Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program Environmental Scan
Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA)

Introduction

AAISA undertook an environmental scan to examine the impact of federal policy changes on the Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program (AINP) and the flow of nominees into the Alberta labour market and communities.

The AINP is an intergovernmental strategy to address province-specific labour needs. The AINP has taken on a broad scope of helping to achieve provincial economic and labour market needs. It is mainly low/semi-skilled TFWs who use the program to achieve residency, as the federal immigration streams tend to have higher requirements.

The program itself has been criticized for creating a vulnerable environment for TFWs in addition to its limited capacity to process and accept applications in a timely manner.

Methodology

The results of this environmental scan are based on a mixed-methods approach which involved a comprehensive literature review, key informant interviews, and an analysis of publicly available quantitative data. The findings of this project provide an initial evaluation and understanding of the program that can ultimately be scaled to a larger regional study.

Key Learnings

Federal and Provincial Immigration Goals

The report finds that immigrant retention is best achieved through community and family support. Although there were moves away from this with the closing of the family stream of the AINP in 2013, the new Liberal government has highlighted family reunification as a key immigration goal.
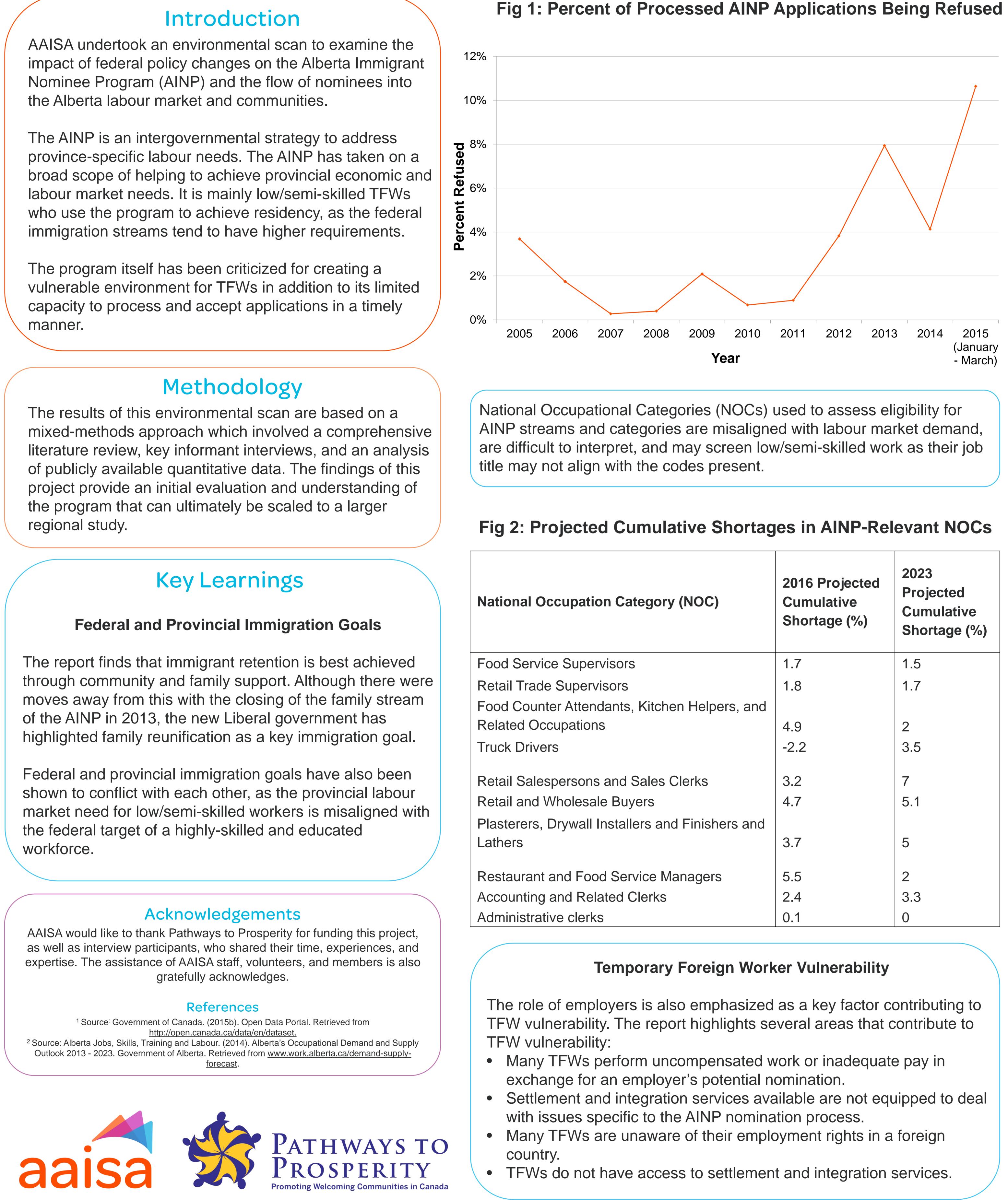
Federal and provincial immigration goals have also been shown to conflict with each other, as the provincial labour market need for low/semi-skilled workers is misaligned with the federal target of a highly-skilled and educated workforce.

Acknowledgements

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References

[1] Source: Government of Canada. (2015b). Open Data Portal. Retrieved from http://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset.
[2] Source: Alberta Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour. (2014). Alberta's Occupational Demand and Supply Outlook 2013 - 2023. Government of Alberta. Retrieved from www.work.alberta.ca/demand-supply-forecast.

Fig 1: Percent of Processed AINP Applications Being Refused

National Occupational Categories (NOCs) used to assess eligibility for AINP streams and categories are misaligned with labour market demand, are difficult to interpret, and may screen low/semi-skilled work as their job title may not align with the codes present.

Fig 2: Projected Cumulative Shortages in AINP-Relevant NOCs

National Occupation Category (NOC)	2016 Projected Cumulative Shortage (%)	2023 Projected Cumulative Shortage (%)
Food Service Supervisors	1.7	1.5
Retail Trade Supervisors	1.8	1.7
Food Counter Attendants, Kitchen Helpers, and Related Occupations	4.9	2
Truck Drivers	-2.2	3.5
Retail Salespersons and Sales Clerks	3.2	7
Retail and Wholesale Buyers	4.7	5.1
Plasterers, Drywall Installers and Finishers and Lathers	3.7	5
Restaurant and Food Service Managers	5.5	2
Accounting and Related Clerks	2.4	3.3
Administrative clerks	0.1	0

Temporary Foreign Worker Vulnerability

The role of employers is also emphasized as a key factor contributing to TFW vulnerability. The report highlights several areas that contribute to TFW vulnerability:
- Many TFWs perform uncompensated work or inadequate pay in exchange for an employer's potential nomination.
- Settlement and integration services available are not equipped to deal with issues specific to the AINP nomination process.
- Many TFWs are unaware of their employment rights in a foreign country.
- TFWs do not have access to settlement and integration services.

Policy Developments, Adaptations, and Alignment

With the election of both a new federal government (Liberal) and provincial government (New Democratic Party) in October and April 2015 respectively, there has been a change in policy alignment.There are three main areas in which both the NDP and the Liberals have emphasized as priorities:

- **Family reunification**: placing a greater priority on reunifying families.
- **Reducing wait times**: an increase in resources to reduce backlogs. The Liberal government has doubled the budget for family class applications to reduce these wait times.
- **Refugees**: unilateral agreement on bringing more refugees to Canada, in addition to restoring healthcare for refugees whose decision is still pending.

Greater alignment is noted in areas such as the provincial government's call for a review of the TFWP, which corresponded with the federal government opening a review under the HUMA committee in 2016.

Recommendations

The report provides recommendations that seek to address the key challenges identified during the environmental scan in the areas of intergovernmental relations, program design, labour market assessment, and evaluation.

1. Organize multi-tiered immigration in a way that is cohesive, collaborative, and has clearly defined target groups/goals for each level of government. Adequate resources and support should be provided to meet those goals.
2. Increase the AINP quota and match with a more robust, objective, and long-term labour market assessments to better meet province-specific labour market needs.
3. Reduce the structural complexity of the AINP so it is more inclusive, consistent, and easy to access.
4. Provide greater accountability and oversight mechanisms for labour abuse among AINP nominees in the program queue.

Further study

While this project has addressed various gaps in knowledge and created a basis for a deeper understanding of federal policy changes on the AINP, it is clear that it has a limited scope due to sample sizes and a provincial focus centred on Alberta. It is imperative that a larger, cross-regional and multi-stakeholder project should be conducted to understand and evaluate the impact of policy changes on other provincial nominee programs.

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