

THE BEST PLACE ON EARTH >>
FOR IMMIGRANTS



**BRITISH
COLUMBIA**

The Best Place on Earth



WE WANT YOUR INPUT



We want to continue to be one of the most culturally diverse places in Canada and the world, and immigrants are making it happen.

More immigrants and new Canadians are choosing to call B.C. home, per capita, than any other province. Each year, more

than 40,000 immigrants move to B.C., which receives newcomers from 180 countries around the world.

WelcomeBC is our commitment to help immigrants settle and adapt to life in their new home communities here in British Columbia. It's an important part of the welcoming environment B.C. offers people from virtually every cultural, religious and linguistic community on Earth. WelcomeBC represents a one-stop approach to providing information for newcomers on everything from English language courses to employment, health, education and recreation services.

We all benefit from the social, economic and cultural advantages immigration brings to this province. Through WelcomeBC, the Province will create new programs and expand the services immigrants have told us they need to make a new life for themselves in our communities.

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Gordon Campbell". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

*Honourable Gordon Campbell
Premier of British Columbia*



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CREATING A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

More and more Canadian immigrants are choosing to call B.C. home. In fact, our province is Canada's most popular destination, per capita, for new immigrants. We are making British Columbia more attractive to the more than 40,000 newcomers who arrive every year, by:

- » Successfully negotiating an additional \$71.5 million over two years in federal funding provided by Citizenship and Immigration Canada for services to B.C.'s growing immigrant population.
- » Investing \$43 million of the increased funding over two years in WelcomeBC, a new initiative that will enable immigrants to access existing and expanded services under one umbrella, to help them better adapt to life in their new communities.
- » Continuing to develop new programs, using the increased federal funding.
- » Building understanding and trust with new taxpayers, by translating B.C.'s innovative Taxpayer Fairness and Service Code into eight languages.
- » Helping newcomers to immigrate, settle and enjoy British Columbia's diversity through resources like an immigration website and DVD.

HELPING IMMIGRANTS APPLY THEIR SKILLS

Retirement pressures and a growing economy mean over one million job openings are projected in B.C. over the next 12 years. However, only 650,000 young people are in our school system.



With future skilled worker shortages in virtually all job categories, the Province is working to help immigrants build their English language skills and secure jobs that fully employ their abilities. Initiatives and investments through WelcomeBC over the next two years include:

- » \$9 million to reduce wait lists for beginner English language services for adults (ELSA).
- » \$12 million to expand intermediate (level 4 and 5) ELSA classes.
- » Another \$2 million to expand intermediate ELSA courses for immigrants entering or in the labour market outside the Lower Mainland.

Other, established programs to help immigrants in the workforce include:

- » Skills Connect, which has assisted 1,200 newcomers since July 2006 to secure jobs that fully utilize their skills, knowledge and experience. This \$9.9-million program will be expanded this fall to include health-sector occupations.
- » Canada's second largest Provincial Nominee Program, which has invited 3,543 skilled and business immigrants, plus their dependents, to B.C. over the past five years.

OPENING DOORS TO ENTREPRENEURS, SKILLED WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

B.C. is a land of opportunity for immigrant business people, skilled workers and their family members alike. In 2006, our province opened its doors:



- » Recruiting 16,729 immigrants in the skilled worker class – almost 40% of all immigrants.
- » Attracting 5,570 business class immigrants – the highest share of business class arrivals in Canada.
- » Welcoming family members as 32% of our newcomers – a 10-year high.

In addition, the Province is now:

- » Expanding immigrant information and integration services, with an investment of \$11 million over two years for settlement workers to assist new students in schools in the Lower Mainland, Fraser Valley and Greater Victoria.
- » Committing \$3.6 million over two years for anti-racism initiatives that assist communities to be more welcoming and inclusive.
- » Investing \$1.6 million to improve information and outreach services for immigrants facing multiple barriers, including refugees.
- » Providing \$8 million through WelcomeBC to increase information and settlement services related to health care access, employment, and recreation, to help immigrants adjust to living in British Columbia.
- » Investing \$220,000 over two years to assist regions in attracting, recruiting, and retaining workers, immigrants, students and families, to meet their labour market needs and be sustainable.



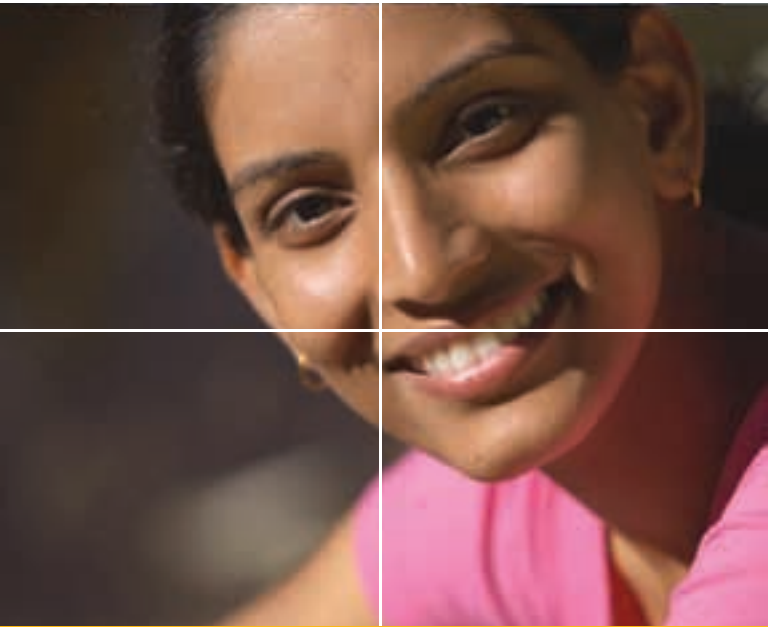
- » Creating a \$2.1-million (over two years) community bridging service or buddy program that matches immigrant and refugee youth, adults, and families, with volunteers from host communities. The buddy program helps newcomers to better understand Canadian life and culture, develop friendships and learn how to access community services.

COMPETING TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN SKILLED IMMIGRANTS

Some of the reasons B.C. remains a destination of choice for business and skilled immigrants include:

- » One of Canada's fastest-growing economies, which has created over 371,000 new jobs since 2001, and some of the lowest provincial personal income taxes in the country.
- » Exceptional educational opportunities, with the highest K-12 funding in B.C. history and 25,000 post-secondary spaces being added by 2010 – the largest expansion of post-secondary education in 40 years.
- » Opportunities to connect and grow with established, vibrant, multicultural communities. More than one-quarter of British Columbians and over one-third of Vancouver residents are foreign-born.
- » Formal efforts to strengthen B.C.'s social and economic ties with Asia-Pacific partners, through comprehensive business promotion efforts and new investments in transportation infrastructure.





WelcomeBC has a twofold purpose: to assist immigrants in accessing a wide variety of settlement and integration services, and to ensure that B.C. communities are as welcoming as possible for newcomers. All British Columbians benefit when immigrants can participate fully in local economies and community life.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

WelcomeBC www.ag.gov.bc.ca/immigration

Skills Connect

www.ecdev.gov.bc.ca/ProgramsAndServices/IQU/SkillsConnect/

Provincial Nominee Program

www.ecdev.gov.bc.ca/ProgramsAndServices/PNP/

RELATED MINISTRIES

Ministry of Economic Development

www.gov.bc.ca/ecdev

Ministry of Advanced Education

www.gov.bc.ca/aved

Ministry of Education www.gov.bc.ca/bced

USEFUL CONTACTS AND LINKS

Service BC

(For information on any provincial government service or program)

Monday to Friday: 7:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Victoria: 250 387-6121

Vancouver: 604 660-2421

Toll-free provincewide: 1 800 663-7867

Telephone device for the deaf (TDD)

In Vancouver: 604 775-0303

Elsewhere in B.C.: 1 800 661-8773

www.servicebc.gov.bc.ca

ReadNow BC

www.bced.gov.bc.ca/literacy/readnowbc/

Work BC www.workbc.ca

Citizenship and Immigration Canada

www.cic.gc.ca

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