

Don Lenihan examines the current problem of foreign qualification recognition in Canada in this paper. Considering that much of Canada's workforce will be replaced by immigrants in the future, he recommends that a pan-Canadian approach is needed to determine priorities for recognizing foreign credentials. The author suggests that the most important aspect of a pan-Canadian approach to foreign qualification recognition is collaboration between governments.

- With an aging population, Canada is turning to immigration to fill gaps in the workforce which means more emphasis will be placed on skilled workers, yet in 2008, 41.9 percent of new immigrants, or 103,736 people, identified themselves as skilled workers and only 40 percent worked at the same jobs they had before they came to Canada
- A pan-Canadian framework has been agreed upon which dictates how the country will undertake a restructuring of foreign qualification recognition
- Such a restructuring calls for a fundamental change in how governments manage the labour market which binds the provincial and territorial governments to ongoing collaboration
- The pan-Canadian framework has roots in the changes made to labour mobility across the country throughout the last decade in which legislation was introduced that allowed for credentials recognized in one province or territory to be recognized across the country
- The author suggests three key aspects in order for a reorganization of how foreign qualification recognition will work: the right model, the right kind of leadership, and a willingness to build on past successes
- The pan-Canadian approach includes a commitment by governments to align their systems with a shared vision, guiding principles, and desired outcomes and focuses on fairness, transparency, timeliness, and consistency
- These four principles should create a collaborative approach among different governments to managing the labour market
- Federal and provincial governments must collaborate in order to create standards and methods of certification across the country
- Drawing on the success of labour mobility, the author suggests there are five steps for moving forward:
  1. Establish focus on competencies rather than requirements
  2. Engage officials and stakeholders and maintain communication
  3. Allow pan-Canadian standards to emerge from the bottom-up through discussions, research, practical experience, and best practises across the country rather than from the top-down from officials in Ottawa
  4. Leverage the knowledge and relationships created from the Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT) as many officials who worked on the AIT are now working on foreign qualification recognition
  5. Let the federal government act as a facilitator by contributing funding, expertise, administrative support, and research and policy development