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**Chamber of
 Commerce**
 abbotsford

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 ABBOTSFORD



Mapping Refugee Skills Fills Employer Needs

To support newcomers to British Columbia, a government-funded labour market partnership has identified ways to help refugees and immigrants connect with jobs and employers. On average, British Columbia welcomes 37,000 permanent residents every year, 1,600 of whom are refugees.

The Abbotsford Chamber participated in the project by identifying local employers concerned with this issue and facilitating the collection of important research data. "We were pleased to have been part of this valuable research," stated Allan Asaph, Abbotsford Chamber Executive Director. "When we reached out to local businesses for their participation we found that there was a high level of interest in engaging in dialogue on this important issue."

According to Manpreet Grewal, Director of Multicultural and Immigrant Integration Services, Abbotsford Community Services, "The biggest asset of the project was the collaboration between all the partners, which helped us understand individual refugee's level of readiness for employment, and uncover the needs of employers in terms of their successful recruitment and retention."

The Province provided the Immigrant Employment Council of BC (IEC-BC) with more than \$186,000 for the Mapping Refugee Skills and Employer Needs project. The Immigrant Employment Council of BC is a not-for-profit organization that provides employers with solutions, tools and resources they need to attract hire and retain qualified immigrant talent.

This year-long project focused on developing employment opportunities for refugees in Surrey and Abbotsford, where the majority of refugees in B.C. have settled. It was informed by substantive input from 42 employers in Surrey and Abbotsford and it maps the skills and occupational profiles of 144 refugees living in these communities. A final report has summarized the project findings.

Mapping Refugee Skills and Employer Needs in Surrey &

Abbotsford was carried out between November 2016 and October 2017 by IEC-BC, in partnership with the Surrey Board of Trade, Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce, DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society and Abbotsford Community Services.

Of the refugees who were surveyed through this project, 55% had some level of post-secondary education, up to and including doctoral degrees. These newcomers have a lot to offer potential employers.

The project also uncovered the challenges faced by employers in connecting to the refugee talent pool in these two communities, which includes knowing how and where to connect with job-ready refugee talent and boosting refugees' ability to communicate effectively in English.

The final report identified specific strategies that would help employers connect to the refugee talent pool. These strategies include coordinating the development of pre-employment programming, including English language training in the workplace, and facilitating interactions between employers and refugee job-seekers.

IEC-BC already has tools in place to help employers reach this untapped talent pool. BC JobConnect, its new online portal, connects job-ready refugees and other newcomers to B.C. employers seeking the skills and talents they bring.

To read or download the summary report go to the Business Resources section under the Advocacy tab on the Chamber website <http://www.abbotsfordchamber.com>

The Community and Employer Partnerships program provides more support to people who are struggling to gain a foothold in the job market. It helps build stronger partnerships with industry and labour to connect British Columbians with classroom and on-the-job training, while making it easier for employers to hire the skilled workers they need.

To date, the program has helped more than 1,675 job seekers benefit from work experience and funded almost 300 projects throughout the province. In response to the federal government's Syrian refugee initiative, the B.C. government has provided up to \$2 million under the Canada-B.C. Job Fund to help get refugees job training and match them with employers.

QUOTES:

Shane Simpson, Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction –

"Connecting people who are new to Canada with employment opportunities is a vital step in helping them integrate into their communities. We all benefit when people bring their skills and experience to our economy, and this project has provided concrete ways to connect newcomers with jobs. I'm also encouraged to see the strong partnerships that were developed through this project. Partnerships across sectors are exactly what is needed to create stronger, healthier communities for everyone."

Bruce Ralston, Minister of Jobs, Trade and Technology –

"Newcomers to Canada bring a wealth of skills and experience to our country and our province. In finding better ways to tap into that talent, our province and our people are richer for it."

Patrick MacKenzie, CEO, Immigrant Employment Council of BC –

"Having a job that one can be proud of is one of the best ways to integrate into your new community and refugees have a lot to give — their skills, resilience and unique perspectives. Employers recognize the value of this talent pool, but often need help tapping into it. Working with our partners, we have identified strategies that can ensure successful employment outcomes for this newcomer group."



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Want A Say About Abbotsford's Future? - Join In!



Mark Warkentin, President

Last year the City completed a very rigorous process called Abbotsforward which resulted in an updated Official Community Plan (OCP). This document will help to ensure that policy and planning objectives align with the community's vision for growth to a community of 200,000 population.

The OCP was just the start of a much larger project that the City has called Plan 200K. They are now in the process of reviewing the major Master Plans such as Parks, Recreation and Culture, Transportation, and Water to name a few. This also involves neighbourhood plans in areas such as the City Centre, Historic Downtown Abbotsford and the U-District. There are also a number of studies and

projects in progress such as AgRefresh, Housing Strategy and a Zoning Bylaw Update.

A key component in all of this is many opportunities for public engagement, discussion and input. This is where we have the opportunity to make our voices heard and take part in shaping the future direction of the City in which we live, work and play.

The Abbotsford Chamber takes an active role in participating in these engagement opportunities and I'd like to encourage every resident to take some time to attend an event, take part in a poll or participate in a discuss. Go to the City's website at <http://www.abbotsford.ca> and sign up for Plan200K updates and events.

Coming up on November 27-30, 2017 are a series of Open Houses around town to talk about AgRefresh and how the City plans to enhance agriculture in Abbotsford. Go to the website to find the date and time of the Open House near you. There will even be an opportunity to share your input online.

Take the time to attend to find out what the issues are and how you can have your say. It is a true investment in your community, your family and your business.

Abbotsford Chamber Accredited with Distinction

The Chamber Accreditation Council of Canada has confirmed Abbotsford Chamber's accreditation "with distinction" for the period 2017 to 2019. Accreditation is a formal acknowledgement that a Chamber of Commerce/Board of Trade has been successfully evaluated against rigorous national standards of policy, service, and performance.

The Chamber Accreditation Council of Canada (CACC), an independent team of representatives from all levels of the chamber network, oversees the accreditation process. The CACC

determined what the core activities of a chamber are and what the requirements under each activity would be for accreditation.

Displaying the accreditation seal is your chamber's declaration of, and commitment to, our unique value proposition as "the voice of business" in communities across Canada.



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.

- Bakerview Financial Solutions – Lyle MacDougall – 604-377-9350
- Turn of Events – Janet Collens – 604-309-1983
- Ripples Winery – Caroline Mostertman – 604-864-1033
- Bow & Stern – Jon Smith – 604-776-3474
- BARR Plastics – Dean Barrett – 604-852-8522

UPCOMING CHAMBER EVENTS

22ND ANNUAL ABBOTSFORD BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARDS

DATE: Thursday, November 23
LOCATION: Tradex
TIME: 5:30pm-9:30pm

CHAMBER CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

DATE: Thursday, December 7
LOCATION: Quality Hotel & Conference Centre
TIME: 11:30am – 1:30pm

BUSINESS AFTER BUSINESS

DATE: Thursday, December 14
LOCATION: Sandman Hotel & Suites
TIME: 4:00pm – 6:00pm

The BC Chamber is back at it, trying to find out what is on BC's mind

Our 2016 province-wide Collective Perspective survey captured results from 1,200 businesses of all sizes representing all sectors of the economy, and from all regions of the province. We discovered a strong confidence among the business community in both the cur-

rent health of their businesses and their future outlook on the economy.

This year, we are drilling down deeper into the issues to see if anything has changed. Insights gathered from this survey feed directly into the BC Chamber's advocacy efforts.

So we want to hear what's on YOUR mind, so we can use and share this data with our members, making BC a province wired for insight.

This short 10-minute survey is being conducted by Abacus Data for the BC Chamber

of Commerce. There will be an opportunity to enter to win a \$500 voucher to Air Canada at the end of the survey.

To complete the survey go to our website at www.abbotsfordchamber.com

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ENTER AT
abbynews.com/contests

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BC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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