

Labour and Immigration
Written Responses to Questions Raised at the
Standing Committee on Public Accounts
Alberta Hansard (Transcript No. 30-2-10)
July 14, 2020

PA-308

Ms. Renaud:

My questions are about the GBA plus analysis. I really want to get a sense of out of all the programs – and there are so many categories of programs that we've talked about – I'm wondering if you can give me an outline in writing as to how this analysis was used, particularly as it relates to people with disabilities. What were the benchmarks? What was the progress? What were the targets?

Answer:

- Labour and Immigration's employment and training programs are federally funded and aligned with federal program policy.
- The department collects information regarding participation in employment and training programs by underrepresented groups. This includes data on the participation of all individuals including those who self-identify as having a disability, Indigenous peoples, newcomers and those living outside major urban centres.
- Collecting this information has allowed the department to identify community specific programming needs and opportunities to better meet the needs of all Albertans.

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Ms. Renaud:

Was there any consultation with established ABCs that were set up to provide this kind of advice like, say, the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities?

Answer:

- Labour and Immigration's employment and training programs are federally funded and align with federal program policy.
- We emphasize staff participation in GBA+ and Indigenous Introductory training in an effort to eliminate unconscious bias in the delivery of employment and training programming.
- The department also works with third party training providers to ensure that programs are meeting the needs of all Albertans.

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Ms. Renaud:

I wanted to know if there was any work or any measurement that this department has done to look at poverty reduction in terms of, let's say, using the GBA plus tool. For example, women earning 80 cents on the dollar. I'm wondering if there are any metrics in place to show progress.

Answer:

- Labour and Immigration helps connect Albertans to jobs through training and employment programs delivered by third party training providers. Some programs aim to support women, including through opportunities to take classes tailored to individual career goals or job matching/work experience opportunities. There is also special programming for professional newcomers, helping them to reach their employment goals.
- In 2019, the labour force participation rate of women aged 15 and over in Alberta was 65.7 per cent. (2018 – 66.1 per cent)
- 2018/2019 statistics indicate 41 per cent of the Albertans participating in employment and training programs were women.

Examples:

- Labour and Immigration provided a \$236,000 Labour Market Partnerships grant to Elevate Aviation LTD for the Aviation Career Exploration Workshops project. This project addressed several challenges in the aviation industry including gender diversity, Indigenous employment needs and workforce shortages. Elevate Aviation coordinated 16 industry-facilitated workshops and a two-day Indigenous Professional Development session. Six career exploration streams highlighted airport maintenance, airport operations, air traffic services, flight education, technology and military careers. To increase participation of underrepresented groups in aviation, workshops were specifically marketed to women, Indigenous people and youth aged 15 to 24.
- Women in Trades programs in Calgary, Red Deer and Medicine Hat provide an introduction to trades with an outcome of full time employment in the sector. This program includes training in essential and employability skills with an introduction to wood trades, pipe trades and heavy equipment technician.
- Calgary Women's Immigrant Association offers an Immigrant Bridging program targeted to professional immigrant women with post-secondary education, helping them connect to jobs in administration, sales and marketing, as well as community social services occupations.
- In March 2017, Labour and Immigration awarded a \$2.3 million grant to the Women Building Futures Society, which included \$2 million from Labour and Immigration and \$300,000 from Advanced Education for the 2017 to 2020 period. As a result of investments in Women Building Futures, 1,800 women accessed training in the trades. 30 per cent of them were Indigenous.

- The Labour Market Partnerships Program included \$72,500 in funding for three regional grants that included workshops to attract and retain women in the technology sector and build skills within the sector.

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Mr. Dach:

I'm wondering with respect to temporary foreign workers, protection of workers whether or not in the agricultural sector in particular, on-farm or food processing distribution workers, who's actually responsible for the standards for employment there? Is it the federal government and provincial government? Who actually reigns supreme for responsibility to enforce these regulations with respect to wages, overtime, sick time off, occupational health and safety, housing issues, et cetera? I wanted to know if federal-provincial jurisdictional issues have impacted enforcement of these regulations.

Answer:

- The provincial government is responsible for workplace legislation, including occupational health and safety, labour relations and employment standards (minimum wage, overtime, etc.) for workers, including temporary foreign workers, in the agricultural sector and those employed in food processing distribution. Where employees work in federally regulated industries (i.e., banking, airlines, cross-provincial trucking, grain elevators and seed mills), federal labour standards apply.

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Ms. Gray

On page 17 you talk about employment standards and that the standards apply to approximately 85 per cent of employment relationships in Alberta. If you wouldn't mind providing the committee with the 15 per cent to whom the code doesn't apply.

Answer

- In Alberta, the *Employment Standards Code* applies to all employers and employees, including the Crown in right of Alberta and its employees, with a few exceptions.
 - The exceptions include employees who are employed in federally regulated industries (i.e., telecommunications, financial institutions (banks), inter-provincial trucking, railroads, etc.), employees who are members of a municipal police service appointed under the *Police Act*, and employees and employers covered under other legislation (i.e., some academic staff, physicians).

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Ms. Gray

As well, the report talks about the employer liaison service. It stated that the pilot project was set to expire in March of this year. Did that pilot project end? If not, have

there been any modifications or changes?

Answer

- The Employer Liaison Service has been extended for one year to March 31, 2021 based on Federal Government direction. The program is better aligned with internal processes and provides a more direct line from employers using the service to the staff member who support them.

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Ms. Gray

Finally, pages 59 and 60 report the labour participation rates throughout the province. This includes those looking for work. Overall labour participation in Alberta increased every year 2014 through to 2018 and that targeted strategies to increase that participation of underrepresented groups such as Aboriginal people and persons with disabilities we know contribute to positive growth in the labour force. Can you speak to the strategies to target some of these groups that the ministry undertook in 2018/2019? Were there any that were in the process of being delivered?

Answer

- Throughout 2018/2019, more than 8,100 Albertans received services through government-funded training programs, which include Training for Work and Aboriginal (ATEP) and First Nations Training to Employment Programs (FNTEP). These programs assist Albertans to obtain new skills and connect to jobs, as well as create their own employment opportunities through self-employment training.
 - A total of 180 training programs, employment services and Indigenous programs and services served Albertans across the province in 2018/2019. While most of these services support all eligible unemployed Albertans, some are targeted to older workers, new Canadians and skilled professionals.
 - In partnership with Indigenous communities, Labour and Immigration delivers two skill-training programs, Aboriginal Training to Employment (ATEP) and First Nations Training to Employment (FNTEP). ATEP and FNTEP are partnerships designed to create training and work experience projects that lead to employment. These employment and training opportunities support Indigenous persons who are unemployed or marginally employed gain the necessary skills, training and experience to be successful in the workplace and maintain long-term employment.
 - In 2018/2019, 75 projects were delivered to 4,180 participants. Programs varied in their life cycle during the fiscal year. Some were just starting, some were mid-program and others were in the follow up period.
 - The number of Employment Insurance participants involved in programs and services continues to increase and was up 10 per cent from 2017/2018.

Examples of targeted activities/strategies to increase labour force participation of under-represented groups include:

- procured new services to target foreign skilled professionals in the Technology, Supply Chain and Administration/Social Services sectors;
- targeted employment services to help older workers, new Canadians and unemployed engineers, geologists and other professions impacted by the decline in the resource sector pivot their skills into new occupations/sectors; and
- Indigenous training examples include pipeline labourer, pre-trades and construction, solar panel installation, office administration, tourism and hospitality, security guard and cooking.
- Labour Market Partnership (LMP) program grants enhance workplace development and labour market adjustment strategies through community partnerships. LMPs are designed to identify, develop and support projects with industry, organizations and community groups with common labour market needs.
 - For example, in 2018/2019, an LMP grant supported the Red Deer Local Immigrant Partnership in the delivery of a Workplace Inclusion Charter Forum. The forum focused on building employer capacity around creating and fostering inclusive and diverse workplaces, increasing recruitment and retention of under-represented groups.
 - Sixteen Indigenous focused LMP projects included career fairs, workplace exposure, workshops and labour force studies.

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Mr. Reid

Just a couple of questions related to the coal workforce transition program for you. Thank you for the numbers in terms of those that participated in the bridge to employment program. Wondering how many of those folks were able to actually find gainful employment in their community of origin and not having to relocate and then the overall success of those employees, again, finding gainful employment after the transition.

Finally, can the department tell us what kind of impact the coal transition has had on the local labour market in those communities?

Answer

- Very few workers have applied for the Relocation Assistance, which may provide some indication that workers are finding other employment in their local labour market.
- Workers are supported through Workforce Adjustment Committees that organize and deliver resource fairs and job fairs to ensure they are aware of all the supports available to them, including employment opportunities. Workers report their employment status through the duration of the benefit period, but at this time there is no mechanism in place to follow up with them over the long-term.

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Mr. Rowswell

On page 59 of the annual report there's a table of information stating the labour force participation rate for all Albertans, aboriginal Albertans, immigrant population, and Alberta's youth. Given that Albertans are working longer than the traditional age of retirement, can the department tell us if they track labour participation for Albertans over the age of 64?

Answer

- Using information from Statistics Canada, the department tracks participation rates for Albertans 65 years and older who are in the workforce or looking to find employment.

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Mr. Rowswell

Page 60 states that Albertans have the highest labour participation rate in the country. Can the department explain why Albertans are the most likely people in the country to participate in the labour force?

Answer

- Alberta generally has a younger population than the rest of Canada and this forms the core of the provincial working age population, leading to a higher participation in the workforce.
 - In 2019, Alberta had the lowest the median age among all provinces at 37.1 years. The national average was 40.8 years.
- Alberta still has the highest average weekly earnings, which tend to draw more people into the workforce.
 - In 2019, average weekly earnings in Alberta were \$1,164.70, the highest among all provinces. The Canadian average was \$1,028.50.

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Mr. Rowswell

Page 60 also states that Alberta's off-reserve aboriginal population participation in the labour force is fourth behind the three Atlantic provinces. Can the department explain why Alberta's labour force participation is near the top in Canada for our off-reserve aboriginal population?

Answer

- Alberta has a younger Indigenous population that forms the core of the working age population, and this leads to a higher participation in the workforce.
- Indigenous people living off-reserve have also benefited with the highest average weekly earnings and wages in Canada. Higher earnings tend to draw more people into the workforce.

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Mr. Rowswell

Can the department also elaborate on the gap between the aboriginal participation rate and Albertans in general and what programs are in place to address the gap? For any programs in place to help our aboriginal population, how does the department measure its effectiveness?

Answer

- In 2016, the average employment income of Alberta's First Nations population working full-time was \$17,000 less than the non-Indigenous population.
- A number of factors contribute to the gaps in labour participation rates, some of these include:
 - historical factors related to colonialism and residential schools that have translated into lower educational attainments and other mental health issues;
 - living in more remote locations limits job opportunities and access to higher education;
 - access to transportation compounds the problem of limited job opportunities in remote areas. Many Indigenous people are not able to afford vehicles and do not have drivers licenses;
 - access to affordable childcare are barriers to employment for many women and
 - workplace discrimination causes many Indigenous people to leave employment.
- The First Nation Training to Employment Program and Aboriginal Training to Employment Program help participants to learn workplace essential skills, some occupational related skills, obtain safety tickets, hands-on experience including work experience, assistance with resume writing and job search.
 - Programs are designed with input from industry and employers to ensure that participants are receiving the training and skills required to obtain full time, ongoing employment.
 - Effectiveness is measured by how many participants obtain full-time employment and maintain it for 90 days.
 - Effectiveness can also be measured by asking participants about their experience, evaluating and monitoring the program throughout the training and at the end.
- Labour and Immigration works with grant applicants to build capacity as all training programs are led by Indigenous organizations and First Nation communities.
 - Depending on the capacity of the organization, Indigenous Partnership Coordinators can be brought on at the initial development of the program or later on in the process. Some may need assistance with connecting to industry/employers and others already have well developed relationships and networks of employers.
- A holistic approach is required to address barriers related to Indigenous labour participation. This includes working with cross-ministry partners such as Indigenous Relations, Education, Children Services and Community and Social

Services. Gaps have been recognized that need to be addressed and work is in progress to address issues such as, transition supports, including affordable housing, to assist with moving into an urban area from the remotely located First Nation communities.

- In 2019, Alberta's participation rate of 71.5 per cent was 2.5 percentage points higher than the indigenous participation rate of 68.8 per cent.
- Although the indigenous participation rate remains lower than the Alberta participation rate, there, has been improvements over the last two years with an increase. The gap between the overall Alberta participation rate and the Indigenous rate has decreased 2.6 percentage points from 2018. (5.1 percentage point gap in 2018 and 3.6 percentage point gap in 2017).

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Ms. Rosin

Given the attractiveness of Alberta to immigrants with investable capital can the department tell us what federal or provincial programs were in place during 2018/2019 to help immigrant entrepreneurs come to Alberta?

Further, can you please tell us which organizations in Alberta were authorized to process immigrants applying under this category and if there are any programs available other than the international start-up visa program, and what restrictions are placed on them with respect to qualified industries or sectors?

Answer

- The only provincial immigration program is the Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program (AINP). In 2018/2019, AINP had one entrepreneur stream, the Self-Employed Farmer Stream, which helped individuals looking to operate a new primary farming business or an existing farm with a minimum investment of \$500,000.
- Federally, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) administers the Start-up Visa Program. Under the Start-up Visa program, individuals require letters of support from designated Venture Capital Firms (\$200,000 investment), Angel Investor Groups (\$75,000 investment) or Business Incubators in Canada. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) does not have a restriction on industries or sectors.
- Only IRCC can assess and process applications for permanent residency in Canada. Only Provincial Nominee Programs can assess and process application for provincial nominations to support applications for permanent residency.