force growth in Canada over the next five to ten year period as demonstrated in data derived from relevant population projections.

Potential Barrier: Canadian Immigration Policy and Foreign Credential Recognition

The nature of Canada’s immigration policies may exacerbate the labour shortages experienced within specific Canadian industry sectors. As discussed earlier, the immigration of foreign workers into Canada largely depends on a human capital-focused points system which places a large emphasis on the recognition of formal educational qualifications (MITAC 2005). As a result, the immigration criteria and related processes which Canada’s Citizenship and Immigration department uses may impede the capacity of Canadian employers to effectively recruit foreign workers and may also limit the employment opportunities available to overseas workers whose skills may be demanded by domestic employers.

Currently, Canada's immigration selection criteria, which was introduced by the Federal Government in 2003, requires that foreign applicants acquire a score exceeding 67 points in order to be eligible to enter Canada and seek employment within the country (MITAC 2005). Prior to these amendments in Canada's immigration legislation being made, a score of 75 or more made a foreign applicant eligible for consideration of employment within the country. Despite the slight reduction in the number of points required by foreign applicants, employers within many industry sectors (including manufacturing and mining) expressed concerns of potential problems that some foreign workers with specific skills could experience in relation to acquiring the minimum score required, especially given the relatively low-weighting to non-university educational qualifications (MITAC 2005). The evident consequences of this being that the supply of skilled foreign workers into specific occupational groups such as in trades and semi-skilled professions could be further limited.

In 2005, the Canadian government also introduced measures to reduce the number of points awarded for different qualifications at different educational levels. Following these changes, college diplomas and trade certificate qualification, which took the same time to complete as university degrees, were subsequently assigned less points (MITAC 2005). At the time, this represented an important change to foreign migration policy since many domestic employers in various industry sectors were experiencing significant skills shortages amongst trade professionals (MITAC 2005). Therefore, these changes to Canadian immigration policy may have further contributed to limiting the capacity of domestic employers to effectively attract and recruit foreign workers.

The recognition of foreign qualification and educational credentials within an applicable immigration policy framework is often a key factor in determining the ability of foreign workers to immigrate and be employed within another country. Consequently the failure to have appropriate systems in place which adequately recognise the qualification and educational credentials of applicants generally leads to the undervaluing and underutilization of the skills of immigrant workers. Canada's immigration selection process does not necessitate that the qualification and educational credentials of foreign applicants be evaluated prior to their entry into the country (MITAC 2005). However, The fact that foreign workers' qualifications and education credentials are not appropriately recognised upon their entry into the labour force might subsequently impeded their ability to effectively find employment within Canada.

As a result, specific Canadian industry sectors, such as mining, have experienced skill shortages while there has been a simultaneous "skill wastage" amongst the immigrant population (MITAC 2005). The degree of skill utilization amongst immigrants within the context of Canada's Immigration Policy Framework therefore became a prominent issue of concern. Two factors which appeared to contribute further to the incidence of skill wastage amongst foreign workers in Canada included:

- The largely 'protectionist' stance of certain government, labour and professional organisations to the recognition and certification of some foreign qualifications and educational credentials
- Inaccurate and incorrect perceptions as to the validity and value of qualifications and educational credentials acquired in other countries.

For example, in a survey of employers in the Canadian minerals and metals industry, many of the key informants expressed that recognition of foreign credentials of overseas workers that they intend to recruit is often problematic and a key human resource challenge that they face (MITAC 2005). Take for instance one particular case in which a mining professional with extensive experience spanning over two decades still had to wait several

years before his credentials were appropriately recognised at his particular level. Canadian employers also nominated appropriate recognition of foreign applicants' language skills as another area of concern (MITAC 2005). This exemplifies how many foreign skilled workers may be prevented from entering Canada under the skilled worker migration category due to their educational and training not being appropriately recognised. It also reiterates how even after gaining entry into Canada, the same reasons hamper skilled workers from overseas from seeking out and fulfilling employment opportunities.

In response to some of the skill shortages that certain Canadian industries were experiencing and in order to assist in reducing some of the challenges faced by foreign workers who attempted to have their qualifications and educational credential appropriately recognised, the national Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) developed a Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) program. The priority of FCR was initially to help in minimising skill shortages within regulated professions in sectors that were experiencing significant labour shortages such as medicine, engineering and nursing. However, the HRSDC has also been involved in working with employer organisations through sector councils and industry groups in the case of non-regulated occupations (MITAC 2005).

There are several organisations that provide credential assessment services across Canada and in the different provinces within the country. One may acquire information regarding the processes involved in credential assessment within Canada from the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (MITAC 2005). The process involved in the assessment of foreign credentials generally involves a comparison of diplomas, degrees, and other educational qualifications to Canadian standards. This assessment, however, does not ensure that the respective foreign credentials will be appropriately recognised and valued by the relevant regulatory bodies or employer organisations. It is also possible to organise for an assessment of a foreign worker's education credentials while they are still outside of Canada. However, some employer and regulatory organisations do request that additional assessments of foreign applicants' training and qualifications be completed once they are in Canada (MITAC 2005).

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