Building the Workplace Inclusion Charter in Peterborough Part 3

Includes:

Final Report

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Abstract

This literature review delves into the examination of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) policies in the provinces of Ontario and Alberta, with a particular focus on facilitating immigrant integration into the workforce. Through a comprehensive analysis, the review evaluates the effectiveness of current policies and presents actionable strategies aimed at enhancing workplace inclusivity. In shedding light on the challenges faced by immigrants (specifically economic class refugees) in securing meaningful employment, the findings highlight systemic barriers operating at multiple levels: individual, employer, and systemic. To address these challenges, the review proposes initiatives such as adopting Workplace Inclusion Charters (WIC) and implementing Partnership Mentorship Programs. These initiatives aim to alleviate barriers encountered by immigrants in accessing purposeful employment opportunities. Despite limitations, this review serves as a valuable resource, providing insights and recommendations to cultivate inclusive workplaces not only in Peterborough, Ontario but also in similar communities across the provinces.

Key Words: Economic Integration, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policies, Workplace Inclusion Charters, Skilled Immigrants, Cultural Inclusion, Employment Barriers, Deskilling, and Acculturation.

Background

In recent years, the imperative of fostering diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplaces has gained significant recognition for driving organizational success and societal well-being. This acknowledgment is notably pronounced in regions like Peterborough, Ontario, where rapid demographic shifts are fueled by factors such as immigration and globalization. The

collaboration between the New Canadians Centre (NCC) and the Peterborough Immigration Partnership (PIP) stands as a pivotal force in aiding immigrants and nurturing inclusivity within the community. Between 2022 and 2023, the NCC rendered vital support to a substantial number of individuals, benefiting 1371 clients, including 993 newcomers (NCC, 2023). Responding to various local and international events, such as the influxes of Syrian and Afghan refugees in 2015 and 2021, the NCC has demonstrated its adaptability and commitment. Notably, between 2022 and 2024, the NCC provided crucial assistance to 109 New Government-Assisted Refugees (GAR) from Afghanistan. Important to note that with the federal government's ambitious immigration targets and the escalating impact of climate change-induced displacement, the region anticipates a sustained inflow of newcomers (NCC, 2023). The necessity of the project arises from the imperative to address gaps, evaluate, improve, and understand existing EDI and WIC policies in Ontario workplaces, aligning with broader goals of inclusivity and fairness integration for marginalized populations including immigrants and refugees and social and economic development for the community.

To address the multifaceted challenges of workplace inclusion, it is imperative to assess the effectiveness of existing EDI policies and develop strategies tailored to the needs of both organizations and the community they serve.

Goal/Purpose of the LR

The purpose of the project is to undertake a comprehensive literature review (LR) focusing on the examination of academic and non-academic (gray literature) sources concerning EDI policies in the workplace within the city of Peterborough, and the province of Ontario.

Thus, this literature review endeavours to answer how the PIP and the NCC can enhance the effectiveness of EDI policies and develop a robust WIC to promote diverse, equitable, and

inclusive workplaces in Peterborough, Ontario. A WIC operates by fostering collaboration between community service agencies and local employers, who willingly commit to a set of policies aimed at enhancing inclusivity within the workplace and facilitating the seamless integration of newcomers into the community (Selvanandan & Reid, 2021). By examining the current state of EDI policies, aligning them with organizational visions, identifying challenges faced by minority groups, evaluating employer perceptions, analyzing successful strategies, and exploring collaboration opportunities, this review aims to provide actionable insights for advancing workplace EDI initiatives in the region.

The integration of a WIC harmonizes with the strategic vision of the NCC (NCC, 2022). As delineated in their comprehensive strategic plan for the upcoming five years (2022-2027), the NCC is dedicated to three overarching objectives:

1. Empowering Newcomers to Thrive: This goal entails bolstering newcomers' success in Canada by investing in essential programs and services that foster connections within the community and support their integration process (NCC, 2022).

2. Ensuring Newcomers are Valued and Respected: This objective aims to cultivate an environment where newcomers feel valued and respected by promoting awareness of their positive contributions and dismantling barriers that hinder their equitable participation and access to resources (NCC, 2022).

3. Building a Resilient and Sustainable Organization: This goal focuses on establishing a robust, resilient, and sustainable organizational framework capable of seizing opportunities and promptly addressing emerging needs while ensuring long-term viability (NCC, 2022).

The alignment of EDI policies with the vision and mission of the PIP underscores a collective dedication to nurturing inclusivity and a sense of belonging for all community members (Peterborough Immigration Partnership, n.d.). The PIP acknowledges the significance of dismantling systemic barriers and advancing equity, echoing the values embedded in EDI policies nationwide. Collaborating with the NCC, the PIP has formulated a strategic plan for 2022-2027, which introduces additional priorities:

1. Strengthen Collaboration: Prioritizing the establishment of a robust partnership structure, characterized by new and engaged partners, to ensure responsiveness and efficacy in positively impacting the community (Peterborough Immigration Partnership, n.d.).

2. Build Community Awareness and Capacity: Cultivating broader community awareness that celebrates newcomers' pivotal role in fostering a vibrant community. Additionally, equipping organizations and businesses with strategies and tools to enhance their capacity to include and support newcomers (Peterborough Immigration Partnership, n.d.).

3. Advocate for Change: Recognizing the need for systemic change alongside local and community-level support for newcomers, the PIP pledges to leverage its voice to address issues impacting newcomers and advocate for policy changes conducive to more inclusive and sustainable communities (Peterborough Immigration Partnership, n.d.).

As the PIP and the NCC embark on their strategic plan centered on inclusivity and sustainability, they align with the broader objectives of EDI policies across Canada. Through collaborative efforts and unified metrics, they aim to nurture a vibrant and equitable community where newcomers are welcomed and empowered to flourish (NCC, 2022; Peterborough Immigration Partnership, n.d .).

Significance of Implementing a WIC

Certain regions in Canada have adopted Workplace Inclusion Charters to address systemic barriers encountered by minority groups. However, for the purpose of this research, the primary focus is on immigrants, particularly skilled immigrants. Skilled immigrants largely migrate under the Economic Class category.

This focus is informed by the NCC Annual General Report 2022-2023, which highlights the Client Immigration Profile for 2021-2023. The report reveals that the category of immigrants utilizing NCC services the most was Family & Economic Class, with 247 clients served in 2022-2023 and 91 clients in 2021-2022 (NCC, 2023).

Methodology

Literature Review

The purpose of conducting a literature review was to identify existing WICs and EDI policies specifically tailored for immigrants in Ontario, and to explore their potential application in Peterborough, Ontario, to meet the community's needs. Such a review stands as an original and valuable research endeavour in its own merit, offering a foundational resource for all community members interested in the subject matter. When conducted effectively, literature reviews serve as vital information reservoirs, offering practitioners access to innovative evidence to inform their decision-making and professional practices (Paré & Kitsiou, (2017). Understanding both the challenges immigrants face when entering the workforce and successful strategies implemented in other communities is crucial before recommending policies like WIC and EDI, which have the potential to bring about meaningful change.

Primary and Secondary Questions

The overarching question guiding the LR is: Ho*w can the New Canadians Centre enhance the effectiveness of EDI policies and develop a robust WIC to foster diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplaces in the city of Peterborough, Ontario?*

In answering this overarching question, a set of 5 sub-questions were created to help focus the research:

- To what extent do existing workplace EDI policies align with the NCC and PIP's vision and the goals outlined in the WIC?

- What are the specific challenges faced by minority groups, particularly immigrants, in Ontario workplaces concerning EDI policies?

- How do employers perceive the impact of current EDI policies on workplace culture and inclusivity?

- What successful strategies have other organizations implemented to enhance workplace inclusivity, and how can these be adapted to the context of the NCC and PIP?

- How can the NCC and PIP collaborate with partner organizations, including employers and employees from minority groups, to co-create and implement a WIC?

Search Strategy: Key search terms

The literature review focused on identifying key barriers to immigrant employment by conducting an internet search using relevant keywords: *Economic Integration, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policies, Workplace Inclusion Charters, Skilled Immigrants, Cultural Inclusion, Employment Barriers, Deskilling, and Acculturation.*

Sources were selected based on their alignment with newcomer job challenges, WIC, and EDI policies, as well as their Canadian focus and recency within the past 10 years. Searches were conducted on the following specialized database sources: *Knowledge@UChicago*, *MDPI*, and *Springer Link*. Additionally, *Google Scholar* and *OMNI* searches were also performed. After reviewing both gray and academic literature, the study aimed to identify Ontario communities/cities offering WICs and EDI policies. Three recognized Ontario-based WICs were found in Belleville, Timmins, and Kingston, along with the initial Charter, created in Bow Valley, Alberta, used to provide comparison and variety (The Workplace Inclusion Charter, 2023). The review assessed each Charter's functionality, priorities, and goals, as well as its website accessibility, transparency, and effectiveness in addressing immigrant employment challenges.

Literature Review Findings

Skilled immigrants largely migrate under the Economic Class category. This group comprises immigrants chosen for their capacity to enhance Canada's economy. They fulfill this by meeting labour market demands, owning or managing a business, making significant investments, creating employment opportunities, or fulfilling specific provincial or territorial labour requirements (Statistics Canada, 2023). Under the Economic Class Category there are four sub-categories 1) Federal Skilled Worker Program, Federal Skilled Trades Program; 2) Canadian Experience Class; 3) Quebec Skilled Workers and 4) Provincial Nominee Program. It is not within the scope of this LR to expand on each class (Statistics Canada, 2023). However, it is important to note that individuals who migrated under the Canadian Experience Class (includes skilled workers with previous Canadian experience) were 2.4 times more likely to be employed than those who immigrated through other economic immigration categories (World

Education Service [WES], 2019). Moreover, job applicants with English-sounding names are 40% more likely to secure interviews, despite possessing identical education, skills, and experience (Government of Canada, 2020). Furthermore, research indicates that Black candidates receive callbacks only 25% of the time when using an Anglo name on their resumes, compared to 10% when using their actual names (Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo [RMWB], 2023). Additionally, the country where respondents obtained their degrees played a significant role. Those educated in the United States were more likely to be employed in positions commensurate with their qualifications compared to those who earned their degrees in other countries (WES, 2019).

Raihan et al. identified four broad categories hindering skilled immigrants' integration into the Canadian job market: Individual-level, Employer-level, System-level, and Societal-level factors (2023).

Individual-level

Individual challenges, such as language skills, acculturation difficulties, and teamwork abilities, intersect with local contexts, often trapping immigrants in low-skill jobs (Raihan et al., 2023). To elaborate, immigrant professionals and service providers highlight the challenges stemming from unfamiliarity with Canadian workplace cultures, norms, and unwritten rules (Lai et al., 2017). This lack of understanding can significantly impact performance and integration. According to a training program instructor, the inability to grasp these cultural intricacies poses a significant barrier, particularly as these norms are not always apparent. Immigrants often struggle to navigate interactions with managers due to differing cultural expectations. For example, some immigrants may refrain from direct eye contact out of respect, a behaviour perceived differently

in Canadian workplaces (Lai et al., 2017). Additionally, cultural disparities in teamwork and interactions with colleagues can create misunderstandings. For example, in some cultures, offering assistance without being asked demonstrates teamwork, but in Canadian workplaces, co-workers may be resistant to offering help as they may interpret it as a threat to one's job. Moreover, cultural differences in conflict resolution can lead to misunderstandings, with some immigrants seeking resolution through supervisors rather than directly with colleagues as expected in Canadian workplaces (Lai et al., 2017).

Additionally, newcomers may face acculturation stress or feelings of isolation, which can affect their confidence and willingness to actively participate in team activities (Berry, 2013; Raihan et al., 2023). Moreover, English proficiency is crucial for employment; however, language barriers may hinder effective communication and collaboration within teams, impacting newcomers' ability to contribute effectively (Raihan et al., 2023). Notably, skilled immigrants noted difficulties in understanding co-workers and feeling confused or embarrassed. Additionally, skilled immigrants often face hurdles in offering responses that are deemed suitable or fitting within a given context. These challenges typically stem from language barriers, cultural disparities, or a lack of familiarity with the social norms and expectations prevalent in their unfamiliar environment. For instance, a female immigrant administrator highlighted the complexity of communication in the workplace with clients and/or co-workers (Lai et al., 2017).

Employer-level

At the employer level, obstacles include the insistence on Canadian experience and workplace references, alongside the exploitation of immigrants for unpaid or underpaid work (Raihan et al., 2023). Employers frequently favour candidates with Canadian work backgrounds,

placing newcomers at a disadvantage despite their pertinent experience from their home countries. This tendency can be misleading for newcomers, as evidence indicates that employers often disregard the foreign expertise and qualifications of skilled immigrants, even if those credentials were instrumental in their selection for economic immigration status (Raihan et al., 2023). This overlooks the policy outlined in the Ontario Human Rights Code, which mandates equal rights and job opportunities, explicitly prohibiting discrimination based on the requirement for Canadian experience (OHRC,n.d.). To underscore this point, statistics reveal that merely 39.1% of Canadian immigrants secured employment with job responsibilities akin in type and complexity to their pre-immigration roles (WES, 2019). Additionally, only 50.3% found employment aligned with their educational credentials, matching both their field of study and degree or diploma level (WES, 2019). These figures underscore the challenges immigrants face in finding employment commensurate with their skills and qualifications in Canada.

Additionally, some employers exploit immigrants by offering unpaid or underpaid work, capitalizing on their vulnerability. This practice not only violates fair labour standards but also perpetuates economic inequality and marginalizes immigrant communities (Berry, 2013; Raihan et al., 2023). Furthermore, employers may underestimate immigrants' language skills based on their names or origins, with discrimination against non-native accents reinforcing this bias, reflecting a preference for White English/French accents rooted in colonial attitudes (Berry, 2013; Raihan et al.,2023). According to a program officer at an immigrant service organization, some employers struggle with accents even when English proficiency is high. This suggests a lack of workplace sensitivity to language differences (Lai et al., 2017).

System-level

Significantly, newcomers encounter challenges due to financial constraints and delays in acquiring licenses and registrations. Additionally, as it has already been noted, English proficiency is essential for securing employment and is considered one of the most critical factors for immigrants finding jobs in Canada (Raihan et al., 2023). However, from a systemic perspective, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes frequently fail to meet the standards necessary for skilled immigrants (Kaushik & Drolet, 2018). To elaborate, ESL programs in place are often inadequate in preparing skilled immigrants adequately for integration into the workforce or society. For instance, the absence of a Canadian accent or speech pattern, unfamiliarity with industry-specific terminology, lack of understanding of Canadian expressions and challenges in cross-cultural communication may impact employment prospects (Kaushik & Drolet, 2018). There is a need for training aimed at immigrant professionals prioritizing topics such as workplace professional language, teamwork expectations, conflict resolution, workplace legislation, employee rights, occupational safety, and ethical standards in the workplace (Lai et al., 2017).

Importantly, skilled immigrants often face challenges in obtaining professional licenses or accreditation for their foreign qualifications, particularly in regulated professions (Reitz et al, 2014) unless they are migrating as Federal Skilled workers. This difficulty arises when there are discrepancies or gaps in their training compared to Canadian standards. While their professional training may be relevant in their home country, it may lack certain essential components required in Canada. Consequently, immigrants often find themselves needing to undergo the entire process of professional training again in Canada to meet the necessary standards and requirements (Reitz et al, 2014).

Societal-level

Societal factors encompass initial support from community networks but eventual shortcomings in securing meaningful employment (Raihan et al.,2023). Moreover, skilled immigrants face limited opportunities to network professionally and encounter challenges in connecting cross-culturally with Canadian-born individuals, which is crucial for both job market integration and social assimilation (Raihan et al., 2023). Significantly, a survey conducted by the WES in 2019 found that 48.5% of respondents reported a lack of professional connections as a significant barrier to employment (2019).

Furthermore, upon immigrating to Canada, many skilled immigrants face a discrepancy in their career progression, often moving from senior positions in their home countries to entry- or lower-level roles. This phenomenon is referred to as deskilling (Lai et al., 2017). This trend is underscored by a 2016 survey conducted by the World Education Services, which found that survey respondents were significantly more likely to be employed in lower-level positions (31.8 percent) compared to the Canadian-born population (9.3 percent) (WES, 2019).

Another societal-level issue is that university-educated immigrants in Canada earn, on average, one-fifth less per hour than their Canadian-born counterparts. Additionally, the wage gap for immigrant women is higher than for immigrant men, with women experiencing a 23.2% difference in median hourly wages compared to Canadian-born women, while men face a 19.2% difference (The Conference Board of Canada, 2016). While this issue does involve employer-level practices like discriminatory hiring and compensation policies, its root causes are deeply rooted in broader systemic and societal factors. These include historical injustices, institutional biases, and social inequalities, all of which contribute to perpetuating the wage gap between racialized Canadians and their counterparts (The Conference Board of Canada, 2016).

These findings underscore the importance of WICs in addressing multifaceted barriers and promoting immigrant integration into the Canadian workforce.

Analysis

Overview of EDI Policies in Canadian and Ontario Workplaces

In Canada, EDI policies play a crucial role in creating an inclusive society (Government of Canada, n.d.). Equity within these policies centers around dismantling systemic barriers such as unconscious bias, discrimination, racism, sexism, ableism, and homophobia; thus, ensuring that all individuals have equitable access to opportunities and benefits. In addition, diversity is celebrated as encompassing a wide range of unique dimensions, identities, qualities, and characteristics, recognizing the richness it brings to society. Last, inclusion is emphasized as the practice of valuing and respecting individuals for their contributions, ensuring they are supported equitably in culturally safe environments. Having said this, EDI policies aim not only to address existing inequalities but also to create spaces where everyone feels welcomed and valued, contributing to a more equitable Canadian society (Government of Canada, n.d.)

Identification of EDI Policies in Canadian and Ontario Workplaces

To easily identify EDI policies in Canadian and Ontario workplaces, the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion created a tool called the "Success Story Initiative." This initiative is an endeavour aimed at promoting diversity and inclusion leadership through relevant narratives tailored to the Canadian context (Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion, 2024). By highlighting and showcasing the achievements of Canadian organizations, this initiative contributes to broader learning within communities dedicated to EDI. It recognizes that employers prioritizing EDI initiatives are responding to the evolving needs of a competitive

economy and acknowledging the diverse makeup of their workforce and the nation. Unlike many case studies that often draw from international settings, the focus here is on sharing stories that resonate with the Canadian landscape, reflecting the unique demographic, regulatory, and economic factors at play. Through these stories, the initiative aims to inspire and empower Canadian employers to drive positive change within their workplaces, fostering environments where diversity is celebrated, and inclusion is embraced (Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion, 2024).

One exemplary Canadian organization participating in the Success Story Initiative is the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC). Renowned as a pioneer in EDI, the TTC operates and maintains Toronto's public transit system, fostering a culture that profoundly impacts its services (Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion, 2017). Established in 1920, the TTC has evolved into a multi-modal transit agency, encompassing bus, subway trains, streetcars, and paratransit services, serving as the most utilized transit system in Canada and one of the busiest in North America. Under progressive leadership, exemplified by individuals like Karen Kuzmowich, Manager of Diversity, the TTC has implemented a comprehensive diversity and inclusion corporate plan since 2015 (Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion, 2017). This plan serves as a guiding framework to systematically advance initiatives promoting diversity and inclusion throughout the organization. Key commitments include attracting and retaining a diverse workforce reflective of the population it serves, eliminating barriers to participation for employees and customers, fostering a harassment-free workplace, and providing inclusive policies, programs, and services (Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion, 2017). The TTC's dedication to diversity and inclusion is evidenced by its numerous, including recognition for its Best Diversity Program at the National HR Awards. Noteworthy achievements include increased

recruitment outreach to attract diverse applicants, expanded internship and job placement opportunities, and significant representation of women in senior management positions, surpassing Toronto's benchmark standards. Through initiatives like specialized leadership training and the development of the Diversity and Inclusion Lens and Toolkit, the TTC demonstrates a steadfast commitment to embedding diversity and inclusion principles into every facet of its operations, contributing to a more equitable and inclusive public transit system for all (Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion, 2017).

Recommendations

As noted previously, various WICs have demonstrated success in different regions, with companies and organizations participating actively. However, Huang's (2021) study, focusing on ethnic-minority skilled immigrants in Canada, reveals that inclusion initiatives like this often have a limited impact (Huang, 2021). Instead, these programs are perceived as gestures of diversity support rather than enacting substantial change. Stainback and Tomaskovic-Devey (2012) found that while diversity programs increased job opportunities for white women and African American men, they did not effectively address the workplace advantages already held by white men, resulting in limited improvements for African American women (Huang, 2021). Moreover, key findings in Huang's (2021) study highlighted the significance of team building in facilitating the integration of new immigrant workers into the workplace by fostering better relationships with colleagues and understanding organizational culture. Another notable finding emerged when participants were asked whether diversity programs could assist new immigrants in transferring their credentials or skills (Huang, 2021). One respondent expressed doubt, noting that if a company has already hired the immigrant, it signifies recognition of their ability, thus emphasizing the importance of recognizing immigrants' abilities through hiring practices.

Notably, respondents recommended reforming screening and selection procedures to combat employment discrimination against immigrants, advocating for skill-based hiring practices aligned with diversity principles (Huang, 2021).

Leveraging these insights, it is essential to refine existing approaches and introduce new strategies to address barriers to immigrant employment. We propose two initiatives: the WIC Adoption Initiative and the Partnership Mentorship Program, to foster a comprehensive approach to support newcomers in accessing employment opportunities and foster supportive work environments. These initiatives will be further explained in the subsequent sections.

Strategy 1: WIC Adoption Initiative

Strategy 1 proposes implementing a WIC adoption initiative in Peterborough, modelled after the Bow Valley Alberta framework, known for their clarity, accessibility, and tangible guidelines addressing minority issues in the labour market Bow Valley WIC, 2023). This aspect of the WIC entails endorsing commitments and objectives delineated by the NCC, followed by stakeholders crafting objectives within their respective domains to achieve those goals, all aimed at cultivating a more inclusive, equitable, and diverse workplace. It encourages businesses and organizations to pledge their dedication to these objectives.

We suggest following the Bow Valley goals which adopt the "5 Pillars" approach, focusing on Capacity Building, Cultivating Cultural, Language, and Newcomer Inclusion, Enhancing Accessibility, Promoting 2SLBTQIA+ Inclusion, and Providing WIC Support (Bow Valley WIC, 2023) To be recognized as a Workplace Inclusion Champion, signatories must fulfill five required actions for each pillar. Examples of key adoption policies specifically helpful for Peterborough immigrants under these pillars include implementing a standard operating

procedure for interpretation and translations, creating designated spaces for quiet activities, such as prayer, accommodating diverse cultural traditions and holidays with a time-off policy, enrolling leaders in intercultural competence training, and sharing insights with their teams (Bow Valley WIC, 2023). Significantly, while many Charters have outlined commitments and offer recognition for each level achieved, there remains a concern that some companies may merely sign on for appearance's sake (Huang, 2021). Therefore, we propose additionally conducting an annual audit, including an anonymous survey for all workers. This ensures that companies are actively fostering EDI and safety within their spaces.

The second part of this initiative aims to enhance support for immigrants through human resource practices. First, job postings should refrain from requesting non-essential qualifications or specifying work experience locations. Language in postings should be gender-neutral and inclusive, encouraging candidates with diverse abilities to apply. Secondly, diverse talent will be attracted through job postings dispersed across various channels and partnerships with community organizations offering employment support. Thirdly, promoting an EDI committee established within each company or organization which enables employees to raise concerns about violence, harassment, and discrimination directly, bypassing immediate supervisors. This ensures employees have an accessible and confidential avenue to address sensitive issues, promoting accountability and fairness within the organization. Fourth, it is crucial to share the responsibility for improving communication and relationships among immigrant professionals while also addressing and mitigating bias practices. Collaboration between employers, service providers, and government bodies is vital to support integration efforts, including organizing team-building activities, fostering social spaces, promoting teamwork, and implementing measures to reduce bias and discrimination in the workplace. Lastly, hiring panels will undergo

unconscious bias training, ensuring diverse representation to foster inclusivity in the hiring process. Notably, key stakeholders essential to this initiative include the Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce, the Peterborough & District Labour Council, as well as local industries and businesses. Their involvement is integral to the success of the initiative.

Strategy 2: Partnership Mentorship Program

Immigrant professionals and service providers highlight the importance of on-the-job training and internships to help newcomers acclimate to the Canadian workplace (Lai et al., 2017). These opportunities provide invaluable experience and networking connections, facilitating a smoother transition. Mentorship programs are recommended to provide personalized guidance and support (Lai et al., 2017). Mentors, whether experienced professionals or Canadian-born, offer assistance with job search strategies, interview preparation, and adaptation to workplace culture. They also help in building professional networks and introducing newcomers to potential employers. These mentorship approaches, ranging from community-based support to workplace mentorship, play a crucial role in the integration and success of immigrant professionals (Lai et al., 2017). Notability, various bridging programs are available across Canada, such as Career Bridge internships by TRIEC, Qualification En Pharmacie at Université de Montréal, Engineering and Technology Upgrading Program by Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, International Pharmacy Bridging Program by Bredin Centre for Learning in Edmonton and Calgary, and Bridge to Canadian Nursing Certificate or Ready to Teach program at Mount Royal University and SAIT Polytechnic in Alberta (Kaushik & Drolet2018). These organizations offer bridging programs that include internships, aiding in the acquisition of Canadian work experience.

Based on this understanding, the second strategy aims to bridge a critical gap found in current charters. Given the obstacles skilled immigrants face in securing employment, as revealed in Huang's (2021) study, it is clear that a more well-rounded approach that delves deeper into root causes rather than just providing surface-level solutions or post-hiring assistance is required (Raihan et al.,2023; Huang, 2021). Furthermore, it has been reported that skilled immigrants encounter challenges in establishing professional networks and connecting with Canadian-born individuals, which is essential for job market integration and social inclusion (Raihan et al.,2023).

Hence, the Charter Partnership Mentorship Initiative is proposed to actively engage partners across diverse job sectors. This initiative works through partnership with local stakeholders offering free meetings and training sessions, facilitating newcomers in building connections, acquiring Canadian experience, and securing valuable references. It is important to highlight that Ontario's Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration has allocated funding for the most bridge training programs in Canada to support internationally trained individuals (Kaushik & Drolet2018). Yet, to further enhance support, additional funding could be secured through corporate sponsorship and community fundraising efforts.

This initiative comprises two key components. Firstly, establishing collaborative job sector partnerships involves forming alliances with organizations across various industries, including IT, Healthcare, Finance, Education, and Skilled Trades. Potential partnerships specific to Peterborough could involve institutions such as the Peterborough Regional Health Centre, Trent University, Fleming College, Kearns Technology Inc., as well as government bodies like the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, and local police and fire departments, along with industries and businesses in the area. These partnerships

provide mentorship programs tailored for newcomers with qualifications in their respective fields. This initiative offers free meetings and training sessions, empowering newcomers to build connections, understand their next career steps, acquire Canadian experience, and obtain valuable references. Such support significantly aids immigrants in overcoming barriers at both the individual and employer levels.

The second component of this initiative involves establishing a job board platform. The objective is to develop a centralized platform in collaboration with the City of Peterborough where partner organizations can promote upcoming opportunities for newcomers. This ensures inclusive hiring practices, streamlines user access, aligns with DEI policies, and supports the charter's objectives. Importantly, it helps newcomers overcome barriers at the employer and system levels.

It is essential that the website can be translated into multiple languages, similar to the Peel Region model (RDRPeel, 2020). This feature is crucial for ensuring accessibility and inclusivity, and other charters must adopt similar practices. This component of the Charter is highly valuable as it emphasizes a hands-on approach. It prioritizes adopting an action-oriented methodology, offering practical support and guidance throughout the mentorship process. Building on this, the goal of the charter is to consolidate all workplace inclusion information and resources into one accessible platform. This comprehensive website will serve as a central hub for individuals and companies striving to cultivate more inclusive work environments and for those seeking to join diverse and inclusive workforces.

Discussion

The paper's key findings underscore the critical need for fostering diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplaces, particularly in regions like Peterborough, Ontario, where demographic shifts driven by immigration and globalization are reshaping the landscape. It highlights the necessity of implementing WIC to address systemic barriers faced by minority groups, especially immigrants, in accessing employment opportunities. These charters are deemed essential tools in aligning organizational practices with broader community goals of inclusivity and belonging. Moreover, the study identifies various challenges encountered by immigrants in Ontario workplaces, including language barriers, lack of Canadian work experience, and discrimination. Despite the existence of diversity programs, their limited impact in addressing systemic barriers and fostering substantial change is noted, emphasizing the need for more comprehensive approaches. The proposed Partnership Mentorship Program is identified as a promising initiative to provide newcomers with mentorship, networking opportunities, and practical support in navigating the job market. Collaboration with key stakeholders across sectors is emphasized as essential for the successful implementation of these initiatives and for fostering inclusive, equitable, and diverse workplaces in communities like Peterborough.

Limitations to the Literature Review

While the study provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by immigrants in Ontario workplaces and proposes promising initiatives to address these issues, it is important to acknowledge some limitations. Firstly, the reliance on existing literature and case studies may not fully capture the dynamic and nuanced experiences of immigrants in Peterborough specifically, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings.

Moreover, since the effectiveness of proposed WIC and Partnership Mentorship Programs has not been empirically tested in the Peterborough context, implementing pilot programs in select organizations within the community could provide a practical evaluation strategy. This approach allows for a controlled implementation and assessment of the program's impact.

Furthermore, the paper does not address potential barriers or challenges that may arise during the implementation of these initiatives, such as resource constraints, resistance from stakeholders, or the need for sustained commitment over time. Lastly, while the proposed strategies aim to promote inclusivity and equity, there may be unintended consequences or overlooked considerations that could arise during their implementation. Despite these limitations, the study provides a valuable starting point for further research and action in fostering inclusive workplaces in Peterborough and similar communities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper highlights the importance of EDI policies in addressing challenges faced by immigrants in Ontario workplaces, proposing strategies like WICs and Partnership Mentorship Programs. While these initiatives offer promising pathways, their effectiveness and potential barriers require further empirical testing and consideration. Continued research and stakeholder engagement are crucial for fostering inclusive environments and advancing community goals of belonging and prosperity.

Visual Representation of Recommendations

Peterborough Workplace Inclusion Charter
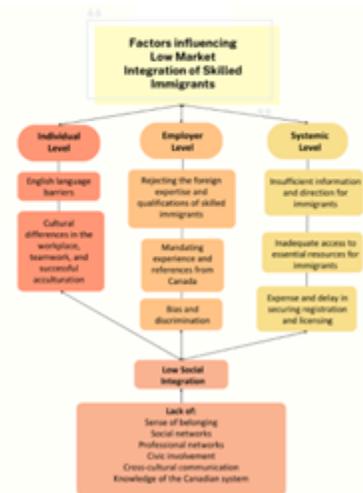
PTBO WIC

About Us

About

There are several avenues for getting involved in promoting a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive (DEI) workplace.

The PTBO Charter strives to be a comprehensive resource where employers, employees, and individuals entering the job market can find information and support on fostering or joining DEI-focused workplaces.

This Charter, in collaboration with the New Canadian Centre and Peterborough Immigration Partnership, places a strong emphasis on designing workspaces with immigrants in mind.

This Charter offers two initiatives, WIC Adoption Initiative and Partnership Mentorship Program.

Significance of a WIC

WIC Adoption Initiative

Enabling companies and organizations to formally commit to Workplace Inclusion Charter Commitments .This initiative leverage sthe "5 Pillars" approach, focusing on:

- Capacity Building
- Cultivating Cultural, Language, and Newcomer Inclusion
- Enhancing Accessibility
- Promoting 2SLBTQIA+ Inclusion
- Providing WIC Support

WIC Commitments

To be recognized as a Workplace Inclusion Champion, all signatories undertake 5 (*)required actions

Capacity Building

*Enroll one or more leaders in intercultural competence training and share what you learned with your team.

Detail and resources...

Cultivating Cultural, Language, and Newcomer Inclusion

*Play the introduction to Settlement Services in the Peterborough video during onboarding.

Detail and resources...

Adopt a policy and standard operating procedure for the use of interpretation & translation.

Detail and resources...

Adopt a time off policy that accommodates diverse cultural traditions and holidays.

Detail and resources...

Enhancing Accessibility

*Add an equal opportunity (or 'pro-diversity') employer statement to recruitment advertisements with directions on how to request accommodations during the hiring process.

Detail and resources...

Promoting 2SLBTQIA+ Inclusion

* Make at least one type of staff facility gender neutral.

Detail and resources...

Providing WIC Support

* Tell your team about your Workplace Inclusion Charter commitments.

Detail and resources...

Key Benefits:

- Boosted Productivity,
- Morale,
- Customer Experience,
- Retention,
- and Wellness via Inclusive Practices.

Become a Workplace Inclusion Champion

Name (required)

First Name

Last Name

Email (required)

Business (required)

Phone (required)

Message

SUBMIT

PTBO WIC

Partnership Mentorship Program

Partnership Mentorship Program

The Charter Partnership Mentorship Initiative allows for users to actively engage with partners across diverse job sectors. This initiative provides free meetings and training sessions, enabling newcomers to establish connections, gain Canadian experience, and secure valuable references.

Key Components:

Collaborative Job Sector Partnerships: Forge alliances with organizations across different industries.

Job Board Platform: Develop a centralized job board where partners can post upcoming opportunities for newcomers.

Hands-On Approach: Embrace an action-oriented methodology, ensuring practical support and guidance throughout the mentorship process.

Current Partners

Become a Partner

Step up as a leader and actively contribute to creating positive and meaningful change in the community..

Name (required)

First Name

Last Name

Email (required)

Business (required)

Phone (required)

Message

SUBMIT

PTBO WIC

Events

Support

Build Your Resume
Detail and resources...

Get Matched With a Mentor
Detail and resources...

Help Trasfering Qualifications
Detail and resources...

Partnership Career Experience
Detail and resources...

The Peterborough Welcome Pass
Detail and resources...

WelcomePeterborough.ca
Detail and resources...

Workshops

Immigration 101 (starting February 2024)
Detail and resources...

Cultural Humility (starting May 2024)
Detail and resources...

Storytelling and Empathy Building (September 2024)
Detail and resources...

Events

16 MAR — Family Yoga with Tree Song Yoga
Today, 2:00–3:00 p.m.
1 Dufferin St
Millbrook, ON

23 MAR — Matthew Good
Tue, 7:30–11:00 p.m.
Showplace Performance Centre, 290 George St N
Peterborough, ON

16 MAR — Cultural Outreach 2024 (1PM SHOW) + After Party...
Tomorrow, 1:00–4:00 p.m.
Wenjack Theatre, Trent University, 1600 W Bank Dr
Peterborough, ON

16 MAR — Party With Easter Bunny
Today, 2:30–4:00 p.m.
McDonnel St Activity Center, 577 McDonnel St
Peterborough, ON

17 MAR — Social Walk and Talk Peterborough
Sun, 2:00–4:00 p.m.
266 Water St
Peterborough, ON

17 MAR — St Patrick's Day Parade
Sun, 2:00–4:00 p.m.
Downtown Peterborough, 313 Water St
Peterborough, ON

Skilled Trades

Connect with our Skilled Trade Partners...

Urgently hiring

Truck Mechanic

Laforge Canada 3.6 ★
Ontario

$30.65–$36.65 an hour | Full-time | Monday to Friday +1

French not required

▶ Easily apply

- Is your JPBT truck & coach technician license in good standing with skilled trades Ontario?
- Technicians needed at all three of our maintenance shops in Barrie...

Active 3 days ago

Health Care

Connect with our Health Care Partners...

Hiring multiple candidates

Registered Practical Nurse - Sign On and Retention Bonuses

Trent Valley Lodge 2.7 ★
Peterborough, ON

From $32 an hour | Full-time +1 | Day shift +1

▶ Easily apply

- Wound Care overseen by Wound Care Champion & Treatments.
- Responding to the needs of residents with dementia and other cognitive disabilities.

Active 3 days ago

Registered Dental Hygienist

TAG Dental
Peterborough, ON

$40–$47 an hour | Part-time | Monday to Friday +1

French not required

▶ Easily apply

- We are a practice that strives to provide great service and build lasting relationships with our patients.
- Orthodontic training and experience is an asset but...

Active 6 days ago

Education

Connect with our Education Partners...

Coordinator, Recreation and Community Sport Partnerships

Fleming College
Peterborough, ON

$50.42 an hour | Full-time

- The Coordinator, Recreation and Community Sport Partnerships is the primary lead for Sutherland Campus Recreation, Intramurals, Extramurals, Special Events,...

Posted 1 day ago   More...

Teacher — Violin and Viola

Kawartha Youth Orchestra
Peterborough, ON

Part-time +1

▶ Easily apply

- We at the Kawartha Youth Orchestra provide professional instrumental teaching artists and performers, host public education events, advocate for the Arts, and...

Active 8 days ago   More...

Finance and Business

Connect with our Education Finance and Business Partners...

Account Manager (Commercial Insurance)

Westland Insurance Ltd. 3.3 ★
Peterborough, ON

Full-time

▶ Easily apply

- As a Commercial Account Manager, you're a trusted advisor, who owns and supports client relationships and understands their business needs in order to provide...

Posted 30+ days ago

Finance Assistant

Community Care Peterborough
Peterborough, ON

From $30.37 an hour | Full-time +1 | Monday to Friday +1

▶ Easily apply

- The Finance Assistant works closely with the Director of Finance & Administration and the Finance Officer to complete all tasks related to the accounting...

Active 17 days ago   More...

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