

## > WHY HIRE IMMIGRANTS?

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Changing demographics are having an impact on businesses in Ottawa and many other Canadian municipalities. The workforce is shrinking as unprecedented numbers of workers retire and fewer new workers enter the labour market. Demand for skilled labour is growing, signalling impending labour shortages. At the same time, Ottawa is becoming home to a greater proportion of Canada's immigrants. Yet local employers are finding that it's not always a simple matter to recruit and retain skilled immigrants as part of their workforce. While there are some challenges for employers, there are many benefits.

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Ottawa is now the second largest recipient of immigrants in Ontario. Visible minorities will play an increasingly important role in our economy—as employees, as consumers, and as connectors to the increasingly important emerging markets. As a business owner in Ottawa, you have a real opportunity to recognize this pool of skilled immigrants as a business asset and use this asset to its fullest advantage.

Whether or not your business is operating in global markets, you can benefit from hiring skilled immigrants. You will gain employees with great diversity in their education, training, on-the-job skills, and life experience. This diversity of education and experience brings fresh perspectives and diverse points of view to existing business practices.

### **BENEFITS TO ALL BUSINESSES**

Your customer base may be purely local but it's changing rapidly as consumers become more diversified. The consumer demographic in Ottawa (and throughout Canada) is becoming increasingly multi-cultural. By hiring skilled immigrants, you can put your organization in a position to:

- better understand and respond to your increasingly diverse customer base
- tap into new local markets, expanding your customer base through improved cultural awareness and communications
- enhance creativity, productivity, and decision-making through diverse approaches

- broaden your talent pool for recruiting new employees
- attract and retain top talent in an environment of labour shortages

### **ADDITIONAL BENEFITS TO BUSINESSES WITH GLOBAL MARKETS**

Many of Ottawa's businesses are operating within an increasingly global context, or perhaps could do so with some additional expertise. If your business fits this description, hiring skilled immigrants offers additional benefits, allowing you to:

- improve understanding of existing international customers and of new international markets
- improve understanding and connections with the global business context
- achieve a competitive edge by engaging more effectively with diverse customers, clients, suppliers and partner companies internationally
- improve employee relations through increased diversity
- enhance corporate image among international customers
- reduce training costs by hiring required international skills and experience

And all of this leads to bottom line results—whether measured by profits, shareholder value, customer satisfaction, the number of new products designed and brought to market, or the effective delivery of programs.

## IT'S JUST GOOD BUSINESS

Several studies and publications have identified bottom-line reasons for businesses to tap into the available pool of skilled immigrants. For business owners it's not a matter of social benefit or the public good. There's a strong business case; diverse hiring practices are simply good business practices.

Here are some other resources<sup>2</sup> developed for employers that illustrate the business case.

- The Government of Manitoba Immigration website has produced a guide to hiring immigrants for employers. Page five of this guide describes the benefits of hiring newcomers.  
**[http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/downloads/Manitoba\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/downloads/Manitoba_Guide.pdf)**
- The hireimmigrants.ca program provides employers with the tools and resources they need to better recruit, retain and promote skilled immigrants. Several key business drivers for hiring immigrants are identified and explained.  
**<http://www.hireimmigrants.ca/why>**
- The Skills Without Borders program has produced an Employers' Resource Guide that includes a section titled 'Why Should Businesses Hire Immigrants?'.  
**[http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/downloads/Skills\\_without\\_Borders.pdf](http://www.hireimmigrantsottawa.ca/downloads/Skills_without_Borders.pdf)**

<sup>2</sup> Much of the material in this section of the guide is drawn from these resources.

- The Conference Board of Canada has produced a report titled 'Business Critical: Maximizing the Talents of Visible Minorities'. This Employer's Guide includes a section titled 'The Benefits to Organizations of Focusing on Visible Minorities'. The guide is available through the Conference Board's e-library service.  
**<http://www.conferenceboard.ca/>**

However, hiring and retaining immigrants is often a challenge. It is one thing to embrace diversity as a concept; it is quite another to achieve organizational diversity and leverage it for success.

The remainder of this guide focuses on the most important challenges you may face as you progress towards a culturally diverse workplace.

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## DID YOU KNOW?

- The first of Canada's 8 million baby-boomers reached official retirement age in 2011.
- The annual number of new pensioners will rise from 344,000 in 2011 to as much as 530,000 in 2031.
- According to Statistics Canada projections, annual labour force growth—once as high as 4%—could slow to 0.2% by 2021.
- By 2031, one in three labour force participants is projected to be foreign born.

