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## Abbotsford Chamber Connecting Employers to BC's Refugee Talent Pool

The Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce and the Surrey Board of Trade have partnered with the Immigrant Employment Council of BC (IEC-BC) and Abbotsford Community Services to undertake a research project to assist the integration of refugees into our local economies. Launched in December 2016, Mapping Employer Needs in Surrey & Abbotsford is a community based initiative to help connect refugee talent with job opportunities.

From 2015 through 2016, BC received close to 3,000 refugees. Many of these have settled in communities in the Lower Mainland, primarily Surrey and Abbotsford. Of these, about 40% are within the working age of 19 years - 64 years.

Access to employment is a key factor in the successful integration of refugee families into the local community. However, there is very little understanding of the occupational and skills profile of these refugees or the potential skills shortages that they could fill. On the demand side, employers in many key sector and sub-sectors are facing barriers in effectively hiring and retaining refugees

In recognition of the need to create a bridge between employers and refugee job seekers, the Chamber will engage employers in Abbotsford to get a better understanding of their labour needs, and develop a strategy to connect employers to this talent pool.

A key component of this project is to consult with local employers to discuss the following themes:

- Economic sectors experiencing skills shortages and/or job openings
- Challenges employers face recruiting and hiring refugees
- Strategies to help connect refugee talent with job opportunities

Three (3) focus group sessions have been planned the week of April 3rd to be hosted by the Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce in the Boardroom on the mezzanine level at the Sevenoaks Shopping Centre. The dates and times of the sessions are:

- ▶ Monday, April 3, 1:00 – 4:00 pm
- ▶ Tuesday, April 4, 9:00 – 12:00 noon
- ▶ Tuesday, April 4, 1:00 – 4:00 pm

The Chamber is looking for participation in the focus groups from a broad range of businesses:

- Small and medium-sized employers – up to 250 employees
- Includes not-for-profit, public sector employers
- Includes employers who hire workers on a part-time, seasonal or contract basis
- Includes some employers with experience recruiting/hiring refugees and other immigrants

The Economic sectors specifically targeted for potentially employing refugees are:

- Accommodation & Food Services
- Business, Building & Other Services
- Health Care (support services)
- Professional & Scientific
- Transportation & Warehousing
- Agriculture
- Construction

- Manufacturing

For more information or to register for one of the focus group sessions contact:

**Allan Asaph, Executive Director  
Abbotsford Chamber**  
allan@abbotsfordchamber.com or  
call (604) 859-9651 ext. 302.

### The Immigrant Employment Council of BC

IEC-BC is a not-for-profit organization that provides BC employers with solutions, tools and resources they need to attract, hire and retain qualified immigrant and refugee talent. IEC-BC believes that the successful integration of skilled newcomers into the BC labour force is critical to both their success and the province's long-term economic performance. IEC-BC works with employers, government, and other partner stakeholders to ensure that BC employers can effectively integrate global talent.

### Abbotsford Community Services (ACS)

Abbotsford Community Services provides a full suite of support services for immigrants and refugees new to our community. Our services address a range of resettlement needs, include Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) and English for the Workplace, and include tailored employment services.

Among these employment services we offer employment mentoring, career coaching for Skilled Immigrants, and professional workshops.



## Network with 7 Cities Under 1 Roof!

The Fraser Valley Chambers of Commerce Business Showcase is back for the 10th year on Wednesday, April 19, 2017 from 3:00pm-7:00pm at the Quality Hotel & Conference Centre (36035 North Parallel Road, Abbotsford).

The event is sponsored by Branding DNA Designs Inc., City of Abbotsford Economic Development, Dennis Kiffiak & Bob Edwards-Re/Max Little Oak Realty, Praise 106.5, Prospera Credit Union and What's On! Abbotsford.

As the largest Fraser Valley Chamber networking event of the year, they expect more than 500 people to attend the tradeshow and over 60 businesses to exhibit. This year's event will include food trucks from Hunger Management and Kampong-The Taste of Malaysia.

The show is presented by participating Chambers: Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Cloverdale, Langley, Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows, Mission and Surrey Board of Trade. With a membership exceeding 4,500 businesses, it is a great opportunity for businesses to promote themselves to a targeted audience of business leaders and decision makers.

Previous participants herald this as the most cost effective and productive trade show they attend. They commented:



"This was a beautiful, well organized event that was very well attended. It was affordable and a great place to make fabulous connections. I will definitely participate again next year!"

"Being a new member of the Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce, the Business Showcase was our first event attended. It is an excellent forum to connect with potential clients, as well as meeting other local businesses that we can support in the future."

"This event is a great way to reconnect with existing clients and also meet potential prospects. Two thumbs up!"

With exhibit space starting at only \$249 for members, it's an incredible chance for organizations of all sizes to get involved.

This networking event is FREE to attend, but registration is required for catering purposes. Exhibitor information and registration is available at [www.abbotsfordchamber.com](http://www.abbotsfordchamber.com).

## Individual Solutions from Independent Advisors

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**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

This is my final column, as my term expires at the end of March. Of course, the incoming President will continue to contribute to this publication.

I am grateful for the opportunity to have been President of the Chamber, and I have enjoyed it tremendously. The Chamber movement is an important and effective network, working as the voice of business. And we in Abbotsford live in a great city, with individuals, businesses, and government all involved in working hand-in-hand with each other.

Our Chamber is growing up, along with our City. There's construction, development, a new Official Community Plan, we participate on City committees, and we've restructured our Chamber committees, bringing our committee structure into modern times. Our Board has worked to create a Strategic Plan that is simple and clear – ABC - Advocate / Benefit / Connect. These 3 strategic objectives of the Chamber remain the foundation for what we do.

We continue to work with City Hall people, both elected and staff, providing input in the planning stages as new programs are developed. It is so much more effective to work together in planning something, compared to standing back and then complaining about the things they got wrong in their plan they did by themselves. To this end, we have Board members sitting on many City committees.

The Chamber provided input into our Official Community Plan. We participated in the Abby Business Walks. Our Board has had regular meetings with our 3 MLAs. It is from one of those meetings that the strategy was developed on how to best promote our needs for transportation, and that strategy saw some of our requirements being included in the government's B.C. on the Move: A 10-Year Transportation Plan. And we will provide input into AgRefresh, the City's review of Agricultural Land Use in our community.

It is the Chamber movement that promoted the idea of an Inter-Municipal Business License. What a simple concept, and what a useful one! Our government is now working to expand the existing agreements and to establish new Mobile



JOSHUA BACH & JATI SIDHU

Business Licence agreements in BC.

Every 8 years, the BC Electoral Boundaries Commission reviews and revises our electoral boundaries, to allow for changes in population density and to ensure appropriate representation based on population. In 2015, their draft Report would have given Abbotsford a single dedicated MLA, plus 4 MLAs to be shared with other communities. We'd have been the 'poor cousin'. Our Chamber Board reviewed the proposed changes, and wrote such a strong letter, supported by our City, that the Commission revised their draft boundaries back to where they make sense. As a result, we continue to have our dedicated MLAs.

In order to connect with our membership at large, last year we engaged in a series of Focus Groups.

This has led to the creation of a new Chamber Committee for Not For Profit enterprises. We are working on our communication plan. We have instituted Ambassadors at our events, to promote networking and to be more welcoming to new members and also to existing members. Our Committees have strategic plans of action. We continue to sponsor resolutions at our BC Chamber AGM and Canadian Chamber AGM. And this year, as with every election year, we will run our All Candidates' Meetings, asking probing questions of our candidates.

Volunteering – One of the treasures of living in Abbotsford is the ability to work together with others. In addition to my volunteer work with the Chamber, I also work for a living. And as much as I like my paid employment, it keeps me in my office, all the time. It is my volunteer work that allows me to connect with others in our wonderful community. Through this volunteer work, I have formed relationships with each of our MPs, our MLAs, our Mayor and Councillors, and our School Trustees. This allows me to participate in making Abbotsford an even better place to live, work, and play. This is fulfilling, and I absolutely recommend volunteer work. Get involved! It's your community!

And of course - visit our website [www.abbotsfordchamber.com](http://www.abbotsfordchamber.com) to sign up for our events.

*Joshua Bach*

**NEW BUSINESSES:**

The Abbotsford Chamber would like to welcome the following businesses:

Becoming a member of the Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce provides substantial benefits to generate more business and reach the heart of your community.

- LegalShield ..... 604-534-9883
- Afterthoughts Restaurant Ltd. .... 604-850-1014
- Abundance Canada ..... 604-850-9613
- Critical Supply ..... 604-855-3744
- Epide Cleaning Service ..... 604-996-6622
- Concept Plumbing & Gas Ltd. .... 1-888-228-9608
- Fraser Valley Office Systems ..... 604-372-7378
- Himalaya Indian Cuisine ..... 604-851-2583
- E.D.P. Customs Compliance Canada ..... 604-557-0371



**UPCOMING CHAMBER EVENTS**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING WITH VAL LITWIN**

DATE: Wednesday, March 29  
LOCATION: Cascade Community Church  
TIME: 11:30am – 1:30pm

**FRASER VALLEY CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE BUSINESS SHOWCASE**

DATE: Wednesday, April 19  
LOCATION: Quality Hotel & Conference Centre  
TIME: 3:00pm – 7:00pm

**ALL CANDIDATES MEETINGS**

DATE: April 25 – Abbotsford West  
April 27 – Abbotsford South  
May 4 – Abbotsford Mission

More information at:  
[www.abbotsfordchamber.com](http://www.abbotsfordchamber.com)



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**Notice of Annual General Meeting of**



Held on Wednesday, March 29, 2017  
at the Salvation Army Cascade Community Church,  
35190 DeLair Road, Abbotsford

The meeting will be called to order at 12.01pm

Registration is available at: <http://www.abbotsfordchamber.com/events>

If you are a chamber member and unable to attend the AGM to cast your vote(s) for board elections and wish to vote via proxy, please call the office to request a "Voting Accreditation Form" for your company. A personalized form will be sent for you to complete and return.

Call La Vonne @ 604-859-9651 for a accreditation form.

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