

## **Meeting our Labour Needs by Reducing Barriers to Inter-Provincial Labour Mobility**

### **Issue**

With many businesses facing challenges to recruiting skilled employees, streamlining requirements for certification across provinces and shortening timelines will help fill positions in key areas.

### **Recommendations**

The Edmonton Chamber of Commerce encourages the Government of Alberta to:

1. Re-evaluate and address Alberta's nine labour mobility exceptions under the CFTA with the intention of aligning them with other provinces, especially in high demand occupations such as those in healthcare and social assistance.
2. Continue consultation on the Alberta Labour Mobility Act (ALMA) to find more ways to remove barriers to credential recognition.
3. Institute an ALMA accountability mechanism, such as enforcement of the Act while ensuring public protection is upheld.
4. Collaborate with provincial and territorial governments to ensure that policy, certification, and regulation are cohesive and do not provide a barrier to labour mobility across Canada.

The Edmonton Chamber of Commerce encourages the Government of Canada to:

1. Ensure the Canada Free Trade Agreement (CFTA) Secretariat is adequately resourced to lead the work of reducing barriers to labour mobility.
2. Explore policy options which harmonize credential and qualification recognition across provinces and territories.
3. Ensure that business needs are met by including chambers of commerce in the discussions.
4. Track efforts to improve internal trade barriers by creating a public database including the associated jurisdictions, date of creation, any tax revenues, and the reason they were originally formed.

### **Background**

The Canadian Free Trade Agreement (CFTA) and the New West Partnership Trade Agreements both have the goal of reducing labour mobility barriers, but exceptions remain in place. The Government of Canada has also participated under the CFTA to move forward on the removal of some trade barriers and, in December 2022, announced the [Federal Action Plan to Strengthen Internal Trade](#).

In December 2021, the Government of Alberta announced the Alberta Labour Mobility Act and the intention of knocking down labour barriers. Despite this, the province still has nine

labour exceptions under the CFTA. This number is substantial as many other provinces and territories have only one exception with the highest outside of Alberta having five.

Alberta's exceptions under labour mobility of the CFTA include many occupations which businesses are trying to fill, many of them in the health and life science industry:

- Dental Hygienists – Anaesthetic
- Dental Hygienists – Prescribing
- Licensed Practical Nurses
- Medical Radiation Technologists
- Nurse Practitioner
- Paramedics
- Podiatrists

According to data by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce Business Data Lab, 28% of businesses in the Edmonton CMA alone expect challenges in recruiting skilled employees. For healthcare and social assistance businesses, this figure jumps to 33%. The shortage of skilled employees in these fields is negatively impacting the health and well-being of Albertans.

Efforts to attract additional skilled workers to Alberta, such as the Alberta is Calling campaign, are important to address the gaps and have been largely successful. With such high proportions of businesses continuing to struggle to recruit skilled employees, more work must be done.

The [Deloitte report](#) on liberalizing interprovincial trade makes recommendations to (1) create a public repository of information about trade barriers in Canada, (2) acknowledge the potential of mutual recognition, (3) collaborate widely on solutions, and (4) recognize there are costs to unlocking the full economic potential of free trade.

Reducing interprovincial trade barriers can add \$14 billion per year to Canada's economy. In 2019, the Government of Alberta successfully eliminated 85% of its exceptions, making it the freest trading province in Canada when it comes to the trade of goods and services. It is important that, on top of goods and services, the free flow of people is also aided.

Regulatory bodies have an important role to play in credential recognition as they ensure that public safety is upheld. Reducing the barriers to mobility can benefit them as well by simplifying the approvals process.

With many businesses facing challenges to recruiting skilled employees and an unemployment rate of 5.9%, reducing barriers to labour mobility between each province and territory is essential.