



GLOBAL DEAL GOOD PRACTICE

Securing the right skills for the future of work through social dialogue: Canada's Future Skills Council and Centre

May 2021

Introduction

The transformations underway in the world of work present both challenges and opportunities that require common solutions shaped by representatives of governments, employers, workers and other relevant organisations. Automation and technological innovation, the transition to a low-carbon economy, changes in terms of the organisation of work and demographic shifts are affecting workers worldwide and causing disruption to labour markets. This good practice case study describes Canada's approach to secure the right skills for the future, including by leveraging social dialogue. It also discusses the outcomes and lessons learned.

In 2019, the government of Canada established the Future Skills Council, a ministerial advisory body made up of multi-sectoral leaders, and the Future Skills Centre, an independent innovation and applied research centre. These initiatives are part of the government's plan to ensure that all Canadians are prepared for the jobs of tomorrow and can adapt in the face of unforeseen events.¹

The Future Skills Council provides advice on emerging skills and workforce trends, and champions action on pan-Canadian priorities. The strength of the Council is that it allows leaders from all sectors to work together to identify common priorities and areas where action needs to be taken. The Future Skills Centre, meanwhile, is focused on ways to adapt to the future labour market and "prototypes, tests and measures new and innovative approaches to skills development and training" across the country.^{2, 3} These two initiatives are complementary as they address both the overarching trends and trajectory of the country's skills needs, and examine how skills and training can be effectively delivered.

Future skills: the Council and the Centre

The Future Skills Council includes a diversity of perspectives and experiences that contribute to a comprehensive and inclusive approach to identifying skills and workforce development priorities.⁴ It provides advice to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion and aims to reflect a wide cross section of views in its advice, not only vis-à-vis stakeholders, but also geographically and demographically. To establish the Council, Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), the federal government's department responsible for social programmes and the labour market, released an open call for applications for those interested in serving as Council members. Ultimately, the Council was assembled with stakeholders from all sectors involved in workforce skills development in Canada, including representatives from trade unions and labour, and from business and employers. In addition, the Council includes individuals who work for non-profit groups, within the training and education sector, and for Indigenous organisations. Finally, as the federal, provincial and territorial governments share responsibility for Canada's skills development, the Provincial/Territorial Co-Chair of the Forum of Labour Market Ministers Senior Officials Table sits as a non-voting member of the Council to ensure that its advice is informed of a provincial and territorial perspective. This inclusive approach to membership has been integral to ensuring that the challenges and needs of Canadians are reflected in the work of the Council.

Uniformly, Council members are seen as leaders and conveners. Well-integrated individuals in their respective communities and who are well-connected globally, Council members help to foster links between their respective networks, thus creating a "network of networks".⁵ Council members can reach

1 Crawford Urban, M.; Johal, S. 2020. "Understanding the Future of Skills: Trends and Global Policy Responses". Public Policy Forum and Future Skills Centre, Canada. Retrieved from: <https://fsc-ccf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/UnderstandingTheFutureOfSkills-PPF-JAN2020-EN.pdf>.

2 Future Skills Centre. 2020. "Strategic Plan". Retrieved from: <https://fsc-ccf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Strategic-Plan-2020.pdf>

3 OECD. 2020. "Workforce Innovation to Foster Positive Learning Environments in Canada". Retrieved from: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/a92cf94d-en/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/a92cf94d-en>

4 Fernandes, Rhonda. 2020 November 13. Employment and Social Development Canada. Personal Communication. Interview.

5 *ibid.*

out to their respective contacts to solicit input about the challenges and opportunities they are observing in the labour market. This strengthens engagement efforts, as they are able to draw from strong relationships they have developed with a wide array of organisations across sectors. Indeed, the first task chosen by Council members was to reach out to their networks to gather their input on the most pressing issues. As explained by Mike Luff, of the Canadian Labour Congress, “when Council members returned with their respective priorities, they were collectively whittled down to a series of cross cutting themes, trends, and recommendations, that are reflected in the Council’s first report”, released in November 2020.⁶ In addition to ongoing consultation, Council members engage in further outreach to share their policy recommendations, relevant research and good practices, and other information that is pertinent to the debate about, and preparation for, future skills. This iterative process is made easier by the fact that many Council members have extensive social dialogue experience.

To promote a consistent policy agenda to address future skills in Canada, social dialogue and multi-stakeholder involvement are key. While the federal, provincial, and territorial governments have the ability to set policy directions and priorities, and to fund strategic initiatives like skills and training,⁷ businesses are uniquely positioned to provide forecasts about their future skills needs. Occupational training and education, meanwhile, are influenced by provincial governments and educational ministers and carried out by a range of actors including, among others, locally-governed school systems, provincially-overseen colleges and universities, joint union-management training programmes, unions in the form of apprenticeship programmes, and Indigenous and not-profit organisations. Having all of these actors present for co-determining an agenda around future skills is necessary to aptly identify challenges, opportunities, and mechanisms for skills and training delivery, and to thus ensure that Canadians are well prepared to meet the future needs of the economy.

While the Council has worked to identify challenges and opportunities, and to offer advice on how to best prepare Canadian workers for the future, the Future Skills Centre, supports innovative projects that identify emerging trends and in-demand skills, as well as projects that test new methods of training delivery. The Centre is a pan-Canadian organisation founded by Ryerson University and two non-profit research organisations, Blueprint and the Conference Board of Canada. Funded by the Government of Canada, the Centre has a diverse board comprised of individuals who come from the private and public sectors, Indigenous organisations and from trade unions and businesses. Like the Council, the Centre also has federal government non-voting observers on the board. These include representatives from ESDC and from Innovation Science and Economic Development, the federal government’s department mandated to foster a growing, competitive and knowledge-based Canadian economy. Additionally, the Forum of Labour Market Ministers attends as an observer and provides territorial and provincial government perspectives. The Future Skills Centre and Future Skills Council operate independently, but are both part of the government’s plan to ensure that all Canadian workers are prepared for the future.

To date, projects have typically been identified through open calls held by the Centre and proposals are accepted from a wide range of organisations; only federal, provincial and territorial bodies are precluded from applying.⁸ Proposals undergo a rigorous review process, and projects that are selected are supported with funding from the Centre. Outcomes of these projects can be used to identify good practices regarding skills needs and training. Additionally, projects generate data for evidence-informed decision-making about future skills in Canada.⁹ Such information is made publicly available and can be used by a wide range of actors. The Centre has also formed targeted partnerships with organisations to advance, strengthen, and

6 Luff, Mike. 2020 November 12. Canadian Labour Congress. Personal Communication. Interview.

7 Government of Canada. 2019. “Horizontal Skills Review”. Retrieved from: <https://www.budget.gc.ca/2019/docs/plan/chap-01-en.html#Horizontal-Skills-Review>

8 Future Skills Centre. 2020. “Call for proposals. Shock-proofing the Future of Work: Skills Innovation Challenge”. Retrieved from: https://fsc-ccf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Shock-Proofing-Guidelines_EN.pdf

9 Blueprint. 2020. “FSC Annual Evidence Report”. Retrieved from: <https://www.blueprint-ade.ca/reports>

support work on their strategic priorities, targeted calls, or in areas where there is a recognised need for further research or programming.

Together, these initiatives comprise a dynamic and growing network that can forecast Canada's future skills needs, provide advice, and create an infrastructure that can help Canadians prepare for the future world of work.

Meeting labour market challenges in Canada

The Future Skills Council has identified a range of challenges and opportunities that have affected, or are expected to affect, Canadians across the country. Among others, these include features such as automation and technological innovation, the need for essential skills, and the transition to a low-carbon emissions economy. The Council has also identified five emerging priorities and specific recommendations for ensuring that the Canadian labour force is equipped with the right skills for the future.¹⁰ While addressing these priorities requires significant investments from employers and workers, skills acquisition and workforce preparedness can be used to equip organisations for economic changes and future workplace demands.

The Council has also noted that to move forward together and to enhance and sustain meaningful work for current and future workers, persistent inequalities and structural barriers related to employment access and participation must be addressed. The work of the Council, its members, and other actors in Canada's skills and training landscape demonstrate that social dialogue is and can be used to proactively prepare and train workers for the future and to meet these challenges head-on. The following section presents a number of innovative examples that show how social dialogue is being successfully used to address Canada's skills needs, and which are part of the dynamic and comprehensive future-oriented skills and training agenda.

Skills for automation and technological innovation

Technological innovation is rapidly changing where, how, and when we work. On one hand, this poses threats to workers and their livelihoods. The OECD, for example, estimates that 14% of workers will experience the full automation of their work within 15 years, and another 30% will need to upskill as a result of technological change.¹¹ On the other hand, innovation presents vast opportunities; for example, tedious and repetitive elements of work can be automated, leaving workers with greater time to dedicate to more interesting tasks that require more complex cognition and communication. Even for those workers who will remain in their roles, the World Economic Forum has suggested that core skills will change and half of all workers will need to reskill.¹² Digital labour platforms have vastly transformed access to and the organisation of work; the gig economy provides an opportunity for workers to provide short-term services – yet these work opportunities are often absent of the protections or stability offered by traditional employment.¹³ Ensuring that individuals can realize the benefits that technologies offer, while mitigating the risks associated with vast transformations, amplifies the need for strategies around skills education

10 The Council's report released in November 2020 outlines five key priorities for building a learning nation: 1. Helping Canadians make informed choices; 2. Equality of opportunity for lifelong learning; 3. Skills development to support Indigenous self-determination; 4. New and innovative approaches to skills development and validation; and 5. Skills development for sustainable futures. For more information: Employment and Social Development Canada. 2020 November 30. "Canada, A Learning Nation: A Skilled, Agile Workforce Ready to Shape the Future". Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/future-skills/report-learning-nation.html#h2.10>.

11 OECD. 2018. "Transformative Technologies and Jobs of the Future". OECD Report for the Canadian G7 Innovation Ministers' Meeting (Montreal). Retrieved from: <https://www.oecd.org/innovation/transformative-technologies-and-jobs-of-the-future.pdf>.

12 World Economic Forum. 2020. "The Future of Jobs Report". Retrieved from: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs_2020.pdf

13 The Conference Board of Canada. 2020 October 26. Episode 6: Gig Economy and Independent Workers. [Audio podcast]. Retrieved from: <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/insights/podcasts/future-skills-centre>.

and training for future work. A robust system of social dialogue can support the purposeful development of such strategies.

In some cases, technological disruption in an industry may outpace curriculum standards; this often results in a reactive effort to upskill and reskill to match workplace needs.¹⁴ Conversely, social dialogue may support the pre-emptive creation of programmes that allow employers and workers to pivot in a changing economy. This is particularly important in the face of possible or anticipated job loss or the displacement of entire sectors. For example, more than 2,500 auto workers were impacted when auto giant General Motors announced the closing of their Oshawa factory in Ontario in 2018. In an effort to avoid mass unemployment, the auto company, the provincial government, Unifor (the auto workers union), and educational institutions partnered to develop services and programmes to support workers in their career transitions.¹⁵ In particular, social partners provided training around digital skills, an area where economic growth is expected. By working together, social partners were able to identify more successfully areas of future growth, and thus could help workers reskill more effectively.

Unanticipated events also highlight the importance of technological innovations. The COVID-19 pandemic underlines the importance of digital access, delivery and literacy; technology can not only be harnessed for delivering educational programming and skills training, but can, and is, being used to reconfigure how workplaces are organised. This has been true of many sectors, particularly the service sector where, for the first time, jobs in the fields of education and government services have moved largely online. With many people working remotely, low levels of digital literacy or inconsistent internet access have caused some employers and employees to struggle to adapt to new remote working arrangements. While such difficulties are not unique to Canada, the Council has advised in its report that internet connectivity must be prioritised.¹⁶ In line with this advice, the government has recently pledged to invest CAD 1.75 billion to help connect Canadians across the country to high-speed internet by 2030.¹⁷

Finally, in addition to supporting the transition to remote work, technological innovation offers employers and workers new opportunities to deliver training aimed at improving skills and ensuring workplace safety. In the construction and trades sectors in Canada, management and unions collaborate to operate multi-million dollar cutting-edge training facilities for present and future skills development.¹⁸ These facilities, often negotiated through collective bargaining, are looking towards the future and the adoption and implementation of new technologies. Simulation and virtual reality, for example, serve as safer and more cost effective methods for completing the necessary training of entry and mid-level workers. Training in this way also serves to enhance worker self-efficacy and confidence in completing the nuanced tasks of a job. Cooperative training efforts have also fuelled apprenticeship and safety training, particularly in the skilled trades, which include occupations such as electricians, plumbers, welders, carpenters, and others. Cooperative efforts to support workplace change and training are fundamental to the success of future work in Canada.

14 The Conference Board of Canada. 2020 September 28. Episode 4: Upskilling and Reskilling (Mid-Career Workers). [Audio podcast]. Retrieved from: <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/insights/podcasts/future-skills-centre>.

15 The Conference Board of Canada. 2020. "Bridging Generational Divides: Advancing Digital Skills in Canada's Apprenticeships and Skilled Trades Ecosystem". In partnerships with Future Skills Centre. Retrieved from https://www.conferenceboard.ca/temp/8b60106b-741f-44e2-8f6e-e795bec91807/10707_impact-paper_bridging-generational-divides.pdf.

16 Employment and Social Development Canada. 2020. "Canada, A Learning Nation: A Skilled, Agile Workforce Ready to Shape the Future". Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/future-skills/report-learning-nation.html#h2.10>.

17 Government of Canada. 2020. "Connecting all Canadians to High Speed Internet". [Press release]. Retrieved from: <https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2020/11/09/connecting-all-canadians-high-speed-internet>

18 The Conference Board of Canada. 2020. "Bridging Generational Divides: Advancing Digital Skills in Canada's Apprenticeships and Skilled Trades Ecosystem". In partnerships with Future Skills Centre. Retrieved from: https://www.conferenceboard.ca/temp/8b60106b-741f-44e2-8f6e-e795bec91807/10707_impact-paper_bridging-generational-divides.pdf.

Essential skills

As Canada looks to the future, there is a recognition that some occupations will cease to exist; elsewhere workers may have to upskill or reskill to meet the needs of business and the economy. Although vast transformations are expected, social and emotional skills – such as adaptability, accountability, communication, and motivation – remain in demand, and can help workers prepare for employment in a wide range of occupations. The unique emotions and behaviours of human beings make social and emotional skills challenging to automate, so many stakeholders have come to view investment in this area as future-proof. Investing in these durable skills may not only moderate unemployment in Canada, but may close some of the skills gaps in complex problem solving and critical thinking that the OECD has identified.^{19, 20} The OECD also notes that training for social and emotional skills can improve a worker’s overall socio-economic success.²¹

In many sectors of the Canadian economy, employers frequently rely on individuals receiving essential skills training via their formal education, prior to entering the job market.²² However, to ensure proficiency in this skills area, it is likely that workers will benefit from practice, as well as from lifelong, workplace-based training opportunities.

The Future Skills Centre recognises that developing a plan to close gaps in the area of essential skills, including social and emotional skills, is an important priority to ensure Canadians develop the skills needed for the future of work.²³ Employers, unions and governments have also begun to put supports in place. For example, the government of Canada has had an essential skills framework in place for over 25 years to address this skills gap and facilitate steps forward in this area. The framework is structured around nine essential “building block” skills useful for work, such as various communication and thinking skills.²⁴ It is being modernised to better reflect the social and emotional skills that employers identify as gaps in the workforce and that are needed for work and learning. Occupation-specific essential skills profiles (based on the existing framework) describe the proficiency level in each of the nine skills needed by occupation, which can help people identify occupations for which they have or need to acquire particular skills.

Trade unions have also started to tackle this challenge by adding social and emotional skills to the roster of training opportunities offered by union training centres. Skilled trades in British Columbia, for example, now incorporate essential skills training into their technical training programmes. The BC Centre for Women in the Trades specifically, has witnessed improved retention of women within trades occupations as a result of community engagement and leadership opportunities that unions and the Industry Training Authority, a multi-stakeholder training initiative, provide to female workers.²⁵ These outreach initiatives, which often include public-speaking events and advocacy opportunities, foster and depend on essential skills and provide women with opportunities to grow and develop in this area. Businesses and employers have also made their needs known. Since 2016, the Business and Higher Education Roundtable has produced a skills survey every two years; the surveys similarly cite that there is opportunity for workers to grow in social and emotional skills, such as problem solving and critical thinking.²⁶

19 The Conference Board of Canada. 2020. “The Future is Social and Emotional: Evolving Skills Needs in the 21st Century”. In partnerships with Future Skills Centre. Retrieved from: <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/research/the-future-is-social-and-emotional>.

20 OECD. 2019. “OECD Skills Strategy 2019: Skills to Shape a Better Future - Canada”. Retrieved from: <https://www.oecd.org/canada/Skills-Strategy-Canada-EN.pdf>.

21 *ibid.*

22 Baldwin, Noel. 2020 November 24. Future Skills Centre. Personal Communication. Interview.

23 Employment and Social Development Canada. 2020. “Canada, A Learning Nation: A Skilled, Agile Workforce Ready to Shape the Future”. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/future-skills/report-learning-nation.html#h2.10>.

24 Employment and Social Development Canada. 2020. “The Office of Literacy and Essential Skills”. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/essential-skills.html>.

25 Langevin, Lisa. 2020 November 30. BC’s Industry Training Authority. Personal Communication. Interview.

26 Walker, Valerie. 2020 December 2. Business and Higher Education Roundtable. Personal Communication. Interview.

Recognition from various stakeholders about the need for essential skills yields a productive and enabling environment for the social partners to work together to meet these needs. Ultimately, although technology may present new challenges to workers, many jobs continue to depend on foundational knowledge that remains steadfast, even in the face of a changing economy. Education and training in social and emotional skills are an essential component of work life and will ensure a future-proof, agile workforce.

Skills for the green economy

The transition to a green economy will affect all workers, with a specific focus on those who work in extractive sectors. For Canada, a country that has long relied on extractive industries, the change to a low-carbon emissions economy will mean investing in new sources of energy and negotiating the displacement of workers in these affected areas.

To assist with the inevitable reallocation of economic activities, the federal government has developed a Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change, to avoid climate disruption and ensure well-paying employment. Part of the Framework commits support for sustainable development; specifically, the Low Carbon Economy Fund helps with expenditures geared toward renewable energy, clean technology and green manufacturing projects.²⁷ These actions, however, have a significant impact on the world of work, and on employment and skills, and Canadians need support to prepare. In Calgary, for example, work to ease the transition is being done via Edge Up, a project supported by Calgary Economic Development and NPower Canada, and funded by the Future Skills Centre, to help oil and gas workers reskill for new careers in information and communications technology intensive occupations required in a sustainable economy.²⁸ Elsewhere, workers are now upskilling, and receiving training to perform tasks associated with green technologies. Electricians, for example, are being formally trained to use digital diagnostic tools to repair electric cars, and carpenters' unions are providing training on solar panel installation and zero-emission construction.²⁹ Whether training is required for renewable energy-specific technologies and tasks, or for learning to update old infrastructure to newer, greener standards, training around new and revised skills will be required for workers in many sectors.

A low-carbon economy will require “labour market information and forecasting” to identify future growth areas and opportunities, and, in turn, to train workers and equip them with the skills that may not have been previously gained.³⁰ Social dialogue is helpful in pre-emptively identifying where these changes are likely to occur. This way, workers can prepare for career transitions, and avoid job displacement, and employers can ensure that the workforce has the skills needed to meet market demands. Emerging skills can be effectively included in lifelong learning opportunities, thus allowing employees to continually adapt to ever changing demands.

Enhancing diversity and closing employment access, participation and skills development gaps

In order to ensure that all Canadians are able to fully participate and prepare for the future of work, inequalities need to be recognised and rectified. Challenges faced by industries, businesses, organisations, and workers may be the result of barriers to workplace participation. In Canada, 59% of persons with disabilities are employed, a much lower percentage than the 80% employment rate of their

27 Government of Canada. 2018. “Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change”. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/environment/weather/climatechange/pan-canadian-framework/climate-change-plan.html>.

28 Future Skills Centre. “Projects: Edge Up”. Retrieved from: <https://fsc-ccf.ca/projects/edge-up/>

29 Luff, Mike. 2020 November 12. Canadian Labour Congress. Personal Communication. Interview.

30 Employment and Social Development Canada. 2020. “Canada, A Learning Nation: A Skilled, Agile Workforce Ready to Shape the Future”. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/future-skills/report-learning-nation.html#h2.10>.

non-disabled peers.³¹ Women, black and racialised people³² are under-represented on corporate boards; a research study on board diversity conducted across Canada by the Diversity Institute shows that racialised people hold 10.4% of board roles despite representing 28.4% of the population in the cities where the study was conducted.³³

In an effort to advance workplace inclusion across sectors, in 2018 Canada passed Bill C-25,³⁴ which promotes corporate diversity to “enhance shareholder democracy and participation, diversity and women’s representation on corporate boards and in management positions” through limiting director terms and instituting diversity tracking and reporting.³⁵ More recently, the government has announced the 50-30 challenge, which private sector employers can voluntarily sign up to. This challenge builds on Bill C-25 and is aimed at achieving gender parity (50%) and better representation of under-represented groups (30%) in organisational leadership positions; companies that sign up to the challenge receive social media promotion on government websites and supportive resources to help with their diversity recruitment and retention.³⁶ These innovations aim to address inequality and ensure that Canada is moving toward closing significant labour market gaps. Adequate and inclusive skills training can also play an important role by providing all workers with the skills that they need to access the full range of opportunities in the job market.

To further tackle inequality in employment, the Future Skills Centre reaches out to community-led organisations to develop and test training and skills development models that would help close labour market participation gaps of diverse under-represented groups. Trade unions have been able to support the inclusion of under-represented groups in skills development, at times by accessing funds from Employment and Social Development Canada’s Union Training and Innovation Program. This initiative aims to enhance labour force participation investments, with an emphasis on women, Indigenous workers, newcomers, persons with disabilities and racialised people.³⁷ In a similar vein, a Future Skills Centre project, the Workplace Inclusion Charter in Kingston, Ontario, is a multi-stakeholder group made up of service providers, under-represented groups and employers that intends to “hire, train and retain” diverse employees through a shared human resources function, which they hope will make workers feel more supported on the job.³⁸ This will benefit the city’s small and medium sized businesses by permitting them to access a diverse talent pool and gain from diverse perspectives, while sharing capacity and the administrative costs.³⁹

Emerging demographics in Canada require the inclusion of diverse groups, including immigrants, to build the labour force in support of economic growth. The Future Skills Centre has funded another project in Toronto, Ontario, through the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council and local medium and large businesses, in an effort to assist immigrant professionals advance their careers and help employers retain newcomer talent through talent, mobility and retention strategies that will help newcomers settle in jobs

31 *ibid.*

32 The term “racialised people” encompasses all persons who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour, regardless of their birthplace. As pointed out by the Ontario Human Rights Commission, the use of “racialised person/group” is preferred over “visible minority”, as it expresses race as a social construct rather than as a description based on perceived biological traits. For more information: Ontario Human Rights Commission. 2005. “Policy and guidelines on racism and racial discrimination”. Retrieved from: http://www3.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/Policy_and_guidelines_on_racism_and_racial_discrimination.pdf

33 Diversity Institute, Ryerson University. 2020. “Diversity Leads - Diverse Representation in Leadership: A Review of Eight Canadian Cities”. Retrieved from: https://www.ryerson.ca/diversity/reports/DiversityLeads_2020_Canada.pdf

34 Parliament of Canada. 2018. “Bill C-25”. Retrieved from: <https://www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/bill/c-25/royal-assent>.

35 *ibid.*

36 Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada. 2020. “Embracing Diversity in the Workplace: A Good Business Decision”. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/innovation-science-economic-development/news/2020/12/embracing-diversity-in-the-workplace-a-good-business-decision.html>

37 Luff, Mike. 2020 November 12. Canadian Labour Congress. Personal Communication. Interview.

38 Future Skills Centre. 2020. “Project: Workplace Inclusion Charter Expansion”. Retrieved from: <https://fsc-ccf.ca/projects/workplace-inclusion-charter-expansion/>.

39 *ibid.*

that match their skills and experience.⁴⁰ The project intends that completion of the Career Advancement for Immigrant Professionals Program will improve immigrant career outcomes within one year.⁴¹ Like all Future Skills Centre projects, this programme will be evaluated and, if successful, could be promoted, expanded or implemented elsewhere. Indeed, dissemination about the outcomes of Future Skills Centre projects can aid policy makers and social partners in other regions about effective mechanisms to and approaches that could be used to address Canada's skills needs.

The desire to enhance diversity and inclusion must come with an implementation and accountability plan. In some cases, hiring quotas and targeted training can be effective. Elsewhere, "wrap-around supports", such as day-care or transportation, help enhance workforce representation. Alex Cook, the Manager of Inuit Employment Programs at the publicly owned Quilliq Energy Corporation, notes that maintaining statistics on Inuit labour market participation is crucial for accountability purposes and ensuring equity in hiring and workforce retention. In 1999, when the territory of Nunavut was established as part of an Inuit land claims settlement, a government commitment was made to ensure Inuit would be hired into public sector jobs as part of the territory's move towards self-determination. This diversity requirement was set with an Inuit participation rate of 80%, a rate that is proportional to the territory's Inuit population. Maintaining statistics on this rate, Cook explains, not only helps to ensure that this quota is met, but also can be used to promote Indigenous participation across all types of jobs.⁴² Lisa Langevin, a Future Skills Council member who now works for British Columbia's Industry Training Authority and has done extensive work promoting the participation of women in the trades, makes similar remarks. Hiring quotas can help improve diversity, but "you need to make sure that participation numbers are publicly available and that they are being looked at regularly", she states.⁴³ This type of monitoring serves as a soft enforcement mechanism, improves accountability, and can be as important as funding training and diversity initiatives. Collaboration among governments, employers and employees is required to enhance representation as well as ensure accountability around equity and diversity initiatives at work, and to meaningfully reduce the diversity gap. As Langevin notes, "if you don't count us, we don't count".⁴⁴

The contribution of social dialogue to address future skills: lessons learned from Canada

Invite all stakeholders to the table

The Future Skills Council is composed of a diverse array of stakeholders. These include employers, workers, and governments; as well as non-profit groups, and representatives from the education sector. It also includes a distinction-based approach, with First Nation, Inuit and Metis members, to contribute towards reconciliation. This has made Canada's Future Skills Council one of the most diverse and inclusive multi-stakeholder groups. Canada's Future Skills Centre has similarly committed to engaging a wide range of individuals and stakeholders working on the topic of skills. To this end, the Centre encourages proposals from partnerships of employer groups, trade unions, training partners, and others. This commitment to inclusivity is also reflected in the Centre's board and its cross-country consultations where it receives input from a wide range of stakeholders and can thus facilitate a coordinated approach to skills solutions.

40 Future Skills Centre. 2020. "Project: Career Advancement for Immigrant Professionals". Retrieved from: <https://fsc-ccf.ca/projects/career-advancement-for-immigrant-professionals/>.

41 *ibid.*

42 Cook, Alex. 2020 November 10. Quilliq Energy Corporation. Personal Communication. Interview.

43 Lavengin, Lisa. 2020 November 30. BC's Industry Training Authority. Personal Communication. Interview.

44 *ibid.*

The inclusive orientation of these organisations can help to address the needs and concerns of the most at-risk workers and aspirational workers within the economy, including young people who have not yet begun their working life, the unemployed, or those who face structural barriers to employment participation. This will help to close existing labour market gaps and deliver better policies and outcomes, thus helping to prepare everyone for a changing future.

Social dialogue can foster skills policy coordination while remaining flexible

Planning for an unknown and ever-changing future is a challenging prospect, but by working together, sharing information and identifying good practices, stakeholders can effectively prepare Canadians with the skills they will need in the years to come. Through its work, the Council identifies priorities and outlines possible directions for the future, while the Centre tests innovative approaches to how such priorities might be effectively addressed. Within Canada, the outcome of these initiatives has not been a uniform policy or programme on skills, but instead the creation of a pan-Canadian skills agenda and a vibrant and dynamic skills network where dialogue is ongoing and actors can respond to future challenges and needs as they emerge. This approach may work particularly well in an environment where there are many actors engaged in skills and workforce training delivery; social dialogue processes have yielded policy advice but there is substantial flexibility in how actors will work to achieve and operationalise it.

Skills preparation requires action at the national, regional, and local levels

Among the most important ways to prepare the workforce for the future is to ensure that workers are able to make informed decisions about their labour market participation. Similarly, educators responsible for training the future workforce need to be attuned to skills needs and labour market trends. Businesses, meanwhile, need to be aware of the workforce's potential and availability, among other things. Yet data and labour market trends can vary regionally, and may depend on whether a region is rural or urban, among other factors. Education and training providers throughout the skills landscape are committed to providing workers with training opportunities throughout their working lives, whether they are early career individuals who have just entered the labour market, or mid to late career professionals. Accounting for such variation can be achieved by ensuring that social dialogue includes actors from the national, regional, and local levels.

Canada's initiatives through the Centre and the Council have taken slightly different approaches in ensuring that their pan-Canadian approaches are multi-scalar. The Council was structured as a "network of networks" and the outreach undertaken by Council members ensured that local needs and priorities from disparate regions around the country could become part of the national dialogue about future skills. Subsequent outreach by the Council to their respective networks ensures that dialogue, information, and advice flow in both directions. The Future Skills Centre, meanwhile, has built a consortium and partnerships across the country with a variety of actors, many of whom work within their respective local communities. Projects seeking support and funding from the Centre are able to bring their ideas to the table, and test and evaluate their approaches to future skills development. On one hand, this impacts individual workers who may benefit from programmes and fosters collaborative engagement with, and between, partner organisations like trade unions, employers, and educators seeking to address skills needs. On the other hand, the Future Skills Centre's commitment to disseminating information about project outcomes is helping to build a national network of stakeholders who are invested in these issues.

Skills as a starting point to build trust and expand social dialogue

The Centre and the Council have helped embed social dialogue as part of the process of identifying future skills needs and preparing the Canadian workforce. Consultation and involvement from all social partners, like those built into the design and function of the Council, can foster trust in government by ensuring that policy advice and agendas are reflective of stakeholder needs. This helps to build a sound industrial

relations framework and confidence in institutions. Given Canada's diverse skills landscape and varied actors, using social dialogue to address future skills needs can be an effective way to promote dialogue among actors with limited previous experience. Ultimately, this could be extended to other realms of workplace governance.

The Global Deal for Decent Work and Inclusive Growth

The Global Deal is a multi-stakeholder partnership that aims to address the challenges in the global labour market to enable all people to benefit from globalisation. It highlights the potential of sound industrial relations and enhanced social dialogue to foster decent work and quality jobs, to increase productivity, and to promote equality and inclusive growth. The Global Deal welcomes governments, businesses, employers' organisations, trade unions, as well as civil society and other organisations to [join the partnership](#).

The full list of partners is available at www.theglobaldeal.com/partners

Good Practices from Global Deal partners

The Global Deal encourages its partners to share examples of effective and innovative experiences in the area of social dialogue. These are published on the website in a repository that enables knowledge sharing and facilitates peer learning, helping Global Deal partners and other actors to improve social dialogue and sound industrial relations. It provides a valuable resource that illustrates different forms of social dialogue from a variety of regions and countries. Partners are welcome to send relevant experiences and working practices to the [Global Deal Support Unit](#).



www.theglobaldeal.com | globaldeal@oecd.org | twitter.com/theglobaldeal