



Canada's Attractiveness to Global Tech Talent

Webinar: February 8, 2022

Yilmaz Dinc (0:01)

Hello everyone. Welcome to our Canada's attractiveness to global tech talent webinar. We would like to acknowledge that the land on which the Conference Board team is hosting the session today is the traditional territory of the Wendat, the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Métis, and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. And as this meeting is being held virtually, we would also like to acknowledge all of the nations across Turtle Island. This webinar is organized jointly by The Conference Board of Canada and MobSquad following the Canadian Immigration Summit 2021. My name is Yilmaz Dinc, and I'm a Senior Research Associate in Immigration at the Conference Board. It's my pleasure to host the session.

I would like to start by introducing our great speakers for today. Honorable Minister Tyler Shandro is Alberta's Minister of Labor and Immigration. Minister Shandro was appointed as Alberta Minister of Labor and Immigration last September, and he previously served as the Minister of Health and has been an active member of the community for years, previously serving as a member of the National Parole Board, the municipal government board, the criminal injuries review board and others. Pleasure to have you with us today, Minister. Arif Khimani is the president and CEO at ModSquad, an innovative Canadian startup that ensures high caliber software engineers with US work visa challenges remain working with their current company, but near short from Canada. Arif is also currently involved as an alumni facilitator at the University of British Columbia, where he co-facilitates weekend sessions for undergraduate commerce students as part of a strategy integrated decision-making course. Pleasure to have you, Arif.

In terms of the webinar flow, I want to kick start and contextualize the discussion with a brief presentation that looks at the economic impact of immigration and top talent attraction. Then we will move on to minister Shandro for his remarks, and then we will hear about MobSquad's approach to talent attraction. We will end our session with the Q and A so please don't forget to post your questions in the Q and A tab.

So, why is immigration important to Canada? Our research over and over shows that immigration has a positive impact on Canada's GDP government revenues and helps us to improve the working age to retire leadership. And we see a positive correlation between the



benefits of immigration and immigration levels. The more immigrants Canada welcomes, the more we see these benefits getting better, but at the same time, it's not only about admitting more immigrants, but ensuring that immigrants are set for success. The more we can advance the economic integration of immigrants, the better results we will see on more complex indicators like productivity and GDP per capita, which sometimes can go down if immigrants don't successfully integrate. Luckily, Canada and other provinces have a multitude of pathways to attract skill talent, including tech talents. However, as we will see more and more today, more flexibility, innovation and employee engagement in the system could help us to better attract and retain the tech talent that Canada needs. At the same time, the current global pandemic and migration patterns has provided Canada with a unique opportunity to be able to attract the tech workers.

So, let's start with an overview of economic impact of immigration. If we forecast the current immigration levels and try to see what's ahead in the next two decades, we see that if the government can build on the current immigration levels, Canada can welcome almost 700,000 newcomers in the year 2040 reverting back to pre-COVID immigration levels in comparison, would lead to 540,000 immigrants, whereas lowering immigration could lower the number of newcomers being admitted on a year-to-year basis to 260,000 by 2040 so what does this mean for Alberta? If we keep on building on current immigration levels, we see almost 100,000 newcomer pool being added to Alberta's labor force and helping to grow the economy, At the same time again, growing the current immigration levels, or baseline immigration levels, means 80,000 newcomers per a year. And these are all important, because immigration is closely related to the economic growth. When we look at the figures for Canada level, we see that the real GDP growth is highest when Canada builds on the current immigration levels and continues to increase over the next two decades. At the same time as Canada's population continues to age, higher immigration levels helps us to mitigate the effects of a retiring and aging population faster than keeping the immigration levels at the pre-COVID times or lowering immigration. Then comes the question of, but if we increase immigration, that leads to a drop in GDP per capita. That really drills down to improving economic integration of immigrants. It's not only about admitting immigrants, but ensuring that they can find jobs that match their skills, that increase that helps to increase productivity, and this is particularly important for skilled professions, regulated occupations where immigrants continue to face barriers, hence the employment and earnings gaps that takes away the benefits of immigration on the GDP per capita side and at the Conference Board, we really see this as a combination of selection and settlement factors. We should not only select immigrants that help us to meet current labor market demand, that have high human capital potential, that can help us to meet future demand, but also, we set them up for success through settlement, through engaging employers to ensure that we drive to drive benefits of immigration.

So, what are the current talent pathways for Canada to drive the benefits of immigration? You see that express entry remains as the flagship program that the federal government



manages to admit people based on qualifications and ability to economically integrate. At the same time, there are smaller programs like the startup visa that attempt to bring immigrant entrepreneurs to stimulate growth of immigration through alternative channels. And we also have regional pathways or pilot programs, now the Atlantic immigration pilot has become the Atlantic immigration program, where we see a balance between employers, current labor market needs as well as immigrants' future potential to contribute to the economy. Along with the federal programs we see, there are provincial programs that help Canada meet its labor demand at the provincial level, and different than the federal programs, we see there are different skill levels that could be admitted. For instance, most federal programs, it's more difficult to admit people on NOC level C and D, whereas provincially, if the need is there, provincial programs help local governments and provincial governments to attract that labor. We have entrepreneur immigration programs, and the Provincial Nominee programs have also been traditionally a platform for temporary to permanent resident transitions.

So, how do we improve and build on the successes of these pathways and address the opportunities to come as well as mitigate any challenges. In terms of the federal programs, we see a continued important role for Express Entry. It will remain the flagship program and continue to choose people based on their ability to integrate. But at the same time, particularly during the pandemic, we have seen there is specialized needs or national demand in certain areas in the labor market that could be addressed through federal programs. So it's important to explore how to bridge labor shortages that are persistent and that are national. At the same time, we see an important role for federal programs to provide immigrants with information. Many immigrants make choices to settle based on where they think they will find employment, and sometimes opportunities in smaller communities, rural communities go ignored because immigrants do not have the information that they could leverage to find jobs that match their skills in non-traditional immigration destinations. For Provincial Nominee programs, their main intention is to be able to meet local labor market needs effectively, and building on that, and ensuring that the programs continue to match local economic trajectories is very important. And one advantage that the Provincial Nominee programs have over federal programs is their connection to regional and local employers and their engagement is very important. When we look at temporary workers and particularly within the tech context, we see this program is a good platform to act as a trial period for workers and potential immigrants. On one hand, the workers can see if the job that they have is a good fit for them, they can contribute economically, and at the same time, we can transition them into permanent residency once they gain the Canadian experience and ties that would help, help to set them up for success. This could also help Canada to diversify entry points for top talent. Lastly, international students, again, in an ideal environment, have a credential advantage. We expect them to already perform better economically to people compared to international degrees, because they already have the degree, they have the connections. At the same time, we see more and more international students settling in different parts of Canada post-graduation, so there's a regional and



sectoral retention element as well. And if Canada managed to build on, on on the retention of international students, you might be able to attract more talented students, more successful students, who will be the future workforce in the tech sector and others.

So lastly, I would like to touch upon what's Canada's attraction advantage if you think about, about the Canada's, um, immigration context. Canada is a highly attractive destination for potential immigrants, and there are two important reasons that contributes to this. One is the country's long-standing commitment to multiculturalism. This is very hard to replicate on other countries, and at the same time, the immigration system over the last few decades has consistently provided access to permanent residency and citizenship, which is the kind of stability that has not been offered by other governments around the world. And, this is this is proven in data as well. Canada ranks among the top OECD countries in terms of attractiveness to top talent. But at the same time, having a good immigration system needs to be complemented, particularly in attraction of tech talent and entrepreneurs, with a good business environment. And we see that Canada has to do more on the business development side, attracting foreign direct investment, stimulating innovation, to be able to remain competitive in immigration and make the most of the benefits that immigrants and tech workers has to offer. And with that, I'd like to thank our audiences and pass the floor to minister Shandro.

Tyler Shandro (11:16)

Well, thanks so much and good afternoon, everyone. Thanks so much the to the Conference Board for inviting me to be here today to talk about the important role that immigration plays in Canada's tech space, and as our immigration labor and immigration minister here in Alberta, I can say with confidence that this is a topic that's a key priority for our government. In fact, just last month, we announced an exciting new immigration pathway to help Alberta to attract global tech talent, and we got to announce it actually at the MobSquad office in Calgary. So, through you, Arif, to, to your team at MobSquad, I thank you for hosting the vote. Sorry. Take two hosting the event, and for us to be able to depose on you guys and being able to announce that new tech pathway pilot, there are your offices, and I'll talk a little bit more about that the pathway in a moment.

But first, before I talk about that, I just want to go over as some context on our labor force in Alberta in particular, particularly the tech sector, and our labor force in Alberta there. So, without a doubt, the past few years have been been challenging in Alberta, as they have been throughout the country and throughout the world. But here in Alberta, it hasn't just been the pandemic that we've been hit with. It's been a triple whammy of the pandemic, energy price collapse and then the worldwide recession and the devastating impacts that have been felt across our economy and our communities. And as part of the Alberta recovery plan, Alberta's government is doing everything in our power to help businesses get back on track and to get as as many folks back to work as possible. And so, I'm happy to report that Alberta is coming back. We continue to to lead the nation in employment in a



month that, well, I mean, in January, I think it was a month where we saw 200,000 job losses across Canada, but it was a month where, despite those 200,000 job losses across the country, Alberta gains 7,000 more jobs in January.

But despite challenges, Alberta's tech industry has shown promising signs of growth and development over the last two years. In fact, in 10 years, if we look over the last 10 years, from 2012 until this year, we've seen a 200% increase in the number of tech companies that have set up shop in Alberta, with more than 3,000 companies based now in the province today. And investors are taking notice. Most recently, we saw an announcement from Amazon. They announced a new, a new cloud computing operation in Calgary, and this record-breaking investment of \$4.3 billion in the province's tech sector is estimated to create about 1,000 new jobs. So clearly, the tech potential in our province is massive, which is why Alberta's government has identified the sector as a key part of our economic recovery, and that includes actions identified in the Alberta Technology and Innovation Strategy, which is led by my colleague, Minister Schweitzer, who's the Minister of Jobs Economy and Innovation. Now that strategy provides a roadmap for how Alberta can attract capital, private capital investment, and create a competitive landscape and the tech and innovation sectors, as well as actions to develop, attract and retain a future-ready workforce for the sector.

And now, while our unemployment rate continues to decrease here in Alberta, the fact remains that we continue to have this dual challenge here where, and this has been lingering for years, but we have thousands of Albertans who continue to face unemployment. I think over 60,000 facing long term unemployment, being unemployed for more than 27 weeks. With the, but with the the increased investment and large-scale operations that have been recently announced, as I mentioned, the the Amazon announcement, you know, the Dow announcement for the world's first net zero petrochemical plant being based in Alberta, we can expect to see the demand for highly skilled and trained workforce to also increase in our profits. So that makes it so important that we work with job creators, we work with investors, we work with stakeholders, and just like you, to to address our long-term unemployment and our labor shortages. So, as we move forward and in our recovery and towards greater sustainability, we will continue to invest in Albertans to ensure that everybody wants to work as the necessary tools that are needed to get a job so that our economy can can adapt, it can grow, it can compete on a global stage. And in particular, we know that competition for talent, for for tech companies, is fierce, and that's not just national that's also at a global level, and it's important that we take innovative steps to ensure that Alberta comes out on top by by bringing in fresh skills, fresh ideas, fresh perspectives, to our province, and that's where our newest immigration initiative comes into play.

So going back to talk about what I talked about at the beginning, the accelerated tech pathway, which we announced that MobSquad's Calgary offices as as part of the Alberta provincial Immigration Nominee Program. This this pathway, which is going to be within our



Express Entry stream in our nomination program, but this accelerated tech pathway will strengthen Alberta's workforce by providing a fast track to permanent residents, for highly skilled tech professionals who want to live and work in Alberta. Now under the pathway tech professionals from across Canada and overseas can receive their Alberta nomination in as little as two weeks if they have a job offer in an in-demand tech industry occupation. So along with priority application processing, tech professionals will also receive a letter of support from the Government of Alberta if they require a work permit. And employers also save on the cost of requiring a Labor Market Impact Assessment, the LMIs, reducing the costs of hiring global talent and that this, this new pathway was developed, quite frankly, in collaboration with our tech sector to ensure that it need, meets the needs of the workforce, meets the needs of our employers. It was, it was actually by meeting with folks like those at MobSquad to be able to help us inform how we could change the criteria or develop the criteria for this new pathway to be responsive to their needs. And in fact, we've already nominated individuals under this new pathway since the the the launch, and we continue to see a lot of buzz and excitement around Alberta's tech community.

I can also talk a little bit about our other pathways. We do offer a number of other immigration pathways that help attract skilled workers to our province. As I said that this new pilot that we announced is a pathway within Express Entry stream. We also have the Alberta opportunity stream, as well as two new immigration pathways that provide permanent residency to recent international graduates in Alberta and outside of Canada who wish to start tech and startup ventures in our province. Now our government also recognizes that one of the biggest challenges facing rural communities is population decline. It's caused a succession crisis when a retiring business owner can't find an interested buyer. So to help address this, we will be announcing the launch of two new immigration streams in the coming days that will help us to attract newcomer professionals and entrepreneurs to Alberta's rural communities. These new streams will help us ensure that the benefits of the entrepreneurial drive and innovation which newcomers can bring are across our province.

However, our you know, once newcomers arrive in our province, we also need to make sure that they have the necessary supports to to succeed, both economically and socially. And so next week, on February 16, we will be hosting the first annual, the inaugural, premier summit on fairness for newcomers. And this is going to bring together stakeholders to look at the current challenges in this area. It's a full day event. It'll include keynote and panel presentations from experts and including Iain Reeve on topics such as foreign qualification recognition, labor mobility, supports for integration and settlement and as well, the importance of immigration to our workforce and to our economy. First hand experiences of newcomers will also be highlighted throughout the day. And going forward, we hope to make the summit an annual event, which will help to provide a pulse check on Alberta's immigration approach. And you know, I'm sure difficult conversations are going to be had on that day, but they're absolutely necessary for us to be able to ensure that our approach, our approach remains informed, it remains adaptive, it's agile, and helps all members of our



society to succeed. So in conclusion, I truly believe that Alberta is set up to become a dominant tech hub in Canada and around the world. Know that Alberta's government will continue to work to ensure that Alberta remains a place where the tech and innovation sector continues to thrive well into the future. And attracting global talent and building a strong permanent workforce will be an important part of the mix that supports sustained, long-term growth for the sector. We already have a strong foundation in our province. Now we have to set our sights on enhancing efforts to seek out and to attract this highly, or the high-quality talent, and to help them make Alberta their choice to live, their choice to come and and to work and play. And so thank you very much, Yilmaz. Back over to you.

Yilmaz Dinc (23:18)

Thanks, Minister Shandro lots done factor, very exciting initiatives seem to be underling in Alberta, and I'm sure we'll get a lot of questions. Next up is, are, if you would love to hear more about most ModSquad's work in the area of tech attraction?

Arif Khimani (23:35)

Absolutely. Thank you, Yilmaz, and thank you Minister Shandro. First, I just want to say I very much resonate with what's been said by both of you. At MobSquad we see much of what's being discussed firsthand. I mean, it's the heart and soul of our business, so we see this every day, and we very much believe in the power of highly skilled global technology talent and how this will provide Canada an advantage in the global landscape. So I'll just give you a little bit about MobSquad, just for some context. So we help solve the technology talent shortage by building teams of technology professionals for our clients, and we really focus on some of the most sought after technology talent in areas that are the hardest to fill, such as data scientists, machine learning engineers, senior software developers, AI and cyber security experts, just generally the areas where, where it's hard to find some of the best talent. We employ all of our technology talent directly, and we aim to provide a work environment that the team loves across Canada. And we're really proud to have been named one of Canada's best workplaces, basically since we started the company, and hope to continue to do so just by creating an environment that people love to be at. Relevant to this discussion, we source most, we source much of our tech talent from outside of Canada, and this includes foreign nationals in the US who may be struggling with US visa issues, such as expiring H-1B visas, but also those from around the world who are just simply the best at what they do in technology. And we help all of our employees get work permits to come to Canada initially, but importantly, we support them and their families to become permanent residents and eventual citizens of Canada. Our goal is to create long term solutions here and create long term employees and people who want to be in Canada for the long haul.

And just stepping back a little bit, broadly speaking, since GDP is capital plus labor, if we attract the best labor to Canada from around the world, this will disproportionately fuel Canada's growth. And if we focus on the tech sector, which is the most widely growing and



hardest to fill sector, that's just going to accelerate that further. And so when you look at programs like the Global Talent Stream, the Atlantic Immigration Program and the recently announced Accelerated Tech Pathway in Alberta that Minister Shandro spoke to this can help us attract the best labor, and we've seen this firsthand when we recruit talent. So our goal is obviously to attract the best talent, and a large part of us being able to attract them is being able to offer that stability and that understanding that not only will they be able to come and work here on a work permit, but there's a very understandable and timely PR process and citizenship process, so that they feel comfort in residing themselves and their families in Canada long term. And I'll just lastly in here, where anyone who's spent any time trying to recruit technology will tell you that it's tough and getting tougher, especially if you're only looking locally. So we think we need to think globally here for the solution, and think about how we can best position Canada, long term, to those around the world as the best destination for people to come, because that's the only way that we think we're going to get out of this technology talent shortage. Now I want to speak for too long at the top, so we'll just open this up for discussion and questions. So, Yilmaz now feel free to kick us off.

Yilmaz Dinc (26:36)

Thanks, Arif, and just another reminder for our audiences to post their questions in the Q and A. And I will set us up with the with the first question, actually, and I will start with Minister Shandro. We have seen, particularly during the pandemic, that more and more workers are not going into offices, but are working remotely. How do you see the increase in remote working affecting the mobility and immigration decisions of tech talent? Do you see it as an opportunity for Alberta, or is that a threat? Does that mean more competition?

Tyler Shandro (27:06)

Well, it definitely means more competition. I mean, we saw in the I think it was 2021, we saw some jurisdictions like Tulsa with really innovative attraction and recruitment initiatives like I think they're paying people, if you're a remote worker, I think they'd pay you \$10,000 to move to Tulsa and just work in Tulsa so they can choose to to live and spend their tax dollars in Tulsa, rather than wherever they were working elsewhere in the world. So, I mean, having worked previously in a tech company, myself, all of our developers, maybe except for Bucha, worked remotely. I mean, most of them were in Canada, but everybody was in a different time zone. Some were all over the world. And so it's not a new challenge, definitely for tech companies. A lot of places have had distributed workforces, but I do think that the pandemic has accelerated a lot of that for not just the tech industry, which had already been adapting to and already living with it, but it's going to now bring what the tech industry has been adapting to bring it to almost every other workforce, including what we've dealt with at the Government of Alberta, having a lot of our employees distributed and working remotely from home. So, it's definitely something I think the tech industry is probably at the forefront of adapting to, though.



Yilmaz Dinc (28:35)

And Arif, like on the same question, I know you also keep a pulse on the US market as well. How do you see remote working changing the landscape, and what are Canada's advantages and disadvantages in that sense?

Arif Khimani (28:49)

Yeah. So, I mean, I think the impacts are multifaceted here. So, I mean, I think some of what Minister Shandro spoke to if people can work from anywhere, there is a risk that some people will just choose to work from wherever they are, or choose tropical destinations or wherever it happens to be to conduct their work, because companies are just more flexible in terms of where people are, which could potentially make it harder to find some people that that want to actually come to Canada. But on the other side of that, and this is something that we've seen a lot, because companies are more willing to work with people from anywhere, when we're building teams of engineers, a lot of our clients who might be San Francisco- or New York-based, who were saying things like, we want our whole team in San Francisco, we're only going to work with people in New York, that has really gone out the window in the last two years. I mean, if anything's improved that people can be working from from anywhere, and that's actually helped us attract clients to our business, which in turn helps us attract clients, or helps us attract talent, because we can then say we're working with some of the some of the greatest companies, that we have more opportunities available for more people, and that actually helps us attract more talent to Canada. And so, in terms of being able to create net new positions and net new role for people in Canada and bring in some of that highly skilled talent, that ability to work from anywhere, has actually grown our business, in some sense, and and can also help others, I think, on in a similar light.

Yilmaz Dinc (30:11)

Absolutely. And I think, you know, tech attraction talent is an important part, but then there's also the retention side of things as well. Canada and Alberta can manage to bring lots of newcomers in tech, but my next question to Mr. Shandro is, how do we ensure that we retain that tech talent in the longer term?

Tyler Shandro (30:36)

Well, I mean for newcomer in general, if somebody is a newcomer to Alberta, part of the the answer is making sure that we do have the community supports, to make sure that newcomers are successful in the community, and that we have the tough conversations that we're going to have, like on on February 16 at the premier Summit. But it's also working with businesses and and making sure the businesses are doing everything that they can, our businesses here in Alberta to make sure that the once they've they've filled a vacancy with a worker, knowing that all over the world, that's a difficult proposition to be doing right now, but, but when they do fill their vacancy, that they're they are retaining their talent and giving us advice If there's you know, ways in which government can support our job creators, in in



in Alberta, to make sure that they are retaining that talent, then it's important for us to listen to those job creators, to see what you know, how we support them.

Yilmaz Dinc (31:38)

Arif anything to add, yeah, yeah.

Arif Khimani (31:42)

But, I mean, it's gonna say this is, this is really important to us. I mean, just because such a number of the people that we bring in our foreign nationals from from all over the world, and we've got employees that are from Brazil, Russia, China, India, Ukraine, you know, they're, they're Egypt, it's all over, and it's really important to us that when people come to Canada, they feel welcome, and they feel like this is their their new home, and a lot of them, it's the first time for them and their family actually stepping foot into Canada. And so, we work really hard with all of our folks to make sure that that experience of them, of them landing and and finding community is dealt with, is handled appropriately. I mean, as some examples, we, you know, we pick our employees up at the airport when they land. We help them get, you know, their banking and everything set up administratively. We help their spouses try and find jobs. We help their kids find the best schools. Like we really want to make sure that this experience is as smooth and as welcoming as it can be. And I think things like the Premier's summit on newcomers are extremely important because it helps us get to those discussions in terms of not just what can we do as a company, but what can we do as a province and as a nation to, you know, further make people feel like this is the place where they want to stay. So, I think there's a retention of people at the company, and that's incumbent on the company to offer competitive, you know, salaries and benefits in a workplace. That's, that's great. But it's also retention in the country that's important to us. If we've done all the work to bring the best people here, we want to, obviously, keep them here.

Yilmaz Dinc (31:42)

Yeah, absolutely. And yeah, you provide a really good overview of, like, what the country needs to and you have a related question, in terms of, as an employer, what are the strategies and actions that you found impactful in attracting and retaining top talent?

Arif Khimani (33:30)

Yeah, I mean, I think the ones that are, that are obvious to most is you got to pay competitive you got to have great benefits, you got to have, you know, a competitive offer that way. I think at this point, that's basically table stakes, like, if you're not coming to the table with that, you're you're you're in trouble. I think it goes; it goes far beyond that in today's world. Or I think that that flexibility of being able to work remotely as well as have an office environment if people so choose to do that, having a welcoming and fun environment for people to work, having a productive place where people can get things done, but also having a culture that encourages people to want to work with you, and being super responsive to people's needs so that they're they're proud to work with you and work



for you. I think those are all kind of things that are that are important for us in terms of what we look for. I mean, we talk to all of our team regularly to try and make sure that we're, we're an employer that people are proud to work for and continuously adjust, especially over the last two years during the pandemic, to make sure that that continues to be the case. And then, I mean, for us, I mean, a big part of this is we want to support people becoming permanent residents and citizens of Canada, and so whatever that takes on our end, in terms of the legal support, the financial support, but also just the having people that they can turn to for questions and making sure that that goes as smoothly as possible. And you know, having these programs available, like the Atlantic Immersion Program and the Accelerated Technology in Alberta, really help us along that path, but we think all of it is kind of encompassed in what. Makes people want to want to work for you in today's environment.

Yilmaz Dinc (35:04)

That's really great to hear that, you know, MobSquad offer offers that support to to your employees in terms of accessing PR and how to navigate as as you know that could be a challenge that that newcomers face. I mean, Mr. Shandro, I wanted to follow up on that. What do you see as employers doing more to be able to attract and retain talent. You have some great initiatives unraveling to access tech talent, what's the role of employers in that?

Tyler Shandro (35:31)

Well, maybe I'll maybe I'll turn it around to maybe a different question. You know? What? What? What can we do as government to to help support employers who need to recruit top talent to their I mean, and if, maybe I, if I can have the leeway to change the question that way, it's about listening, and which I had done since coming to this job in in September. It's about, you know, getting feedback from from companies like MobSquad on and hearing about how, you know, the difficulty of Global Talent Stream was to be able to bring tech talent to Alberta, and how we can make sure that we were, you know, turning our immigration pathway for tech talent in Alberta from from worst to first. What else can we do as government is, you know, making sure that we are having the, you know, the lowest tax, tax regime for for businesses, that we have those standard of living, that that's affordable in Alberta, whether it's it's housing, whether it's other other things in the way of because you know, when you are an employer and you have that proposition to to an employee, they have options throughout the world They can vote with their feet. And if, if you know it's, I think it's incumbent on governments to make sure that we're not getting in the way of recruiting top talent by making sure that the proposition to the employee is lucky, you can come to Alberta. It's affordable. Taxes are low, and so we're not making it more difficult for those employers to have those conversations with their employees.

Yilmaz Dinc (37:22)

Thank you, Minister and Arif. Another question for you is, when we think about tech workers in general? Yes, tech sector needs a lot of tech workers. But other sectors, other employers working in other sectors also need tech workers. What would you be your advice for them to



be able to to to access the tech talent and skills that they need. If you know, if it's sector of hospitality, if it's tourism, or if it's if it's manufacturing.

Arif Khimani (37:53)

Yeah, no, I think you're completely right. I mean, I think the need for technology talent doesn't just live with with tech companies these days, and it doesn't just live with startups and scale ups. It's it's much broader, right? It's government, it's organizations that are much larger. It's multinationals who are growing their tech divisions. It's companies that have had very little to do with tech, who now have massive data science and AI and machine learning teams, because that's just the way the world is going, right? So, I think you're right. I mean, I think a lot of what we talked about earlier applies broadly. So, I mean, I do think fundamentally, we have to look globally for this solution. I think that there, if you're only relying on on what's available locally, it's just going to be difficult, just by the sheer number of people that are required for the positions and the number of people that we that we have, right? And I think we we need to train more locally, retrain people locally, but also look globally for for the solution. And then I think in terms of what's what's attractive, it's very much what what we were discussing before. It's it's about having competitive offers where people want to, want to work for you, but also creating organizations where they feel inspired to do their best work, where they feel like the work that they're doing has meaning and purpose, where they feel like they get some autonomy and control, not only of their work, but of their their calendars and their and their mobility. And I think providing that that type of environment is very well suited to to technology professionals, a lot of which are younger millennials or Gen Z where, where those are just base expectations of what what a job is today. And so, to the extent that companies can offer that, I think that that provides, you know, some level of advantage, and it's something that we we strive to do and to build on the minister's point. It really is about listening, right? Like we think we know what the answers are, but we often find out that there are areas where you know we could do better, or there areas that we're doing great and they love and we didn't even know. So always talking to people formally, informally, anonymously, on the record, to try and get answers to how to improve is just something that's super important. Yeah. And the last thing I'll say is, I think, you know, tech companies and younger companies, startups and skills have some advantage here, because they can move quicker. But to the extent that larger companies, or, you know, some of the things that you mentioned, can create that agility, they'll be they'll be able to also attract some of that, some of this talent.

Yilmaz Dinc (40:19)

Thanks, Arif. The next question is on the role of immigrants in entrepreneurship, and I will pose this to minister Shandro. How do you see newcomers and immigrants in entrepreneurship and business taxation landscape in Alberta? On one hand, you know there is salaried employment, but on the other, immigrants can start their own businesses within tech, outside of tech, and they can also take over businesses of retiring Canadians. So how is, how are those trends unraveling in the Alberta context?



Tyler Shandro (40:50)

Well, we have, we have a succession difficulty right now, in particular in rural Alberta. We see population decline in rural Alberta, we've thankfully been doing some good work with our federal counterparts in being able to make sure that those who are coming through a federal stream are, have the opportunities to go to, sometimes a rural community, and that we are working together and making sure that there are supports in those communities. I think there's been a lot of success in what we've seen in High River, just south of Calgary, and much of that work, I think we're learning from and seeing what else we could do throughout the province. So, so that we are encouraging folks not just to come to Edmonton and Calgary. Calgary actually is sometimes not even for the primary destination, but often as a secondary destination, is one of the top three destinations for newcomer in Canada. So folks may land and choose one other province or other municipality, but there are a lot of folks who are then choosing to come to Calgary, and I think a big part of the challenge for it to be overcome has to be making sure that we are encouraging folks to come and to our real communities as well, and the supporting them when they do make those choices.

Yilmaz Dinc (42:20)

Thank you, Minister. Arif, you have a follow up question based on your previous answer, how do you source data for compensation and benefits as a business to ensure that you are as competitive as desired? And I assume that's referring to also global compensation data?

Arif Khimani (42:40)

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. I mean, that's certainly become a hot topic as wage inflation is pretty high these days, especially in the tech sector. I mean, we, I certainly can't take credit for this. It's the our talent team that that does a lot of that work, but we try and keep up to date on all total compensation packages from a variety of sources, right? So, there are public ones like Glass Door and Indeed and LinkedIn, where you can get an idea of where where salaries are. There's surveys done by the job bank as well. So, there's plenty of places where you can get an idea of where, where compensation packages should be, both in kind of a low, medium or high range. Then they get updated quite frequently. We like to use a variety of sources, some which are self-reported, some which are more aggregated, and try and triangulate from that where we think the right the right answer is. And of course, we aim to be on the top end of those ranges, just because we believe, like I said, that paying competitively is kind of your ticket to enter at this point. So, we try and do it that way, but we also get a lot of feedback from from our team and from from our clients as well, in terms of what that should look like. So, it's kind of a multi-faceted approach that we try and take so that we make sure that we're competitive.

Yilmaz Dinc (43:58)

Thanks Arif, we have another question on attracting tech students to Canada, how to provide them with the best opportunity to retain them through post graduate work permits?



I'm going to adjust it slightly and pose to the Minister Shandro. How do you see the role of international students, both in the tech sector and more broadly, in the Alberta economy, as a future talent pool.

Tyler Shandro (44:22)

Well, there they are an important part of the equation, the important talent pool for us, also of the reasons why we have to continue to look at ways in which the Alberta opportunity stream, for those who are here in Alberta can find pathways to permanent residency when, when they do graduate, making sure that that we are continuing to invest in our post secondaries as well, to make sure that, I think Arif made this point that it's not just about newcomers bringing their skills. Because I think those who are newcomers who bring their skills to Alberta and to Canada will be more successful when we make sure that our communities are also developing those those skills and talents for those who are who are already here in Alberta, so making sure that our post secondaries are continuing to do the good work in building up talent pools as well. But no, I like our international students and those who do come on a student visa to be able to come and learn in Alberta and finding an opportunity, I think it's also, you know, folks who are already here in Canada, sometimes it's a good indication of them being successful in the community, when they've they've already had an opportunity to be here for a period of time on a student visa. So, I think that's a fantastic question, and we look forward to continue to support those students that do, do choose to come to Canada to learn.

Yilmaz Dinc (46:02)

And thanks, minister. And at the Conference Board, we also have a research program that's upcoming to look at the role of international students in the immigration system more broadly, to understand what does you know the international students teams mean for accessing that pool as permanent residents, for future talent and for you know how to improve the the experiences of students finishing their programs in Canada. So, there are different aspects to it and and definitely it's very, very important.

Our next question is on, on source countries, have you seen COVID change, the change the talent pool, or where the tech talent is, is coming from. And during the, you know, in the in the post, post COVID period, do you see any change in source countries that Canada and others will try to attract skilled tech workers from?

Arif Khimani (46:58)

Yeah, so, I mean, as I mentioned earlier, we source, really, all over the world, wherever there are hotbeds of technology, talent, which which spreads, really anywhere that, you know, we use that to help us find, find our talent. And I would say in terms of the impact of COVID, I don't know how much that has impacted where the best talent is. But I do think that more and more individuals in in countries from all over the world are realizing that studying within engineering and software development and those types of careers is



where the best career path possibly is. And it's creating new hotbeds of tech talent that, when we started doing this a few years ago, weren't really on our radar. So I would say, you know, maybe less related to COVID, but more just related to the fact that we're not the only ones that are seeing this. global technology talent shortages as many jobs as we are short here. I mean, the US has north of half a million tech open tech positions right now, people are seeing that, and people are realizing that they're able to, if they're able to get skills in this area, they can, they can help be a part of the solution here. And so, I mean, I'd say that just that's just broadened the places that we look for talent. So where we may have had an initial list, there's now places like Ukraine and like Brazil and like, you know, countries in West Africa where we weren't necessarily initially looking but are now definitely on our radar in terms of places to find some of the best tech talent, because it really is everywhere.

Yilmaz Dinc (48:37)

Thanks. So, if that diversifying talent pool and ability to attract from all across is definitely, very, very important. I want to come back to one point that Minister Shandro you have raised earlier, that there is an upcoming program that will help attract income professionals and entrepreneurs in rural and small communities. And I was wondering if you'd be able to share more details on that, because one of the things at the Conference Board that we are also trying to study is, how do we set immigrants up for success in non-traditional immigration destinations, and how do we drive economic benefits and not just attract newcomers, but also retain them there? So, any insights on the on the upcoming program would be much appreciated,

Tyler Shandro (49:20)

Sure. Well, and I may defer a little bit of this to Deputy Minister, but the Foreign Graduate Startup Visa Stream that we have the so, I mean, like, talk about some of the criteria that we would have then related to that. So, I mean, if you're going to be eligible for this stream, you would need to have completed a degree from an eligible post-secondary institution based outside of Canada in the last 10 years, have a business plan with projected financials. Have a Canadian language benchmark of five, demonstrate the financial means to set up a business and meet a minimum level of investment. That's that's the the foreign graduate startup visa stream for the other streams that we'll be announcing soon. I'm not sure how much I can announce before next week, but Michelle, maybe, if I can impose on you is, maybe, is that sense Williams question that you're answering there, right, or you're asking, right? William, yeah.

Michele Evans (50:27)

Minister, I'll lean in a little bit. And, you know, we are announcing the two new rural streams in the coming weeks. So, there's not a lot of details that we can release at this time, but certainly the key features will be, you know, connections to communities. So, we're looking at at, you know, relatively still a good-sized community that can support all of the the kinds of things that would make, make the newcomers welcome and have the necessary



settlement support. So, we're still looking at sort of communities that are smaller, more rural, but still somewhere in that, you know, 100,000 up less than 100,000 so trying to draw people out into those and really having the good community supports and plans around before we try to attract those, those newcomers to those communities. So, there'll be a component of community involvement and community connection as well, as you know, some of the more standardized pathway requirements that you would expect to see for for any provincial nominee program.

Yilmaz Dinc (51:25)

Thanks, Michelle and thanks Minister Shandro. We look forward to hearing more about the details. Sounds very promising. We are kind of entering the last couple of minutes. So I would like to wrap up by asking you, you know, considering everything that we have discussed around the economic impact of immigration, the importance of tech talent Canada's advantages and things that the country needs to work on to attract global tech talent. What are some of the priorities, both for the federal government, for other provinces, for employers that you would like to highlight as part of your final remarks? So

Tyler Shandro (52:01)

I gotta go to me first?

Yilmaz Dinc (52:03)

Yes, let's start with you.

Tyler Shandro (52:04)

Maybe I'm gonna first before we finish, if I have an opportunity to speak again, because I scroll through the attendees list and I noticed Hamid. Hamid Shaterian was our ITA, when in a previous life, when I was at a tech company. I can't remember if it is Industrial Technology Advisor, but Hamid, who works at National Research Council. And Hamid just to thank you for all your years of helping me through the IRA process and good to see your name on the attendee list. I think priorities for for government and employers is just going to be continuing to do everything that each of us can, to to listen to each other, to work together in the ways that each of us can contribute to making sure that Alberta is and Canada is, because I know many on the line are—oh Nancy's point out Industrial Technology Advisor, I got it right. Thanks Nancy. You know, making sure that the Canada is is the destination for the top tech talent, because we have a shortage of tech talent, I think we also have to make sure that we are and in Budget 22 just a little bit of a spoiler, we're going to have a big part of our budget, which we'll be tabling at the end of the month, is going to be a workforce initiative, and is going to be how we are addressing the differences between our unemployment and underemployment in Alberta, with the vacancies that we see, and working with industries like the tech industry, working with our employers to continue to learn from each other and make sure that we're responsive to their needs and the needs of the workforce, to make sure that we're the destination of choice. So, thank you everyone.



Yilmaz Dinc (53:57)

Thank you, Minister. And Arif, any final remarks on the priorities for the government and employers.

Arif Khimani (54:03)

No, I couldn't agree more. I'm happy to have the minister have the last word on that. I think we're getting the time, but I totally agree with what he said there.

Yilmaz Dinc (54:10)

Thank you. So, I would like to take the opportunity to thank Honorable Minister Tyler Shandro and Arif Khimani from MobSquad once again for their participation. I hope, I would like to take our audience for posing us questions and having stimulating the discussion that we just had. Thank you everyone, and we hope to stay in touch through future events and offer opportunities for collaboration. Thank you.

Tyler Shandro (54:34)

Thanks everyone.

Arif Khimani (54:37)

Thank you.

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