

What Employers in Prince George Should Know About Recruiting High-Demand Occupations and Workforce Attraction



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Hiring is Becoming More Challenging

Prince George is one of Canada's fastest growing mid-sized economies, and it is a central service and supply hub to a northern region that is undergoing sizable expansions in activities like oil & gas and mining.

Since 2011, demands for skilled trades and professionals have increased dramatically throughout the region. Prince George's unemployment rate is at a 20-year low of 5.1%, and local employers are finding it more difficult to recruit. As an employer, you may need to seriously consider looking outside of Prince George for hiring and recruitment.

The following are the challenges you may need to overcome when hiring externally:

- **Lack of Knowledge:** Candidates from other cities (particularly outside of BC) will often not know much about Prince George, including its low cost of living and housing, size, and wide range of local amenities.
- **Perceptions:** The Perceptions of Prince George Survey indicates that Canadians often perceive the city to be small, high in crime, and lacking in job opportunities.
- **Compensation:** Expect a higher level of challenge for recruiting skilled trades, as the extraction industries in Northern BC and Northern Alberta are likely attracting from the same talent pools as your company is, and are generally able to offer high levels of compensation.

Occupations Most Difficult to Hire Locally

The list below provides the occupations that Prince George employers report as being the most difficult to hire for in 2014 (they are not in order of priority).

1. Civil, Mechanical, and Electrical Engineers
2. Specialist Physicians
3. University Professors and Lecturers
4. Chartered Accountants
5. Heavy-Duty Equipment Mechanics
6. Millwrights
7. Truck Drivers
8. Power Engineers
9. Welders
10. Instrumentation Technicians

Recommendations for External Hiring

If you are interested in hiring professionals and skilled trades from outside of Prince George, the following recommendations can be used to guide your recruitment efforts:

1. Focus on Major Urban Centers and Pursue Immigrant Talent

Employers and associations outside of Prince George consistently indicate that recruitment of skilled employees is far more likely to be effective in big cities rather than in rural communities. Our research indicates that the cities in the list below are the best recruiting theatres for Prince George employers based on their unemployment, migration patterns and representation of high-demand occupations.

Top Cities for Recruiting Employees

1. Toronto, Ontario
2. Vancouver, British Columbia
3. Montréal, Quebec
4. London, Ontario
5. Windsor, Ontario
6. Calgary, Alberta
7. Abbotsford-Mission, British Columbia
8. Edmonton, Alberta
9. Victoria, British Columbia
10. Kamloops, British Columbia

Pursue Immigrant Talent

The majority of highly skilled immigrants arrive to Canada's largest cities. Employers who develop immigrant-friendly attraction and recruitment practices will lead the way in successful hiring. More information is available at the Immigrant Employment Council of BC <http://www.iecbc.ca/> and the Immigration and Multicultural Services Society <http://www.imss.ca/>

2. Turn Your Employees into Recruiters

A best practice among employers recruiting from other cities is to offer bonuses to employees who provide "leads" that result in the successful on-boarding of a candidate. It is common for employers to give rewards of \$1,000 to \$4,000 for occupations like professional engineers and skilled trades.

3. Help Your Candidates' Spouses Get Hired

Prince George employers indicate that external candidates and new hires are often concerned about suitable employment for their spouses.

As an employer, consider augmenting your external hiring packages to provide spousal job placement assistance, or at least information. This could take the form of partnering with other organizations or agencies to share resumes, or to offer resources for spousal career development.

4. Use career fairs to your advantage

Employers in high-growth labour markets outside of Prince George put a high priority on attending major career expos and campus recruiting events, and sometimes even organize their own career fairs in cities where they want to recruit.

Here are Some Major Career Fairs to Consider

The National Job Fair and Training Expo Fall/Spring (http://www.thenationaljobfair.com/)	Toronto, ON
BC Career, Education, and Recruitment Fair May 2015 (http://theeventpros.ca/)	Vancouver, BC
Aerosalon Career Fair October 2014 (www.ecarrieres.com/en/fair/aerosalon)	Montréal, QC
Montréal Job and Training Fair May 2014 (http://www.emploifformation.com/)	Montréal, QC
Global Energy Career Expo June 2014 (http://globalenergycareerexpo.com/)	Calgary, AB

5. Offer and Advertise Work/Life Balance

If you cannot compete with the compensation packages offered by the oil & gas industry, consider offering preferable working arrangements. Employers in high-demand regions have overcome compensation gaps by offering flexible working hours, 4-day work weeks, and other work/life balance programs that appeal to skilled job seekers. Money is undoubtedly an important motivator, but employers need to pay more attention to these other highly important and often overlooked features.

6. Sell Prince George's Affordable Housing

While it may be difficult to offer compensation competitive with employers in cities like Calgary, Edmonton, and Grande Prairie, you have housing prices on your side. The 2013 end-of-year median price for a single-detached home in Prince George was just over \$260,000. The full report provides a wider comparison, but here are some notable mentions:

Median Prices for Single-Detached Homes (Select Cities)			
Vancouver, BC	\$915,000	Calgary, AB	\$440,000
Toronto, ON	\$575,000	Kamloops, BC	\$424,900
Victoria, BC	\$523,450	Edmonton, AB	\$374,400

7. Get to the Campuses

Organizations interviewed outside of Prince George strongly recommended campus recruiting, co-op programs, and job placements. While there is an undeniable need for experienced employees in Prince George, many occupations – particularly in skilled trades – are in shortage across Canada.

To carry out campus attraction, first identify which city or cities you want to target, identify the post secondary institutions that train the occupation of interest, and connect with their co-op programs, job placement programs, and online job boards. This is widely being practiced by employers in high-demand regions.

8. Take Advantage of Online Media

Interviews with Prince George employers reveal that many of them are not taking advantage of social media as a standard recruitment tool. This is the most cost effective way to give a national reach to your attraction and hiring activities, and, if done right, it can provide precision targeting for the occupations you are trying to acquire.

Tips for Online Recruiting

Social Media	Your company should have Facebook and LinkedIn pages, and they should be kept up-to-date with current job vacancies as they become available.
Targeted Recruiting	If you are trying to recruit a specific occupation, like a power engineer, search online for sector councils, professional boards, and unions that represent this occupation. If they have job boards or LinkedIn pages, make sure you post your job(s) on these pages and link to them.
Major Job Boards	Your jobs should be posted on the sites that most frequently appear in search engines: Service Canada Job Bank, WorkBC, Indeed.ca, Workopolis.com, and Monster.ca.

9. Inform Candidates About Prince George

The most important lesson from our survey is that Canadians want to live in British Columbia, but that they are generally unfamiliar with Prince George and often have negative perceptions about the city.

When you are recruiting externally, your candidates are not just thinking about whether they want to work for you; they are also thinking about whether they want to live in Prince George. In your hiring communications (job postings, interviews, career fairs, etc.), you should consider advertising the positive aspects of living in Prince George.

10. Utilize Initiatives Prince George's Recruitment Tools

Initiatives Prince George has a number of recruitment tools available for employers, including; marketing information about Prince George that can be included in recruitment packages and a dedicated web site that is designed to link career opportunities with information about why Prince George is a great place to live. IPG also attends job fairs across the country and also internationally and can support your company at these fairs. For more information please contact IPG at info@initiativespg.com