

# BALANCING ALBERTA'S WORKFORCE.

Are we ready  
for tomorrow's  
growth and  
prosperity?



Prepared by  
**Productivity &  
Competitiveness  
Committee**

MARCH 2011

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Alberta is poised for significant economic growth in the next few years and in the decades ahead. Unless action is taken now to address our significant labour supply issues, Alberta will not achieve its potential for economic growth and prosperity.*

1

**W**orldwide demographic shifts are pulling us into an era of unparalleled global competition for workers. Alberta Economic Development Authority's (AEDA's) Productivity and Competitiveness Committee has identified four goals and recommends a number of policy objectives be pursued to ensure Alberta has the supply of labour needed to allow our province – and people – to prosper for decades to come.

The Committee recognizes that, while more can and should be done to increase opportunities for Albertans to contribute in Alberta's workforce, and to encourage Alberta businesses to adopt new technologies and processes to increase productivity, action in these areas will not be sufficient to address Alberta's pressing short and long-term labour supply issues. Alberta will be reliant on immigration to the province to build the workforce needed for future growth and prosperity.

The Committee has identified four goals and recommends a number of policy objectives be pursued to ensure Alberta employers are able to attract sufficient numbers of people with the right skills when needed to prosper in an increasingly competitive global environment.

## GOAL one

**Attract and retain people with the knowledge and skills needed by Alberta employers.**

*Alberta needs to be a leader in attracting and retaining global talent for work across a range of occupations and skill levels.*

*The Temporary Foreign Worker program and the Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program should be positioned as important components of an renewed immigration strategy that has a sharper focus on the critical role that immigration needs to play in enhancing Canadian productivity and competitiveness.*

*There is a need to continue to identify ways to improve the labour market responsiveness of the Federal Skilled Worker Program, placing more emphasis on factors shown to influence the success of immigrants in Canada's labour market.*

*We can do more to help immigrants and temporary foreign workers to settle in our workplaces and communities, and ensure they have opportunities to apply their qualifications and experience in Alberta's workforce. Increased use of competency-based approaches to credential recognition and the involvement of employers in the assessment of foreign qualifications would allow skilled foreign workers to work to their full potential in Alberta more quickly and make it easier for Alberta employers to attract, mobilize and retain valuable skilled foreign workers.*

2

**GOAL**  
two

**Ensure Alberta employers have access to a flexible workforce**

*Alberta employers often require additional labour for short periods of time. It is important that employers are able to recruit workers with needed skills during periods of peak labour demand.*

*Temporary foreign workers have proven to be very valuable to many Alberta employers when our province's economy is particularly robust and employer competition for workers is intense. Having timely access to additional pools of workers is important for Alberta employers to be able to compete in markets where they are competing with businesses that do not face the same wage escalation challenges during periods of strong economic growth.*

*Stronger monitoring of employer compliance with temporary foreign worker program requirements would help to ensure Alberta builds its reputation as an attractive place to work temporarily in the global labour market.*

*The pre-qualification of established and reputable companies in the province to employ temporary foreign workers would allow these companies to have more timely access to needed employees.*

The Committee offers a number of recommendations for specific policy objectives relating to these four goals. A summary of these recommendations can be found in Section 3 on page 23.

3

**GOAL**  
three

**Engage and develop our existing human resources**

*Alberta's current and projected labour supply issues elevate the importance of strategic investment in the development of our human resources and the engagement of Albertans, including those currently under-represented in our workforce.*

*Increasing emphasis on the development of Essential Skills, cultural competency, and work ethic in Alberta's education system, increasing the participation of Albertans in post-secondary education like apprenticeship and other programs of study where there is strong labour market demand, and increasing employer investment in training and the participation of Albertans in lifelong learning opportunities will all contribute to Alberta having the workforce needed for continued competitiveness and increased productivity.*

4

**GOAL**  
four

**Expand the adoption of new technologies and processes to improve labour productivity**

*The adoption of new technologies and processes offers the potential to reduce the overall demand for labour in Alberta, and thereby alleviate some of Alberta's labour balance pressures.*

# Introduction

## BACKGROUND

### LABOUR SUPPLY CRITICAL TO ALBERTA'S FUTURE PROSPERITY

Having an adequate supply of appropriately trained people will be critical for Alberta's future economic growth and prosperity. By 2019, a short eight years from today, Alberta could experience a labour shortage of approximately 77,000 workers.<sup>1</sup> Labour supply pressures are projected across a number of sectors, occupations, and skill levels.

Our province's future prosperity requires attention today to ensure we are:

- Attracting the best and brightest from around the world to become part of our workforce – and retaining this talent;
- Appropriately meeting the needs of Alberta employers for a short-term, flexible workforce during periods of peak labour market demand;
- Engaging our current human resources and developing our knowledge and skills so we can perform our jobs as well as the best in the world; and,
- Adopting new technologies and processes that will increase our productivity.

### THE CURRENT PROSPECTS FOR GROWING ALBERTA'S LABOUR SUPPLY

Even with in-migration from other provinces and immigration from abroad, Alberta's labour supply is expected to grow at a rate below that of the economy. While Alberta's average GDP growth is forecasted at between 2.8% and 3.5% for the next few years, labour supply is only expected to grow at an average annual rate of 1.1%.<sup>2,3</sup>

### The Demographic Shift

A critical factor underlying Alberta's labour force growth are demographic changes taking place not just in Alberta but across most of the western world. Declining birth rates and increasing life expectancy are driving a significant shift toward an aging population. The median age of Albertans has

already increased from 26.5 years in 1979 to 35.6 years in 2009. Looking forward, the proportion of seniors is expected to increase while the proportion of children (aged 0-14) in Alberta's population is expected to remain relatively stable. By 2028, the number of seniors is expected to exceed the number of children for the first time in Alberta's history.<sup>4</sup> This demographic shift means there will be fewer young Albertans available in the labour force to replace those who are leaving.

Alberta will need to look to other sources of labour both from within and outside the province to meet future labour force demands.

Statistics Canada has estimated that as of 2011, immigration will account for all of Canada's net labour force growth. While Alberta's population is slightly younger than the rest of Canada, Alberta will be in a similar position where almost all of the net workforce growth will have to come from in-migration.

### Under-Represented Groups

Currently, there are a number of groups – Aboriginal people, recent immigrants, persons with disabilities, and mature workers – under-represented in Alberta's labour force. While increasing the labour force participation of under-represented groups will help meet Alberta's future labour supply needs, these groups are simply not large enough to provide the needed workforce to support Alberta's continued economic growth and prosperity in the years ahead. There are limits to the contributions these groups can make. For example, Alberta's 10-year labour force development strategy, *Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce*, estimated that increasing the participation and employment rates of Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities, and recent immigrants offers the potential to only add an estimated 6,100 persons per year to Alberta's labour force.<sup>5</sup> In comparison, Alberta's employed labour force is estimated to have grown by 68,300 between February 2010 and February 2011.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Alberta's Occupational Demand and Supply Outlook: 2009-2019*, Alberta Employment and Immigration. The next 10-year Occupational Supply and Demand Outlook is scheduled to be released in November 2011. A shorter-term forecast is expected to be released in April 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Alberta Finance and Enterprise. *Budget 2011: Economic Outlook 2011-2014*. February 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Alberta Employment and Immigration. *Alberta's Occupational Demand and Supply Outlook: 2009 – 2019*. December 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Alberta Advanced Education and Technology. *Campus Alberta Planning Framework 2010*. 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Government of Alberta. *Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce*. July 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Alberta Employment and Immigration. *2011 Monthly Labour Force Statistics*. March 2011. <http://employment.alberta.ca/BI/12859.html>

## Migration

Alberta's future growth will be largely dependent upon migration, particularly international migration. The employment opportunities created by Alberta's rapidly growing economy prior to the recent economic downturn drew record levels of workers from elsewhere in Canada and the world. Although international and interprovincial migration are expected to strengthen as Alberta's labour market heats up again in the next few years, overall migration growth is not expected to return to these high levels.

Alberta employers can expect to face increased competition for labour from other jurisdictions – both within and outside Canada – due to aging populations and shrinking workforces across the developed world, and expanded employment opportunities for skilled, mobile workers as the world economy rebounds. Estimates of the number of additional workers needed to sustain economic growth in the United States and Europe are staggering: by 2030, the United States will need more than 25 million additional workers and Europe will need more than 24 million. Even China is projected to face labour shortages by 2050.<sup>7</sup>

Alberta's ability to attract workers from elsewhere will be influenced by employment opportunities in other provinces and territories and Canada's policies related to immigration and temporary foreign workers.

## LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY CHALLENGES

Increasing labour productivity (i.e., increasing the value a worker can create for every hour worked, as opposed to relying on more people to work more hours) will also be important to Alberta's future productivity and competitiveness.

Continued adoption of new technologies and processes will be important to increasing labour productivity in Alberta. However, labour market flexibility and the ability of employers to implement work practices that maximize their organization's productivity will also play a role.

## ALBERTA'S UNIQUE CHALLENGES

While Alberta shares the challenges of an aging workforce and sustaining labour productivity growth with many other jurisdictions, it faces some unique challenges because of the dominance of the resource sector in our provincial economy. During times when investment levels in the resource sector are high, there is strong demand for – and remuneration of – employees in this sector. In good times, this can have both positive and negative effects on other segments of Alberta's labour market. On the one hand, it creates wealth, which bolsters employment opportunities in other industries, such as retail, tourism and hospitality, industrial manufacturing, and residential construction. On the other hand, the appeal of high-paying jobs in the resource sector makes it difficult for employers in other sectors to attract and retain needed employees and puts upward pressure on wages. This affects the competitiveness of Alberta businesses, such as those in the manufacturing sector, in global markets and increases the risk of doing business in Alberta. Wage competition among employers also leads to higher levels of employee turnover, which also can have a negative impact on productivity. There are also ripple effects on other costs, including housing costs, which add to the challenges employers face in attracting and retaining needed workers.

The high-paying jobs in our resource sector create competition of another type which has longer-term implications for Alberta's labour market and future prosperity. This is the competition between well-paying jobs now (especially for young males) and higher education. Alberta needs skilled trade workers now, while the overall trend in advanced economies is creating jobs requiring at least college, but increasingly, university-level education.

Being a resource-based economy also makes Alberta's labour force especially vulnerable to economic downturns like the one experienced recently. The resource sector tends to react very quickly with significantly reduced spending when economic conditions change, which has cascading effects throughout Alberta's economy and labour market.

Labour productivity represents the single most important factor in maintaining and enhancing long-term sustained prosperity.

*Alberta Competitiveness Council,  
Report on Competitiveness:  
Alberta 2010*

<sup>7</sup> *Global Talent Risk – Seven Responses*, World Economic Forum in collaboration with the Boston Consulting Group.

## THIS REPORT

Alberta's labour supply challenges are complex. This report is intended to help deepen the understanding of Alberta's labour supply issues and help the Alberta Competitiveness Council to identify specific priority initiatives for industry and government to improve Alberta's overall economic competitiveness which will be publicly released in a report later this spring.

## APPROACH TO THIS STUDY

This project was done under the guidance of members of AEDA's Productivity and Competitiveness Committee. It involved:

- **Reviewing relevant background information and reports.**  
A listing of the documents reviewed is presented in Appendix B.
- **Conducting interviews with 14 individuals familiar with the labour supply issues facing Alberta employers and the actions being taken by the provincial and federal governments to address these challenges.**  
Interview participants included representatives of employers in the manufacturing, construction, tourism and hospitality, and retail sectors; educators; labour; and the Government of Alberta.
- **Researching the approaches being taken in selected other countries to address key labour balance issues.**  
The focus of this research was on immigration and temporary foreign worker policies, foreign credential recognition, and apprenticeship.



# Building the Workforce for Alberta's Future Growth and Prosperity

*The Productivity and Competitiveness Committee has identified four goals and recommends a number of policy objectives be pursued to ensure Alberta has an adequate supply of appropriately skilled labour when needed to allow Alberta to continue to grow and prosper in the years ahead.*



**WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?** *Alberta's future growth will be largely dependent upon migration, particularly international migration. Alberta will need to attract and retain immigrants that not only meet the immediate needs of the province's resource economy, but have the potential to contribute to building Alberta's knowledge-based economy across all sectors. Several issues have been identified in attracting and retaining the international migrants Alberta needs.*

## GOAL one

### Attract and retain people with the knowledge and skills needed by Alberta employers.

#### IMMIGRATION LEVELS

- Current economic immigration levels are not high enough to counter the general aging trend in Alberta's workforce.
- Recent media reports have raised concerns about the possible reduction in the number of Federal Skilled Worker visas for 2011.

#### IMMIGRATION BACKLOGS

- There is a backlog in the processing of Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP) applications. There appears to be a lack of sufficient staff in Canadian Embassies and Consulates to allow for the timely processing of FSWP applications under the current processing approach.

#### STRUGGLE FINDING MEANINGFUL WORK

- Too many immigrants struggle to find meaningful work in Alberta that utilizes their education and experience.
  - Although progress is being made, it continues to take some skilled immigrants a long time to have their credentials recognized in Alberta. This is affecting Alberta's attraction as a place to move to.
  - Access to settlement services outside urban centres constrain some immigrants in getting the supports they need to establish themselves more quickly in communities and workplaces in Alberta.
  - Many feel that the Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) and Alberta Immigrant Nominee programs (AINP) are more effective ways to ensure that new immigrants are able to contribute and add value quickly in Alberta's workforce. By allowing these immigrants to achieve their goals more quickly, Canada's reputation of a country of choice for immigration is enhanced.

#### RECOGNITION OF SKILLED TRADES AND CRAFTS IN THE IMMIGRATION PROCESS

- Despite the importance to Alberta of immigration by skilled trades and craftspeople, there are concerns that the current avenues for permanent immigration are biased against these workers.
  - There is a low uptake of tradespeople under the FSWP – skilled trades represent less than 3% of the FSWP.<sup>8</sup>
  - Points for the education factor are awarded based on an assessment of the highest educational credential obtained and the number of years of full-time or equivalent study leading to the credential. Skilled trades and craftspeople may have a credential in their field, but not the required years of study, and therefore lose points. (This is an issue for all non-university credentials acquired outside Canada.)

#### PATHWAYS TO PERMANENT RESIDENCY

- Many Alberta employers are facing persistent challenges in recruiting and retaining workers for jobs in some occupations and locations and turning to the Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) program to meet their permanent labour needs. Some businesses require employees with specialized skills to work with new technologies, while others require specialized skills rooted in traditional craftsman techniques that have declined in use in the western world. Finding Canadians with these specialized skills is often difficult.

<sup>8</sup> Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Issue Paper: Education in the FSWP Selection Grid

- The Canadian work experience that TFWs obtain is a strong predictor of their future success in the Canadian labour market, often more so than the foreign work experience that immigrants admitted under the FSWP have. Despite this, there are limited avenues for TFWs to become permanent residents, if they wish to do so and have proven to be valuable workers in Alberta.
- The English language\*, work experience, and semi-skilled occupation requirements for the Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program (AINP) limit the ability of some valued TFWs to achieve provincial nomination. Some feel there is a need for more flexibility in the requirements to help Alberta businesses meet their permanent needs for skilled workers.
- There are also risks to employers and TFWs of new Labour Market Opinions (LMOs) and work permit extensions not being obtained while AINP applications are being processed. This increases business uncertainty and can have a negative impact on productivity.
- Many consider Alberta's current quota under the AINP (5,000 nominees in 2010) to be too low.

#### **RECOGNITION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**

- Under current FSWP regulations, applicants can be approved with only basic English language skills. Many do not have the proficiency in English to meet their labour market potential in Alberta.
- In the selection of workers under the FSWP, points are allocated for English Language Proficiency of the principal applicant only. Family members who do not have English language skills can find it especially difficult to secure work in Alberta.

#### **ARRANGED EMPLOYMENT OFFER**

- An Arranged Employment Offer (AEO) can be an effective tool for both immigrants and employers. Under current regulations, a Foreign Skilled Worker (FSW) applicant with an AEO receives additional points on the FSWP selection grid. It would be beneficial to Alberta employers to make greater use of AEOs to bring in foreign workers to meet their needs.

### **What is Alberta doing?**

#### **WHAT IS ALBERTA DOING?**

- Implementing Supporting Immigrants and Immigration to Alberta. This policy outlines a coordinated and comprehensive approach to attracting and retaining immigrants to Alberta.
- Administering the Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program (AINP) in conjunction with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). This is an avenue for individuals to be nominated by the Government of Alberta to apply for a permanent resident visa through CIC. The Government of Alberta has made changes to the AINP to allow skilled temporary foreign workers certified in designated trades in Alberta (including those certified in Alberta's optional trades) to apply directly to the AINP for permanent residency instead of having to apply with their employers. Temporary foreign workers are provided with an AINP invitation letter when they receive their Alberta trade certification.
- Implementing A Foreign Qualifications Recognition Plan for Alberta. An Innovation Fund has been established to promote innovative and flexible approaches to foreign qualifications assessment. In 2009, over \$1 million was provided through the Innovation Fund to increase capacity among professional regulatory organizations to assess internationally-trained applicants.
- Collaborating with other provinces and territories and the federal government on a national foreign qualifications assessment strategy.
- Cooperating with the federal government, Alberta provides settlement services (through contracted settlement-serving agencies) and ESL training for immigrants.
- Developed a cross-ministry marketing and recruitment plan to attract and retain international students, especially at the graduate level.

\* It would be difficult for many TFWs to meet the ESL attendance expectations and attain English language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing at Canadian Language Benchmark level 4 as proposed for the AINP.

## What is Canada doing?

- Implemented the Canadian Experience Class (CEC) with specific language proficiency requirements for highly-skilled applicants.
- Attempting to reduce the backlog in processing FSWP applications.
- Carrying out public consultations on proposed changes to the points system for the FSWP that would place greater emphasis on youth, language ability and skilled trades.
  - Proposing to increase Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) thresholds for the FSWP.
  - Reviewing treatment of non-university education and training under the FSWP. Proposing to relax the years of education required to earn education points.
  - Proposing to increase priority given to younger skilled workers under the FSWP.
  - Proposing to decrease points allocated to work experience and increase the range within which points are allocated.

## What are other jurisdictions doing?

- Australia offers a number of pathways for temporary residents with employer-sponsored visas to become permanent residents, including the Permanent Employer Nomination Scheme, Permanent Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme, and the Skilled Regional Residence.
- Countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia have independent bodies offering expert advice on current, emerging and future workforce development needs.
- Australia has a 'pool' system whereby migrants who have submitted an application under the General Skilled Migration (GSM) category, but do not have enough points to qualify immediately, can be placed into a 'pool' for two years during which they might be selected if circumstances change (e.g. points requirements change).

- New Zealand also uses a 'pool' system. Those interested in coming to New Zealand under the Skilled Migrant Category first submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) into a pool. Every two weeks potential migrants with the highest number of points awarded under the point system are issued an Invitation to Apply (ITA). EOIs not selected are kept in the pool for a period of six months and can update their details as necessary. This approach moves the immigration system from one of passive acceptance of residence applications to active selection of skilled migrants.
- Australia carries out the Pre-Application Skills Assessment (PASA) on potential immigrants prior to applying for immigration. This allows the assessment process to begin before the potential immigrant arrives in Australia. The PASA is strictly an assessment for immigration purposes and does not represent a licensing or registration function for regulated occupations. Additional licensing or registration might be available once an immigrant arrives in Australia.
- New Zealand also offers an optional online pre-assessment process to potential immigrants to support their Expression of Interest (EOI). Similar to Australia, this pre-assessment is for immigration purposes only.
- New Zealand attempts to incorporate qualifications assessment into the application process by requiring potential immigrants to have their qualifications assessed for equivalency between the Expression of Interest (EOI) and Invitation to Apply (ITA) stages. This attempts to minimize the possibility of a skill and qualification mismatch.
- Australia also has a one-stop information website called Australian Skills Recognition Information (ASRI), which offers information on the pre-arrival assessment process for immigration, and the post-arrival registration.
- In Australia, individual state and territory migration plans can be developed so that regional governments can prioritize processing of selected skilled migrants.

**PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT**

- Convince the federal government to increase quotas for the AINP
- Broaden the occupations eligible for AINP nomination
- Reduce the processing time for AINP applications
- Develop mechanisms to identify established and reputable companies that are pre-qualified to nominate employees under the AINP
- Increase understanding among potential skilled immigrants of the steps they might need to take in order to work in their fields in Alberta
- Increase access to settlement, training, ESL and other services throughout the province
- Ensure professional regulatory organizations are being fair and reasonable in their decisions about the qualifications of skilled immigrants to practice in Alberta
- Increase the use of competency-based approaches and the involvement of employers in the assessment of foreign qualifications
- Increase employer awareness of international students as a potential source of labour (e.g. Off-Campus Work Permit Program (OCWPP))

**FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**

- Position the TFW and AINP programs as important components of an overall immigration strategy to enhance Canadian productivity and competitiveness. Increasing the ability of employers to offer skilled individuals the opportunity to work and reside permanently in Canada will increase the competitiveness of Canadian employers in the global talent market
- Increase opportunities for workers under the TFW program to obtain permanent residency, including semi- and low-skilled workers with proven skills and work ethic nominated by reputable employers
- Monitor the labour market success of immigrants in different immigration streams (e.g. Federal Skilled Workers, Canadian Experience Class, Business Class, Provincial Nominees, Family-sponsored). Place greater emphasis on the observed potential for labour market success in setting quotas for different streams
- Continue to identify ways to improve the labour market responsiveness of the FSWP, allocating points towards factors that are valued by employers and have been shown to influence the success of immigrants in Canada's labour market
- Increase the relative importance of arranged employment offers (AEOs) in the FSWP selection process

**WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?** *Alberta employers often require additional labour for short periods of time (e.g. construction of major industrial projects). It is important that employers are able to recruit workers with needed skills during periods of peak labour market demand.*

*TFWs are highly valued by many employers. Employers often find them to be dependable and committed employees that contribute to reduced turnover and increased productivity.*

## GOAL two

### Ensure Alberta Employers Have Access to a Flexible Workforce

#### TIME CONSUMING PROCESS

- The application and renewal processes under the TFW program can be cumbersome and time-consuming for employers. There can be delays in processing TFW applications at Canadian Embassies and Consulates.
- Recent changes, including ending the Expedited Labour Market Opinion (LMO), eliminating the Foreign Worker Application to Extend a LMO, and reducing the time period for work permits under an LMO have put additional administrative burdens on employers.

#### DECISION-MAKING IS CONSIDERED ARBITRARY

- The decision-making rationale surrounding LMOs and work permits is not always clear, leading many employers to feel there is inconsistency in the administration of the program (e.g. discretionary authority of approving agents for LMOs).

#### FOUR-YEAR TIME LIMIT ON TFWs

- The recently introduced four-year cumulative time limit for TFWs is a major roadblock to business productivity for many employers. With the AINP process taking 11 months and the permanent residency process another 10 months, some TFWs might be caught by this limit before their application for permanent residence is approved.

#### ACCESS TO SERVICES

- TFWs do not have access to settlement services and ESL training, despite the fact that many TFWs are successful in Alberta's labour market and interested in obtaining permanent residency.

#### SKILLED TRADE EXAMINATIONS

- TFWs who are skilled tradespeople are required to pass an examination to test their knowledge of the trade within six months of arriving in the country. TFWs can experience difficulties in completing these exams because of limited language skills and challenges in conveying their practical experience in an exam-type situation.

#### LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

- Language requirements to be productive vary by occupation and skill level.

#### UNSCRUPULOUS RECRUITERS AND EMPLOYERS

- Unscrupulous employment consultants and employers can negatively impact a TFW's experience living and working in Alberta, damaging Alberta's public image and effectively making it more challenging in the future for reputable Alberta-based employers to attract highly-sought-after TFWs.
- The "poaching" of valued TFWs by unscrupulous recruiters and employers also contributes to the challenges reputable employers can experience in maintaining a stable workforce, which has productivity implications.

### What is Alberta doing?

- Opened two TFW advisory offices (Edmonton and Calgary) in 2007 and established the TFW Helpline to assist TFWs in learning about their rights and finding solutions for situations involving unfair, unsafe or unhealthy working conditions
- The Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Employment and Immigration (E&I) is carrying out a review of the impact of the TFW Program on Alberta. Findings and recommendations are expected to the Minister by spring 2011.

### What are other jurisdictions doing?

- New Zealand's Employer Accreditation Policy: Accredited employers can offer work to non-New Zealand citizens without having to prove each time that there are no suitably qualified New Zealanders. Accredited employers must prove they have sound HR policies and practices, a history of compliance with all immigration and employment laws, and evidence of a commitment to training and employing New Zealanders (e.g. in-house training, funding for external training).
- Australia's temporary worker program is guided by an occupation list. Employers can recruit temporary skilled workers in occupations on the list without having to pass a labour market test.

### What is Canada doing?

- Making changes to the TFW program. Program adjustments that will come into effect in April of this year include:
  - a more rigorous assessment of the genuineness of the job offer;
  - a two-year prohibition from hiring TFWs for employers who fail to meet their commitments to workers with respect to wages, working conditions and occupation; and
  - a limit on the length of time a TFW may work in Canada before returning home.
- Recently reduced work permits under an LMO from two years to one.
- Ended the Expedited Labour Market Opinion (E-LMO) pilot project in 2010.
- Eliminated the Foreign Worker Application to Extend a LMO in 2009, effectively making the process for renewing an LMO the same as applying for a new one.
- Carrying out the Monitoring Initiative for Employers under the TFW program. Employers who hire TFWs may voluntarily participate in a Monitoring Initiative, which is intended to strengthen the integrity of the TFW program. In anticipation of regulatory changes, HRSDC/Service Canada is moving to more systematically assess employers' past compliance with the terms of employment.

**PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT**

- Work with Alberta employers in advocating for changes to the TFW program as outlined in the next column
- Work with Alberta employers to enhance settlement support services to TFWs, particularly outside urban centres
- Reduce the barriers to trade certification for TFWs. Develop alternative approaches for assessing the competencies of skilled TFWs that do not compromise the integrity of certification

**FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**

- Create two TFW streams:
  - one that is truly a temporary worker program meant for relatively short durations (i.e., 6 months to 1 year) for workers intending to return to their home country; and
  - one that offers pathways to permanency for TFWs if they wish to remain in Canada and have proven to be valuable workers
- Develop mechanisms to identify established and reputable companies that are pre-qualified to employ TFWs
  - For example, implement a policy similar to New Zealand's Employer Accreditation Policy that effectively pre-qualifies employers for TFWs based on a history of complying with federal and provincial legislation and terms pertaining to the recruitment and employment of foreign workers and demonstrating a commitment to hiring and training individuals from Alberta
- Introduce stronger monitoring of employer compliance with the TFW program requirements



**THE DEVELOPMENT AND LABOUR MARKET** *participation of Alberta's current human resources will be of increasing importance to ensure Alberta employers have an adequate supply of suitably qualified employees in the years ahead.*

## GOAL three

### Engage and Develop our Existing Human Resources

#### WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

##### HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION AND POST-SECONDARY PARTICIPATION

- One of Alberta's key labour market development challenges is balancing the labour market demands of our current resource-based economy, which provides employment opportunities for many individuals who have not completed high school or post-secondary education, with the development of the workforce that will be required for Alberta to be competitive in the years ahead as a more knowledge-based economy.
- Although rising, Alberta's high school completion rate remains a concern. In 2009, 72% of Alberta students completed high school within three years of entering grade 10.<sup>9</sup>
- Currently, about 60% of Alberta students enter post-secondary programs within six years of starting grade 10, whereas it is projected that 70% of future jobs will require a post-secondary education.
- There are some capacity pressures within Alberta's post-secondary system. Alberta Advanced Education and Technology's "turn-away measure" is an indicator of how well the system is responding to demand for post-secondary education in the province. While the number of Albertans turned away from publicly funded post-secondary institutions in the province has decreased over the past five years, there continue to be some programs, institutions and regions of the province that are unable to accommodate all qualified applicants. In fall 2009, the Calgary region had over 2,000 Albertan turn-aways, and the Edmonton region had over 1,600 Albertan turn-aways.<sup>10</sup> The fields of study with the highest numbers of Albertan turn-aways in fall 2009 were Health Sciences, Trades and Technology,<sup>11</sup> and Preparatory and Basic Upgrading.
- Labour market shortages are forecasted in the trades, health sciences, business, and the physical, natural, and applied sciences fields. However, increasing the access of Albertans to post-secondary programs in these areas will not be sufficient to meet projected labour market demand.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Alberta Education, Student Learning Opportunities, High School Completion Rates – Measure History (2010).

<sup>10</sup> Alberta Advanced Education and Technology. *Campus Alberta Planning Framework 2010*, p. 60.

<sup>11</sup> The Trades and Technology program band includes programs in the fields of Construction Trades, Mechanic and Repair Technologists/Technicians; Precision Production; Transportation and Materials Moving; Engineering Technologies/Technicians; Science Technologies/ Technicians; and Personal and Culinary Services.

<sup>12</sup> Alberta Advanced Education and Technology. *Campus Alberta Planning Framework 2010*, p. 26.

### APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

- Alberta's apprenticeship system plays an important role in developing Alberta's needed workforce. Employers in Alberta's construction, manufacturing and oil and gas sectors, in particular, require a large number of skilled tradespeople.
- Training apprentices is a large commitment for employers, and the proportion of Alberta employers who take on this commitment is relatively small. It is estimated that when Alberta's economy was growing rapidly a few years ago, only about 16% of Alberta businesses that employed journeymen were involved in training apprentices. While the recent increase in Alberta's permitted journeyman/ apprentice ratio from 1:1 to 1:2 can be expected to increase apprenticeship opportunities in Alberta, it may not prompt greater employer involvement in apprenticeship training. Many employers continue to be reluctant to take on apprentices because of concerns about reducing the productivity of supervising journeyman and increasing the risk – and costs – of errors.
- The current incentives in our apprenticeship system tend to focus on apprentices, not employers.

### EMPLOYER INVESTMENT IN TRAINING

- Concern about employer investment in training is not restricted to the training of apprentices. Employer investment in training has been a long-standing concern, not only in Alberta, but throughout Canada. The nature of work and technologies are changing at an ever increasing rate. Ongoing training is required to ensure Alberta continues to have the workforce needed to increase productivity and remain globally competitive. Although Alberta's workforce is aging, it is estimated that about 85% of our current workforce will still be in the workforce in 2020. Ongoing skill enhancement of our current workforce will play an important role in improving Alberta's productivity and competitiveness.
- Only a small proportion of businesses in Alberta invest in employee development and training beyond the minimum requirements to maintain a safe and legislatively compliant workplace. Many employers are reluctant to invest in training because they have not been provided with convincing evidence of the

return on investment of training, and the risk of employees they have invested in developing leaving to take jobs with other employers who can offer higher pay, in some cases because they do not invest in training.

### ESSENTIAL SKILLS

- Essential Skills are those skills that provide a basic foundation for work and learning. In Canada, the following are recognized as Essential Skills: reading, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, continuous learning, thinking skills, and computer use. Increasingly, cultural competency is also considered by some employers to be an essential skill as Canada's workplaces become more diverse.
- A long-standing concern of Alberta employers is that some high school graduates are not "workplace ready" because of Essential Skills deficiencies and a poor work ethic.
- There are others in the workplace also lacking Essential Skills, including some older workers and immigrants who are not proficient in reading and understanding spoken English. This can be a significant productivity and safety concern for employers, for example, in ensuring employees are able to understand their rights and responsibilities, workplace safety expectations, and work instructions.
- Essential Skills assessment is challenging, and workplace-based Essential Skills training, while effective, can be challenging for employers.

### DEVELOPING THE POTENTIAL OF IMMIGRANTS

- Many who come to Alberta under the Federal Skilled Worker Program find it difficult to become established in Alberta's labour market. Two of the primary reasons for this are their lack of proficiency in English and the challenges they face in having their foreign qualifications and work experience recognized in Alberta. (The issues of English language proficiency requirements under the Federal Skilled Worker Program and Foreign Credential Recognition were discussed previously in Section 2.1.)
- Immigrants, especially those living in rural areas of the province, can find it difficult to access English language training and training that provides them with targeted development of specific skills they may need to work in their field in Alberta (i.e., bridging programs).

### What is Alberta doing?

- Continuing to implement Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce (BETW), the province's long-term workforce development strategy. BETW is built on four themes: inform, develop our province's current human resources, attract workers to Alberta from other jurisdictions, and retain workers in Alberta's workforce. Some industry-led, sector-specific workforce development strategies have also been developed.
- Developing or implementing strategies to increase the labour market participation of under-represented groups (Aboriginal people, mature workers, persons with disabilities).
- Recently entered into an agreement with the federal government to expand employment and training services for unemployed older workers aged 55 to 64 (Targeted Initiative for Older Workers Agreement).
- First Nations Economic Partnerships Initiative (FNEPI), which aims to increase First Nation participation in the economy by supporting development of partnerships with industry and assisting in the development of a viable First Nations private sector.
- Ongoing implementation of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) Education Policy Framework, which focuses on increasing FNMI access to post-secondary education and training, high school graduation rates, the number of FNMI staff in Alberta's education system, FNMI content in courses, professional development for education professionals, and partnerships to improve learning opportunities for FNMI learners.
- Reviewing the programs and services under Alberta's Youth Employment Strategy to ensure their continued responsiveness to the needs of youth and Alberta's labour market.
- Implementing Connecting Learning and Work, the province's career development strategy, which aims to create stronger linkages between education and work and provide Albertans with more coordinated access to career and employment programs and services.

- Reviewing ESL delivery models in the province.
- Implementing Campus Alberta to strengthen collaboration and coordination within Alberta's advanced learning system and expand lifelong learning opportunities for Albertans.
- Continuing to increase learner mobility into and throughout Alberta's advanced learning system by expanding credit transfer opportunities.

### What is Canada doing?

- Working with employers through Sector Councils to strategically plan for future labour market needs.
- Offer Apprenticeship Incentive Grant (AIG) and Apprenticeship Completion Grant (ACG) to encourage participation in apprenticeship training.
- Offer the Apprenticeship Job Creation Tax Credit (AJCTC) to employers. The AJCTC is a non-refundable tax credit equal to 10% of the eligible salaries and wages payable to eligible apprentices. The maximum credit an employer can claim is \$2,000 per year for each eligible apprentice.
- Introduced changes to the Canada Pension Plan which will take effect in 2012. Changes include removing the requirement to stop working or significantly reduce earnings to qualify for CPP benefits before age 65 and allowing continued CPP contributions while receiving CPP.
- Implementing the new Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS). The priorities under this strategy are supporting demand-driven skills development, fostering partnerships, and increasing the emphasis on accountability and results.
- Youth Employment Strategy (YES), which helps youth transition into the labour market.
- Work-Sharing Program. A program that helps employers retain skilled workers during periods when they experience a reduction in the normal level of business activity that is beyond the control of the business.

### What are other jurisdictions doing?

- During the recent recession, Germany implemented a program called Kurzarbeit, which is similar to Canada's Work Sharing program, except employees could also receive additional income if they participated in training during their time off. Austria has a similar Kurzarbeit program to Germany's.
- Australia has the Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Program that offers employers a number of financial incentives for hiring apprentices. Standard incentives include: \$1,250 to \$1,500 for an employer who commences an apprentice; \$750 for an employer who recommences an apprentice; and \$2,500 for employers of apprentices who successfully complete. Additional financial incentives are available to employers for taking on apprentices: in occupations listed on the National Skills Needs List (including an additional incentive for rural and regional employers); in declared drought areas; or who are still in school, of mature age (45 years or more), or disabled.
- Australia also introduced an employer incentive called the Apprenticeship Kickstart Bonus for a limited time (three months in 2009/10) as a means of counteracting the impact of the global recession on the commencements and retention of young people in traditional trades. The Bonus related to apprentices in occupations listed on the National Skills Needs List (NSNL) and was a total of \$3,350 paid in two installments to the employer.
- A number of jurisdictions offer tax incentives – primarily tax credits – to employers as a means of encouraging employment and training of apprentices (e.g. France, Austria, B.C., Ontario).
- Both Australia and the United Kingdom offer group apprenticeship schemes whereby a group training company employs apprentices and then hires them out to "host companies". These companies pay for hiring the apprentice which comprises their salary plus a service charge which covers the management costs of employing and supporting the apprentice. This allows for a far more flexible and demand-led approach to the employment of apprentices. This is particularly attractive during uncertain economic times and for SMEs.
- The U.K. also has Group Training Associations (GTA) which are non-profit organizations providing training and related services on behalf of a group of local employers, funded primarily through statutory training levies paid by member employers. Under a GTA, the training is industry-led as the training organization (i.e. GTA) is governed by representatives of subscribing employers.

**PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT**

- Raise high school completion rates among Alberta youth
- Increase emphasis on Essential Skills, cultural competency, and work ethic development in Alberta's education system
- Increase awareness of Albertans of the opportunities and education requirements for current and future jobs to encourage enrolment in post-secondary education like apprenticeship and other programs of study where strong labour market demand is forecasted
- Increase participation in post-secondary programs that provide learners with the knowledge and skills required to strengthen Alberta's current and future productivity and competitiveness
- Work with industry to increase the commitment of Alberta employers to invest in the training and development of their existing employees to increase the productivity of Albertans
- Continue to support increased participation of those currently under-represented in Alberta's labour force, including Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities, and mature workers
- Expand access to training for foreign-trained professionals, skilled trades and craftspeople to acquire the English language skills they need to contribute to their full potential in Alberta's workforce
- Provide incentives for Alberta employers to employ and train apprentices
- Increase the awareness of the importance of lifelong learning for all Albertans and the access of employed Albertans to lifelong education and training opportunities (e.g. multiple formats and venues, workplace training opportunities, available any time)

**FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**

- Provide additional incentives to employers for investing in the training of their existing employees (e.g. training tax credits, reduced EI/ CPP contributions for employers that invest in training)
- Continue to identify and eliminate barriers to mature worker participation in the workforce
- Expand Sector Councils to support increased sector strategic workforce planning (e.g. manufacturing sector)

**WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?** *The adoption of new technologies and processes will help to improve productivity growth, which will help to reduce overall demand for labour in Alberta, and thereby alleviate some of Alberta's labour balance pressures.*



## GOAL four

### Expand the adoption of new technologies and processes to improve labour productivity

#### What is Alberta doing?

- Productivity and competitiveness is a strategic priority of Alberta Finance and Enterprise.
- Productivity Alberta connects Alberta businesses to productivity improvement tools, resources and services to help improve productivity and global competitiveness.
- The Alberta Guide to Productivity has been developed. This guide outlines the importance of productivity and how some Alberta companies have applied best practices to increase productivity.

## GOAL four

### Recommended Policy Objective

#### PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

- Continue to increase awareness of productivity issues and actions being taken by Alberta businesses to enhance productivity and competitiveness (e.g. workforce development, investment in technology, adoption of new processes)
- Provide incentives to businesses to invest in new productivity programs

# Summary of Recommended **Policy Objectives**



## GOAL one

Attract and retain people with the knowledge and skills needed by Alberta employers.

### PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

- Convince the federal government to increase quotas for the AINP
- Broaden the occupations eligible for AINP nomination
- Reduce the processing time for AINP applications
- Develop mechanisms to identify established and reputable companies that are pre-qualified to nominate employers under the AINP
- Increase understanding among potential skilled immigrants of the steps they might need to take in order to work in their fields in Alberta
- Increase access to settlement, training, ESL and other services throughout the province
- Ensure professional regulatory organizations are being fair and reasonable in their decisions about the qualifications of skilled immigrants to practice in Alberta
- Increase the use of competency-based approaches and the involvement of employers in the assessment of foreign qualifications
- Increase employer awareness of international students as a potential source of labour (e.g. Off-Campus Work Permit Program (OCWPP))

### FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- Position the TFW and AINP programs as important components of an overall immigration strategy to enhance Canadian productivity and competitiveness. Increasing the ability of employers to offer skilled individuals the opportunity to work and reside permanently in Canada will increase the competitiveness of Canadian employers in the global talent market
- Increase opportunities for workers under the TFW program to obtain permanent residency, including semi- and low-skilled workers with proven skills and work ethic nominated by reputable employers
- Monitor the labour market success of immigrants in different immigration streams (e.g. Federal Skilled Workers, Canadian Experience Class, Business Class, Provincial Nominees, Family-sponsored). Place greater emphasis on the observed potential for labour market success in setting quotas for different streams
- Continue to identify ways to improve the labour market responsiveness of the FSWP, allocating points towards factors that are valued by employers and have been shown to influence the success of immigrants in Canada's labour market
- Increase the relative importance of arranged employment offers (AEOs) in the FSWP selection process

## GOAL two

Ensure Alberta Employers Have Access to a Flexible Workforce

### PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

- Work with Alberta employers in advocating for changes to the TFW program as outlined below
- Work with Alberta employers to enhance settlement support services to TFWs, particularly outside urban centres
- Reduce the barriers to trade certification for TFWs. Develop alternative approaches for assessing the competencies of skilled TFWs that do not compromise the integrity of certification

### FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- Create two TFW streams:
  - one that is truly a temporary worker program meant for relatively short durations (i.e., 6 months to 1 year) for workers intending to return to their home country; and
  - one that offers pathways to permanency for TFWs if they wish to remain in Canada and have proven to be valuable workers
- Develop mechanisms to identify established and reputable companies that are pre-qualified to employ TFWs
  - For example, implement a policy similar to New Zealand's Employer Accreditation Policy that effectively pre-qualifies employers for TFWs based on a history of complying with federal and provincial legislation and terms pertaining to the recruitment and employment of foreign workers and demonstrating a commitment to hiring and training individuals from Alberta
- Introduce stronger monitoring of employer compliance with the TFW program requirements





## GOAL three

Engage and Develop our Existing Human Resources

### PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

- Raise high school completion rates among Alberta youth
- Increase emphasis on Essential Skills, cultural competency, and work ethic development in Alberta's education system
- Increase awareness of Albertans of the opportunities and education requirements for current and future jobs to encourage enrolment in post-secondary education like apprenticeship and other programs of study where strong labour market demand is forecasted
- Increase participation in post-secondary programs that provide learners with the knowledge and skills required to strengthen Alberta's current and future productivity and competitiveness
- Work with industry to increase the commitment of Alberta employers to invest in the training and development of their existing employees to increase the productivity of Albertans
- Continue to support increased participation of those currently under-represented in Alberta's labour force, including Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities, and mature workers
- Expand access to training for foreign-trained professionals, skilled trades and craftspeople to acquire the English language skills they need to contribute to their full potential in Alberta's workforce
- Provide incentives for Alberta employers to employ and train apprentices
- Increase the awareness of the importance of lifelong learning for all Albertans and the access of employed Albertans to lifelong education and training opportunities (e.g. multiple formats and venues, workplace training opportunities, available any time)

### FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- Provide additional incentives to employers for investing in the training of their existing employees (e.g. training tax credits, reduced EI/ CPP contributions for employers that invest in training)
- Continue to identify and eliminate barriers to mature worker participation in the workforce
- Expand Sector Councils to support increased sector strategic workforce planning (e.g. manufacturing sector)

## GOAL four

Expand the adoption of new technologies and processes to improve labour productivity

### PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

- Continue to increase awareness of productivity issues and actions being taken by Alberta businesses to enhance productivity and competitiveness (e.g. workforce development, investment in technology, adoption of new processes)
- Provide incentives to businesses to invest in new productivity programs



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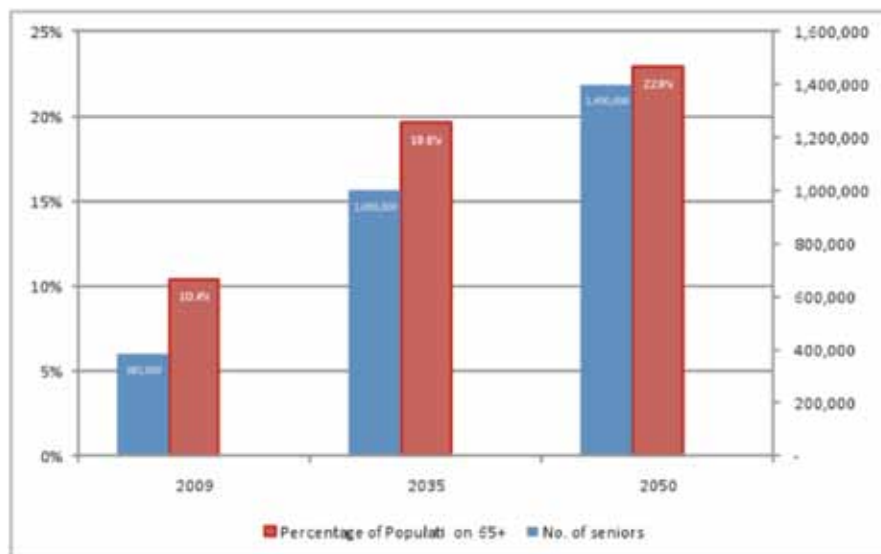
## Appendix A

# Additional Alberta Demographic and Labour Force Profile Information

### THE REALITY OF ALBERTA'S DEMOGRAPHICS

The number of seniors in Alberta is expected to more than double to over 1.0 million by 2035, at which time seniors are expected to account for nearly 20% of our province's population. By 2050, the number of seniors is projected to reach 1.4 million and the median age in Alberta is projected to rise to between 40 and 45 (see Figure A.1).<sup>13</sup>

**FIGURE A.1**  
**ALBERTA'S SENIORS POPULATION (AGED 65 AND ABOVE)**



Source: Alberta Finance and Enterprise. Alberta Population Projections: By Census Division, 2010-2050. June 2010. (Medium Scenario)

Alberta's aged dependency ratio – a comparison of people aged 65+ with working people aged 15 to 64 years – is expected to climb from nearly 15 in 2009 to over 30 in 2035. At the same time, the child dependency ratio – a comparison of children aged 0 to 14 with working people aged 15 to 64 years – is expected to remain relatively constant at 25.

<sup>13</sup> Alberta Finance and Enterprise. Alberta Population Projections: By Census Division, 2010-2050. June 2010. (Medium Scenario)

**TABLE A.1**  
**DEPENDENCY RATIOS FOR ALBERTA - 2009, 2035 AND 2050**

	2009	2035	2050
Aged Dependency Ratio <sup>1</sup>	14.6	30.6	37.9
Child Dependency Ratio <sup>2</sup>	25.6	25.3	27.1
Total Dependency Ratio <sup>3</sup>	40.2	55.9	65.0

Source: Alberta Finance and Enterprise. *Alberta Population Projections: By Census Division, 2010-2050. June 2010. (Medium Scenario)*

Notes:

- 1) The number of persons aged 65 years and older per 100 persons aged 15 to 64
- 2) The number of persons aged 14 years and under per 100 persons aged 15 to 64.
- 3) The number of persons under 15 years of age, plus the number of persons 65 years and older per 100 persons aged 15 to 64.

**MIGRATION**

- **Interprovincial Migration.** The net inflow of people from other provinces to Alberta dropped to 6,797 in 2010, but is expected to increase gradually to an average of about 19,000 by 2016 and remain at that level for the foreseeable future. <sup>14</sup> This level of net interprovincial migration is comparable to 2008 (17,845) but well below the record high of 46,000 seen in 2006. <sup>15</sup>
- **International Migration.** The number of people moving to Alberta from other countries has been increasing. In 2010, Alberta welcomed over 32,600 immigrants, up significantly from nearly 14,500 in 2000. <sup>16,17</sup> Under Alberta Finance and Enterprise's (AFE's) medium growth scenario, the total number of immigrants to Alberta is expected to grow slowly, reaching 29,200 in 2035. Along with permanent residents (i.e. immigrants), Alberta also welcomes a number of non-permanent residents, primarily temporary foreign workers. Net non-permanent residents to Alberta has varied over the years, increasing significantly when Alberta's economy was growing rapidly prior to the economic downturn (from 7,783 in 2006 to 23,508 in 2008) but then decreasing significantly in 2009 (7,748) and even a greater decrease in 2010 (-9,168). <sup>18</sup> Under Alberta Finance and Enterprise's (AFE's) medium growth scenario, net migration is expected to account for 70%, or 1.7 million, of all population growth in Alberta over the next 40 years (2009-2050). <sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Alberta Finance and Enterprise. *Alberta Population Projections: By Census Division, 2010-2050. June 2010. (Medium Scenario)*

<sup>15</sup> Alberta Finance and Enterprise. *Quarterly Population Report: Third Quarter 2010. December 22, 2010.*

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Citizenship and Immigration Canada. *Canada Facts and Figures: Immigrant Overview (2009). September 2010.*

<sup>18</sup> Alberta Finance and Enterprise. *Quarterly Population Report: Forth Quarter 2010. March 2011.*

<sup>19</sup> Alberta Finance and Enterprise. *Alberta Population Projections: By Census Division, 2010-2050. June 2010. (Medium Scenario)*

## UNDER-REPRESENTED GROUPS

Along with natural increases in the population and influxes of workers via interprovincial and international migration, Alberta's labour supply is influenced by the participation of population groups currently under-represented in our labour force.

- **Aboriginal People.** There were approximately 188,000 Albertans who identified themselves as Aboriginal in 2006, or about 6% of the total population.<sup>20</sup> As a group, Aboriginal people are younger and have less of an involvement in the labour force than the general population, representing a potential source of new labour supply. In 2009, 69.8% of Alberta's Aboriginal people living off-reserve participated in the labour force compared to 74.3% of Albertans.<sup>21</sup>
- **Persons with Disabilities.** Approximately 435,000 people in Alberta report having one or more disabilities – roughly 13.6% of the provincial population.<sup>22</sup> Although many Albertans with disabilities are employed, many face challenges obtaining and maintaining employment.<sup>23</sup> The labour force participation rate for persons with disabilities in Alberta was 55.6% in 2006.<sup>24</sup>
- **Recent Immigrants.** Although recent immigrants tend to have a relatively high labour force participation rate (74.9% for those in Canada for five years or less), recently arrived immigrants can face challenges finding employment that fully utilizes their skills and experience (e.g. language barriers, foreign credential recognition, etc.).
- **Mature Workers.** Mature workers who wish – or need – to continue to work past age 65 also offer potential for meeting some of Alberta's labour supply needs in the years ahead. The labour force participation rate of individuals 45 years and older in Alberta was 64% in 2009.<sup>25</sup> Steps can, and in some cases are, being taken by government and employers to assist and encourage mature workers to maintain some level of labour market involvement (e.g. flexible work arrangements, pension reform, etc.).

<sup>20</sup> Statistics Canada. *Aboriginal Population Profile: Federal Census 2006*.

<sup>21</sup> Alberta Employment and Immigration. *Alberta Labour Force Profiles: Aboriginal People 2009*. March 2010.

<sup>22</sup> Statistics Canada. *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey 2006: Analytical Report*. December 2007. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-628-x/89-628-x2007002-eng.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> Government of Alberta. *Understanding Alberta's Labour Force: Looking to the Future (Discussion Document)*. September 2005.

<sup>24</sup> Alberta Seniors and Community Supports. *A Profile of Albertans with Disabilities: A Compilation of Information from National Data Sources*. September 2006.

<sup>25</sup> Alberta Employment and Immigration. *Alberta Labour Force Profiles: Aged 45 and Older*. 2009.

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