

Recommendations

presented to the

**Forum of Labour Market Ministers
Consultation on Labour Market Transfer Agreements**

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CEDEC

INNOVATE. GROW. PROSPER.

WE CONNECT EMPLOYERS TO THE RIGHT TALENT

Successful and competitive businesses require talented and skilled workers. To ensure competitiveness in a global economy, CEDEC works with partners to address workforce opportunities and identify the investments in training and skills development to meet the needs of the labour market.

Entrepreneurship presents an important opportunity for citizens to enter the labour market by creating their own jobs. CEDEC invests in promoting entrepreneurial opportunities and skills development related to starting a business and mentoring services to ensure the sustainability of existing enterprises.

We look forward to this opportunity to share CEDEC's workforce development strategy and recommendations to improve labour market policy and programs in Canada.

CEDEC (Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation) is a leading partner and driving force for community economic development and employability.

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The increasing bilingualism of Quebec's English-speaking workforce is a fundamental asset to build upon as the ability to speak more than one language has positive economic payoffs.

Data show that the rate of bilingualism among English-speakers rose from 37% in 1971 to 67% in 2001. It continues to rise, especially among young English speakers (15-24 years), where the rate is currently more than 80%.

Over the past fifteen years the proportion of English speakers in Quebec has grown considerably, by about 50% in some regions of the province. At the same time as this growth has been occurring, there have been economic and workforce pressures, which have made finding a job difficult: these include the economic down turn of 2008, employer demands for bilingual applicants, and growing opportunities for English-speakers outside Quebec.

In fact, an increasing number of young, well-educated English-speaking Quebecers are leaving the province to pursue employment elsewhere – a trend that is worrisome since many of these individuals possess skills that are needed in the Quebec labour market.

THE STRATEGY: CONNECTING EMPLOYERS TO THE RIGHT TALENT

1. PROMOTE THE BENEFITS OF BILINGUAL EMPLOYEES

- Demonstrate important impact on Canadian economy

2. SUPPORT EMPLOYERS

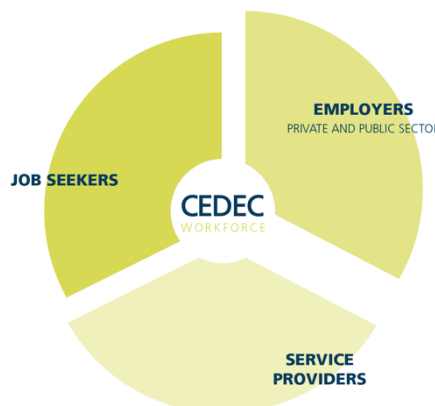
- Develop a robust analytics capacity, including workforce analysis, forecasting, and modelling
- Coordination of workforce integration between job seekers, employers and service providers

3. SUPPORT SERVICE PROVIDERS

- Develop a continuum of workforce development services and products that can provide the framework for an integrated network approach to workforce development

4. GENERATE BETTER LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION

- Gather data, analyze evidence and focus on consolidating and growing a robust evidence base on Quebec's English-speaking workforce.



Download the complete version of CEDEC's Workforce Development strategy, *Connecting Employers to the Right Talent*, at www.cedec.ca/workforce-development

LABOUR MARKET TRANSFER AGREEMENTS CONSULTATION DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Q1. Given varied and changing labour market conditions, what should employment and skills training programs be trying to achieve and for whom?

Employment and skills training programs should reflect employers' needs and better prepare the job seeker to get available jobs. They should be looking at:

- Current and future needs of employers
- Better understanding of available educational programs and how they line up with current and future jobs.
- Skills matching/upskilling of job seekers and those underemployed
- Job matching for seasonal work to allow workers to have longer term contracts
- Assistance for employers to upskill and retain their staff through on the job training
- Strengthening specialized language training programs that will enable bilingual English-speakers to get jobs and operate effectively in Quebec's labour market

Q2. Are current employment and skills training programs flexible enough to respond to the needs of a diverse workforce, e.g. vulnerable workers, youth, Indigenous Peoples, recent immigrants and others who need particular support? If yes, what in particular is working best, or how can these groups best be supported?

Current employment and skills training programs do not appear to be meeting the needs of vulnerable communities. Since 2010, CEDEC has conducted research on members of the English-speaking minority community in Quebec, mature workers (45+), educated Black youth, women, Aboriginal community and seasonal workers. In all instances research has shown a lack of available and /or appropriate service/resources in order for job seekers to find and keep a job in their communities, often in a rural setting.

These groups can be better supported by offering the following:

- Develop workshops, tools, and training to allow vulnerable groups to become aware of their potential and develop it.
- Establish awareness workshops to sensitize employers to the benefits of hiring vulnerable groups.

Q3. Are all Canadians, in particular jobseekers and potential jobseekers, aware of and able to access appropriate employment and training programs to find and/or keep a job? If yes, what in particular is working best? If not, who and why?

Through our research, we have been able to confirm that English-speaking job seekers in Quebec are not always aware of services available to them, have heard negative things about the services and/or are choosing not to access them. This is due to promotion of services primarily in French, employees not being trained or obliged to offer English language services, and a belief (and reality) that job seekers are not able to get services in their language. Bilingual job seekers have an easier time accessing services they are aware of.

With respect to services, although the rates of unemployment among French and English speakers in Quebec are similar, recent evidence suggests that the low income levels and high unemployment are increasingly present among the English-speaking group. Therefore, the situation of English speakers in Quebec is such that (1) an increasing number of well-educated young people are leaving the province for employment, (2) the educational advantage that has historically characterized this group is diminishing

during a time when bilingualism is seen as important, and (3) there is mounting evidence that English speakers remaining in the province are experiencing lower incomes and higher levels of unemployment.

Q4. What are the employment and skills training needs that employers see as critical to address their workforce and economic objectives? What is the role of employers versus government?

In a 2015 stakeholder survey on workforce development in Quebec, respondents of the survey were asked about the importance of being French/English bilingual to actively participate in the labour market. A majority of respondents indicate that they believe bilingualism is an important skill to be competitive in the Quebec economy. Comparing responses of those who completed the survey in English to those that answered the French questionnaire reveals a noticeable difference. Specifically, individuals that completed the English survey were much more likely, 79%, to say that being bilingual is 'very important' than respondents who participated in the French version, 38%. This is an important finding because it suggests those who gravitate more toward English identify the pressures to speak and read French to a greater degree than those who are fluent in French but may need to improve their English skills. This result speaks to the importance of this stakeholder consultation and the development of a Workforce Development Strategy for English speakers in Quebec.

Upskilling current employees will also be important to address as employers spend a lot of time training employees and want to reduce turn over.

It is also worthy to note that all disadvantaged groups are equal, but some are more equal than others. In a 2015 survey, we discovered that visible minorities and women are two groups that seem to fare better when it comes to workforce diversity. When employers were asked about plans to improve diversity hiring practices, only three companies out of 23 said they plan to improve their diversity hiring practices for people with disabilities and Aboriginal peoples and four said they plan to do so for people of African descent (For a fuller discussion of these issues, see the 2015 summary report on the (African-Canadian Career Excellence (ACCE) Undergraduate Student Survey 2014 at <http://cedec.ca/workforce-development/acce/>). Plans to improve hiring practices towards women and visible minorities in general fared better, with seven and six companies, respectively, saying they plan to do so.

Q5. What innovative approaches and partnerships could be used to address emerging issues and needs in the labour market?

Community Revitalisation: If a community is to grow and thrive, local governments and organizations should be engaging citizens to generate new ideas and take ownership of the results. CEDEC's Revitalization initiative has mobilized communities to create 10's of millions of dollars' worth of project ideas leading to millions of dollars' worth of increased revenues

Build a workforce development network: the mandate of the network would be to strengthen the ongoing development, implementation, monitoring and continual improvement of a sustainable workforce development strategy

Q6. How could employment and skills training programs be more responsive? (e.g. changing nature of work, increasing entrepreneurship, diverse workforce)

Employment and skills training programs should focus on taking integrated and coordinated action. Through an integrated and life-long learning approach to labour force development, programs can concentrate on key labour force transitions:

- from formal education to first, full-time entry into the labour force;
- from unemployment to reintegration into the labour force;
- from under-employment to greater employment in the labour force;
- from less well-paying employment in the labour force to better paying employment;
- from active labour force participation to reduced participation or exiting the labour market.

In all of these key life-long labour force transitions, concentrate on:

- promoting labour market opportunities in Quebec to English speakers in a targeted manner;
- matching English speakers with concrete labour market opportunities.
- Promote opportunities for entrepreneurship and self-employment
- Support the creation of small and medium enterprises through entrepreneurship training initiatives
- strengthening the alignment between forecasted labour market demand in Quebec and forecasted supply from Quebec's English-speaking labour force (provincially, regionally, locally, by industry and by occupation);
- education, professional development, training and retraining.
- developing a strategic labour force development approach that centralizes analytics, strategy development, and coordination and decentralizes labour market information dissemination and service provision.

Q7. What kinds of labour market information are most valuable in supporting planning and informed decision making? This could include: Information to support career planning for a jobseeker; or Information for employers to support workforce development needs.

- Link broader provincial labour market and labour force trends, characteristics and challenges to the data related to the development of the English-speaking labour force;
- Identify key labour force development research questions related to English speakers and pursue the necessary knowledge development activities to answer them;
- Measure the relevance, utility, quality, and delivery of the labour force information that is produced and disseminated to Quebec's English speakers on an ongoing basis;
- Create a network of internal/external labour force experts to provide research and data development support;
- Support the development of evidence-based labour force development strategies and initiatives;
- Support the performance management, continuous improvement and evaluation of the labour force development strategy.

Q8. What forms of engagement with stakeholders work best? What approaches to outreach might be considered to improve the sharing of information between labour market partners?

Develop an electronic Labour Market Forecaster for Bilingual Employment in Quebec and Employment Connector Tables. Creation of employment connector tables will allow stakeholders to draw upon each other, create opportunities and strengthen supports (eg. enhancing communication between employability organizations, and tapping into networks organizations that are better able to support business and workers.)

Fostering a more supportive culture for English speakers by lowering language proficiency regulations and sensitizing employers to English-speaking candidates. The political and labour culture in Quebec inherently favours those who are French-speaking. This puts a strain on the English-speaking community with respect to the workforce.

There is prejudice among community members against those not proficient in French and the attitudes of French-speaking Quebecers toward English-speakers is a major impediment to integration. It is also felt to be culturally taboo to discuss the needs of English speakers in the Quebec labour market.

The lack of French proficiency has resulted in a two-tier system in Quebec for English speakers. These individuals typically fall into one of two categories: they are either the most educated, with the highest skillset, or possess the lowest skillset, which makes locating work difficult. Furthermore, the effect of these groups on the labour force is exacerbated by the fact that they tend to cluster in certain communities.

Q9. What information do Canadians need to better understand the outcomes of investments in employment and skills training programs?

- Information related to labour market needs
- Number of skills training and employment services used by citizens
- Change of needs in the labour market due to increased skills of workforce
- Information to show the baseline for the skills needs of the workforce in relation to labour market needs.
- Show participation rates and correlation between the skills needs and the offer of training and employment services, and then establish the change over time in the needs expressed by the labour market.