

ALBERTA IMMIGRANT NOMINEE PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA)

A Pathways to
Prosperity Project

January 2017

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AAISA

The Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA) is a regionally and nationally recognized leader in the settlement and integration sector. As an umbrella organization, AAISA's mandate is to build sectorial capacity by providing member agencies that serve newcomers access to relevant and meaningful professional development opportunities, to act as a liaison with stakeholders, and provide a centre for knowledge, expertise, and leadership. Our member agencies provide services to assist newcomers in becoming fully integrated members of Alberta society.

Acknowledgements

AAISA would like to acknowledge and thank the following individuals, organizations and funders for their contributions and support.

Funder

Pathways to Prosperity (P2P)

AAISA Staff, Volunteers and Members

Caroline Hemstock, Deniz Erkmen, Kylee van der Poorten, and William Mansfield.
Edmonton Immigrant Services Association for providing space to conduct interviews.

Interview Participants

The individuals that shared their time, experiences, and expertise with this project.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAISA	Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies
AINP	Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program
CIC	Citizen and Immigration Canada
IRCC	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
LMIA	Labour Market Impact Assessment
MPNP	Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program
NDP	National Democratic Party
NOC	National Occupation Code
PNP	Provincial Nominee Program
STEF	Short Term Employment Forecast
TFW	Temporary Foreign Worker
TFWP	Temporary Foreign Worker Program

Glossary of Terms

Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program is a program in which the province of Alberta recommends foreign nationals and workers to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) for permanent residence.

Federal Express Entry is an electronic system introduced in 2015 for skilled workers in Canada or in other countries. Candidates are ranked against others using a point-based system based on factors such as skills and experiences, with candidates with the highest score being issued an invitation to apply.

Labour Market Impact Assessment is a process in which Employment and Social Development Canada assess whether the employment of a foreign worker will have a negative impact on the Canadian labour market. A positive assessment signifies that there is a need for the foreign worker to fill the job, and is often required before a worker can apply for a work permit.

National Occupational Classification is a system that organizes over 40,000 jobs into 500 occupational groups through assigning a four-digit code to every job. Certain NOC codes are required to determine eligibility for the AINP.

Permanent Resident is a person who is legally in Canada on a permanent status as an immigrant or refugee, but is not legally a Canadian Citizen.

Provincial Nominee is a person who is nominated by the Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program who is then eligible to submit an application for Permanent Residence to the IRCC.

Temporary Foreign Worker Program is operated by the Government of Canada and aims to help Canadian employers fill temporary labour needs. The program includes all occupations and skill levels.

Temporary Foreign Workers are foreign nationals who have been authorized to enter and remain in Canada as a worker, on a temporary basis.

Executive Summary

With the financial support of Pathways to Prosperity (P2P), 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 to the Alberta labour market and communities. The environmental scan examines the current and future factors that have and may continue to influence the program's development and use.

The results of this environmental scan are based on a mixed-methods approach which involved a comprehensive literature review coupled with key informant interviews, as well as an analysis of publicly available quantitative data. Key themes and the most relevant areas of discussion were identified to be program design and use; immigration goals; relationships; and policy development, adaptation and alignment. The findings of this project provide an initial evaluation and understanding of the program that can ultimately be scaled to a larger regional study.

One of the key features of the report is an introduction to AINP's program design and use. It details the various types of immigrants who use the program to apply for residency and examines recent developments of quotas, processing times, immigration streams, how the program is evaluated, and the way in which the program orients itself towards the local labour market. It was found that 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 applications in a timely manner.

The report summarizes federal and provincial immigration goals by looking at how the program fits into retaining immigrants and meeting economic immigration targets. The key learnings of the report find 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.

The interconnected stakeholders involved with the AINP are addressed through an examination of how their relationships may influence the development and impact of the program. Pressure from the federal government was indicated to be raising the requirements for AINP applicants, creating a misalignment between federal immigration goals and provincial needs for low/semi-skilled workers. Policy developments, changing governments and the introduction of new programs and systems affecting the AINP are further investigated and summarized. Lack of intergovernmental communication in the past resulted in confusion and little consideration of how immigration streams may influence each other. The influence of employers is also emphasized as a key factor contributing to TFW vulnerability.

Alignment between the provincial and federal governments is examined. Family reunification, reducing wait times and commitment to bringing in refugees are highlighted as three key areas in which both current governments align with each other. 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. Although deficiencies in the review have been exposed, it appears that there is greater alignment between the current federal and provincial governments than there has been with previous governments.

Lastly, 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. The recommendations include increasing intergovernmental communication and lateral dialogue on policy changes and how they may affect other immigration streams. Both levels of government may also align more successfully in achieving immigration goals if collaboration between them is promoted. Long-term labour market assessments are recommended to support the provision of residency to immigrants who are needed most. Furthermore, the AINP's structural complexity should be reduced to be more inclusive, consistent and easy to access for applicants. Greater accountability, transparency and oversight should also be employed to reduce labour abuses and reduce the vulnerability of nominees of the program. A larger, cross-regional and multi-stakeholder project will build upon this analysis, and provide greater understanding of the impact of policy changes on other PNPs. Further study should focus on how provincial nominees settle and integrate, as well as the individual impact of federal policies on PNPs.

Project Background

Since the early 2000s, bilateral agreements between federal and provincial governments known as Provincial Nominee Programs (PNPs) have allowed provinces to play a more active role in the attraction and retention of newcomers to meet their specific economic and labour market needs. In 2002, the Government of Alberta signed the first of such agreements which brought newcomers under the following streams: Skilled-Worker, Semi-Skilled Worker, Business, International Graduate, Family Connection, Community-Sponsored, and Strategic Recruitment.

Today, the growth and significance of this agreement and the program is evidenced by the high percentage of Provincial Nominees as part of total immigration to the province (Seidle, 2013). Alberta has experienced a changing policy environment, with the election of new federal and provincial governments, in addition to policy changes such as the introduction of the Express Entry system in January 2015, which places added emphasis on economic integration of newcomers in the admissions process. Other changes have included the prioritization of reunifying families, reducing barriers to international students and temporary residents, and the pledge to make it easier to hire caregivers who assist families. Due to these significant policy changes, the effect on provincial migration flows requires analysis and evaluation.

In 2011, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) now the Ministry of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) conducted an evaluation of the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) at the federal level to determine program relevance and performance. Given that the evaluation was federal in scope, IRCC (CIC at this time) highlighted the importance of evaluating these programs at the provincial and territorial level because of the variable external factors and labour market needs at play in each region (Citizenship and Immigration Canada Evaluation Division, 2011). This evaluation revealed that the current coordination and evaluation techniques make it difficult to

assess the extent to which PNPs address the economic demands of each province (CIC Evaluation Division, 2011). Prior to the launch of Express Entry in 2015, research, such as that conducted by Baxter (2010) and Seidle (2013) indicated the need to further evaluate PNP frameworks and improve federal and provincial policy alignment.

Based on this need and current national research themes focused on the economic integration of immigrants to Canada, the objective of the project is to address a gap in knowledge while creating the basis for a deeper understanding of the impact of Canada's federal policy changes on Alberta's provincial nominee program and the flow of provincial nominees to Alberta's diverse labour markets and communities. Recent government changes at the federal and provincial levels, and the unveiling of new platforms that referenced the significance of immigration and the unique contributions newcomers have made to Canada's development has resulted in a need to develop a further body of knowledge on the program. Moving forward, this initial scanning will serve as the first step in a larger, cross-regional and multi-stakeholder research project that seeks to understand and evaluate the impact of policy changes on PNPs in the Western Region.

Methodology

In order to address the impact of federal policy changes, the scan employed a mixed methods approach to collect and analyze primary and secondary data. By integrating in-depth key informant interviews with a document and literature review, as well as analysis of publicly available quantitative data, the environmental scan sought to employ a methodology that benefited from integrated and complementary methods. The intended result was a descriptive and detailed understanding of the AINP from expert stakeholders balanced by objective quantitative evidence. Although generalization cannot be made due to the smaller sample size, the findings of this project provide an initial evaluation, and can guide future inquiry at a larger, possible regional scale.

Literature Review

The project began with a thorough literature review, which analyzed existing academic, governmental and sectorial literature. This review grounds the inquiry in the most current theoretical and contextual information related to the economic, socio-cultural and political considerations surrounding the Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program (AINP). Relevant secondary sources assessed included: government websites, the Agreement for Canada-Alberta Cooperation on Immigration, program descriptions and documents, and relevant research and policy articles published in the last ten years. Sources of secondary data such as statistics collected from the federal and provincial government bodies like Statistics Canada were also examined in this phase. Overall, the literature review served as the thematic basis for the collection and analysis of qualitative data through in-depth key informant interviews.

Interviews

The review of relevant literature provided a framework for the key informant interview questions. The interviews were designed to explore the impact of policy changes on the AINP and the flow of provincial nominees to Alberta's diverse labour markets and communities more intentionally by leveraging the benefits of a qualitative approach. Five key informant interviews were conducted

in-person and over the phone with AINP experts such as government staff, researchers and advocates across Alberta. The interviews were structured in an open-question format and were recorded for transcription purposes. The information attained during the interviews was aggregated in the final reporting with all information kept confidential.

Findings and Discussion

The following section summarizes the key findings of the environmental scan. This section is organized thematically around the findings resulting from the review of literature, quantitative data and identified during the interviews. In particular, the environmental scan examines the impact federal policy changes have on the AINP and the flow of provincial nominees to Alberta's diverse labour markets and communities.

The scan's findings examine and provide a deeper understanding of how the program is designed and used, details the various types of nominees, and looks into how the AINP is meeting Alberta's labour market needs for low/semi-skilled workers due to federal policy. Additionally, how the program expresses provincial and federal immigration goals is highlighted, with special consideration given to the difference between these goals and finally the implications of the introduction of new systems on the effectiveness of the program.

Over the course of the project, it also became evident that intergovernmental relations and relationships between employers and industries influence the trajectory of the program, and places nominees of the program in vulnerable circumstances. In this respect, the changing relationship between the provincial and federal government was studied, showing a greater collaboration and alignment of policies with the arrival of the new Liberal federal government and the provincial NDP. These themes facilitate an improved understanding of the impact of Canada's federal policy changes on the AINP, and provide an evidence base to inform stakeholders on policy and program decisions that address the needs and barriers of both newcomers and communities:

- Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program Design and Use;
- Federal and Provincial Immigration Goals;
- Relationships; and
- Policy Developments, Adaptations and Alignment.

Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program Design and Use

The Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program (AINP) is an intergovernmental strategy to address province-specific labour needs. Literature notes that while the centralized immigration system in Canada was integral to nation-building and the promotion of a pan-Canadian identity, priorities are increasingly more economy-focused (Tolley & Young, 2011). PNPs were originally created as a strategy to disperse and retain immigrants in economically-deprived areas (Flynn & Bauder 2014; Krahn et al. 2003). Currently they have taken on a much broader scope such as regional development and population growth, with some provinces, like Manitoba, using it as a primary tool to attract and retain immigrants.

Although the AINP is a provincial government program, the federal government has the final decision regarding the quotas for immigration. In particular, it has been observed that there is a misalignment between federal and provincial immigration programs when it comes to the provision of permanent residency for low/semi-skilled workers. The provincial government expresses a labour market shortage for low/semi-skilled workers, but this is in contrast to the federal government's aim to build a high-skilled workforce. Factors such as these have signalled the need to further understand provincial and federal immigration design, use and intergovernmental cooperation.

Predominantly, PNPs are used by Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs), international students, and high skilled workers to gain residency, all of which contribute to helping the province achieve its economic goals through meeting labour market needs. Due to the more stringent requirements for residency through federal pathways, the AINP is frequently the main pathway for low/semi-skilled workers to achieve residency. These workers are classified by two different levels of occupation: labour jobs, in which on-the-job-training is usually given, and intermediate jobs which usually require high school and/ or job-specific training. Examples range from cleaning staff and fruit pickers, to long-haul truck drivers and food service positions (Government of Canada, 2015a).

Currently, the AINP processes require nominees to invest significant amounts of time and money into the process with no guaranteed outcome. Due to the program design, applicants must be sponsored by their employer, and their nomination can be withdrawn if their employment situation changes (Alberta Canada, 2016a). As AINP nominees are often TFWs, this has the added effect of placing them in a particularly vulnerable position as they cannot access the same level of services or rights as afforded to permanent residents and citizens of Canada.

In this section the following aspects of the program design and use will be discussed: low and semi-skilled worker access, skilled workers and international students, nomination quotas, processing times, streams, program evaluation, and labour market assessment. Discussions will centre on TFWs using the program to gain residency, the challenges many applicants face with limited quotas, lengthy processing times, and various shifting streams, in addition to findings on an evaluation of the program, and how it meets current labour market needs.

Low and Semi-Skilled (Temporary Foreign Workers)

Alberta is reported to have the highest retention rate of provincial nominees (95.3%) of any Western province, while Western Canada overall has a retention rate of 86.5 % (Carter et al., 2008). It was highlighted during the interviews that compared to programs in other provinces, the AINP is unique in the way nominations for permanent residency are predominantly (95%) awarded to TFWs already in the province.

There is significant discussion around the ease with which low/semi-skilled workers access nomination through AINP. Authors note the changing eligibility requirements for TFWs at the federal level government likely makes provincial nominee programs more popular as ineligible applicants look for other means to gain permanent residency in Canada (Baglay, 2012). A large proportion of AINP nominees are TFWs which are cited as some of the most vulnerable migrant

groups in Canada (Byl & Foster 2009; Flynn & Bauder 2014; Nakache & Kinoshita, 2010). When discussing the program, a significant emphasis is therefore placed upon them and their relationship with the nominee program.

In Alberta, much of the labour market demand is for low-skilled workers typically excluded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's programs (Kaushal et al. 2015; Nakache & Kinoshita 2010). One respondent noted that AINP is often the only way for low/semi-skilled TFWs to gain residency, as federal programs for skilled workers have improved and restrictions for low/semi-skilled workers have heightened. Baglay (2012) similarly emphasizes that while federal TFW targets are on the decline, PNP and Express Entry targets are moving upwards.

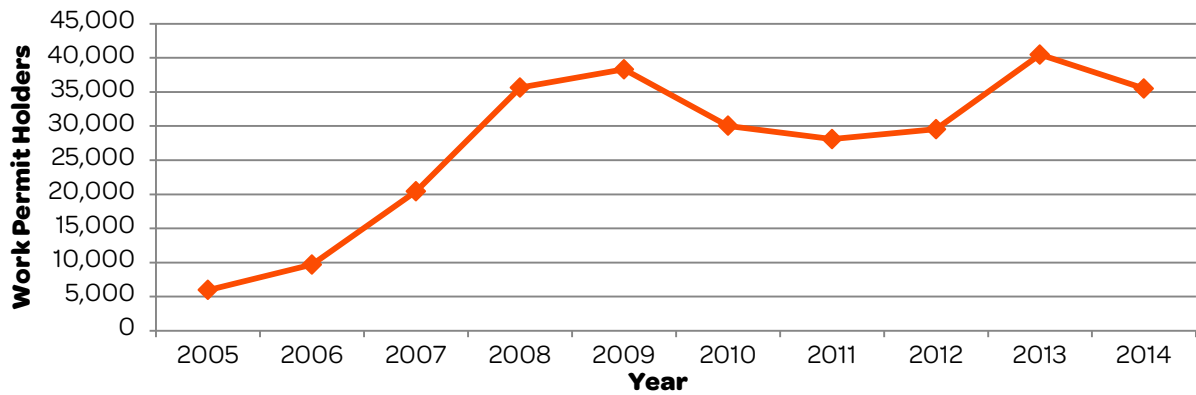
Studies suggest that federal immigration policies target high-skilled workers, while a redesigned TFWP in 2014 limits employers' use of low-wage TFWs (Bandali, 2015). During the scan, an interviewee asserted that language requirements in particular are less stringent for the AINP nominees than federal immigration streams. For semi-skilled workers applying on or prior to July 1st, 2012, a Canadian Language Benchmark of 4 had to be met to be eligible for an AINP nomination (Government of Alberta, 2012a). By contrast, the benchmark for workers applying between July 1st, 2012 and March 31st, 2014 was 2 (Government of Alberta, 2016b). As of April 1st, 2014, a minimum score is now again at 4.

Another participant interviewed noted there were increasing restrictions within the AINP on low/semi-skilled workers which may have impacted the low number of applications received in 2013. Subsequent changes may have been a response to a low level of applications, such as less restrictive language requirements, new initiatives, reduced number of years of required work experience for semi-skilled workers, and increased allocations.

The AINP demonstrates a markedly high retention rate as many TFWs continue to live and work in the communities and industries where they initially obtained their work permit. Studies also characterize PNPs as a pioneering policy practice that enables employers to retain TFWs after their initial visas expire (Flynn & Bauder, 2014). However, in the past, only 4% of TFWs working in Alberta were nominated through the AINP (Byl & Foster, 2009).

By the end of 2013, there were 40,471 TFWs working in Alberta (Bandali & Lane, 2015), while the current annual quota for AINP nominations is 5,500 (Government of Alberta, 2016a). As a result, Alberta witnessed significant TFW demand for its PNP. Likely due to the economic downturn seen in Alberta recently, the number of TFWs working in Alberta has declined in 2014 [Figure 1], and arguably is representative of the local economy and not a changing immigration landscape.

Figure 1: TFWP Work Permit Holders in Alberta¹

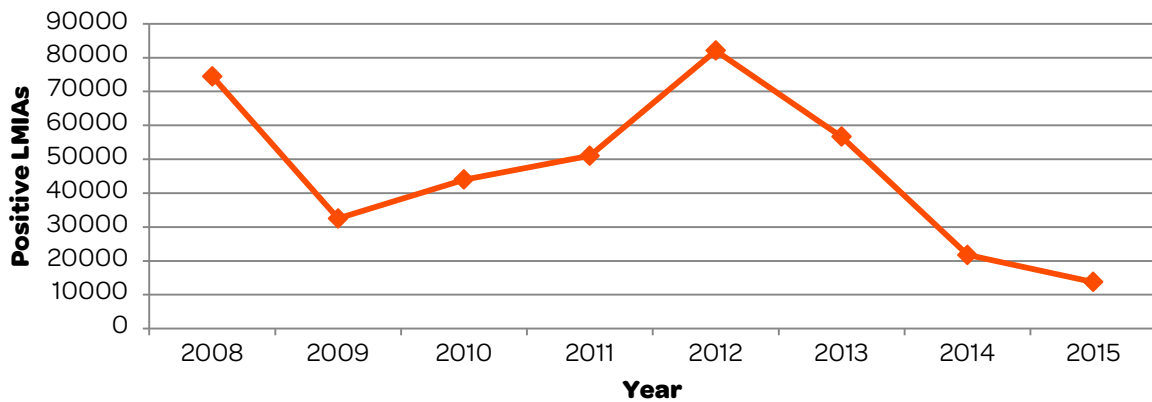


As of 2014, there were 35,486 TFWs working in Alberta. Data is no longer provided past 2014; however other data indicates there are considerably less temporary positions receiving a positive Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA)² [Figure 2]. The decision to issue a work permit rests with the federal government, and not all positions that have received a positive LMIA will result in a work permit. There can also be a time delay between the date the TFW obtains their work permit and the date they enter Canada. Nevertheless, data on positive LMIA's indicates there is either considerably less demand for TFWs in 2016 than in the past and/or the federal government is issuing less work permits for these positions. Again, this may also be attributed to the economic downturn currently being experienced in Alberta. It may be argued that this is a contributing factor to the AINP inventory overload.

¹ Source: Government of Canada (2015a). *CIC Facts and Figures 2014*. Retrieved from http://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/052642bb-3fd9-4828-b608-c81dff7e539c?_ga=1.238184064.1865633676.1473430441.

² LMIA is a document that an employer in Canada may need to get before hiring a foreign worker, as it assesses whether there is a need for this foreign worker to fill the job. Once received, a worker can apply for a work permit.

Figure 2: TFW Positions on Positive LMIA³



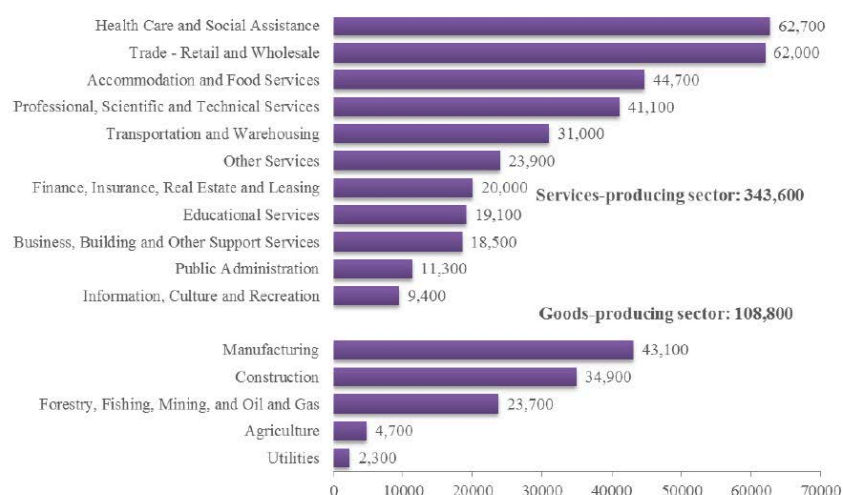
As LMIA are influenced by the labour market needs of the province, low/semi-skilled TFWs are primarily retained through the AINP in specific industries (Government of Alberta, 2015a). These industries include:

- Food services;
- Manufacturing;
- Hotel and lodging;
- Long-haul trucking; and
- Food and beverage processing.

The most recent Labour Force Profile on Immigrants from 2014 (Alberta Jobs, Skills, Training, and Labour, 2015) finds that the services-producing sector (76%) in Alberta employs the greatest share of immigrants, as compared to the goods producing sector (24%). This data is further broken down into specific sectors in [Figure 3].

³ Source: Government of Canada (2016a). *Annual Labour Market Impact Assessment statistics 2008-2015*. Retrieved from http://www.esdc.gc.ca/en/reports/foreign_workers/2014/lmia_annual_statistics/province.pagec81dff7e539c?_ga=1.238184064.1865633676.1473430441.

Figure 3: Employment of Immigrants in Alberta by Industry, 2014⁴



The distribution of immigrant employment is comparatively similar to that of the employment in different industries across Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016). As shown in [Figure 3], a major industry in which immigrants have a large proportion of employment is that of health care. This is attributed to the health care sector typically being independent of the overall state of the economy, and reflects the steady increase in its share of total employment among Alberta's overall population (Statistics Canada, 2015). Although many of the service and goods producing sector jobs may be low/semi-skilled positions, many of these positions also include immigrants with high education and experience.

Skilled Workers and International Students

The AINP is commonly linked with low and semi-skilled workers, but it is important to emphasize that other immigrants who enter through the program include skilled workers such as engineers, international graduates, post-graduate workers, and those working in an AIT-recognized trade⁵ (Government of Alberta, 2016a). According to the *Labour Force Profile on Immigrants* other sectors which saw significantly higher proportions of immigrants compared to other Alberta sectors were: management, natural and applied sciences, health, sales and services, and sectors unique to processing.

Nomination Quotas

There are a number of streams and categories through which applicants may apply for a provincial nomination, each with their own eligibility criteria [Table 1]. The PNP agreement between the federal and provincial governments allows a province to establish their own selection streams and criteria; there are over 50 categories nation-wide under existing PNPs

⁴ Source: Alberta Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour. (2015). *Alberta Labour Force Profiles: Immigrants in the Labour Force*. <http://work.alberta.ca/labour/labour-force-profiles.html>.

⁵ Compulsory or optional trades issued or recognized by Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training (AIT).

(Baglay, 2012). One key informant notes these streams and categories are a way to make decisions about who receives a nomination given the limited quota.

Many new low-skilled migrants who apply for the limited number of nomination spots may face higher educational and experiential requirements than Canadian-born workers working in the same jobs (Byl & Foster, 2009). During the key informant interviews, a respondent reflected that the streams, categories, and their eligibility criteria, are negotiated with employers and industry associations as a means to facilitate nominations where they are believed to be in highest demand.

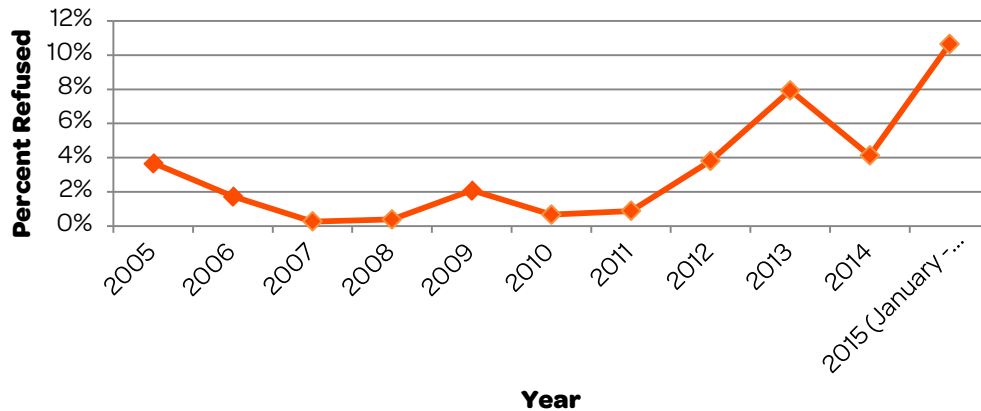
As of September 19, 2016, approximately 3,200 AINP nomination certificates were issued in 2016, with over 4,400 applications awaiting assessment to determine eligibility for nomination (Alberta Canada, 2016b). Compared to Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program (MPNP), the quota for nominations in Alberta (5,500) is markedly low. By contrast, the quota for the MPNP was increased from 10,000 in 2006 to 20,000 by 2016. This is almost four times higher than Alberta's cap. However, large quotas are not without their challenges and do not necessarily equate to greater benefits. Lewis (2010) suggests Manitoba reinstate a more conservative quota so that applications can be processed in a timely fashion and so that immigrants will experience the same labour market conditions upon arrival as learned at the time of their application.

Processing Times

Recently, the AINP has faced similar challenges in terms of application processing times. Stakeholders interviewed during the environmental scan commented that while there is some intergovernmental negotiation involved in setting the quota, the federal government has the final decision regarding provincial quotas for immigration. With the recent federal government change, it is expected that intergovernmental communication may increase, with more feasible quotas.

Over the years, as TFWs continuously entered the queue to be assessed for nomination, the inventory of AINP applications reached a point where processing times were significantly longer than in the past, often up to two years (Byl & Foster, 2009). The permanent residency process that follows should an applicant be successfully nominated is another 8 to 12 months. Due to program criteria, if a TFW is unemployed for a short time period before the granting of their permanent residency, they will be required to start the nomination process over again with a new employer (Byl & Foster, 2009). The number of applicants being declined nomination was reported by one respondent to have increased 33 – 36%, in part due to temporary lay-offs. The most up-to-date data on program approvals reflects this reality [Figure 4]. Interestingly, data suggests that trends in refused applications [Figure 4] as well as a decline in positive LMIs in the 2011-2014 time period [Figure 2] may be related. This trend could be attributed to increasingly onerous application processes that make it more difficult to submit successful applications.

Figure 4: Percent of Processed AINP Applications Being Refused⁶



Recent research (Baglay, 2012) finds that the varying degree in which PNPs can process applications depends on organizational structure of PNP offices, the size of human resource staff, and financial allocations. During the scan, respondents echoed this assertion and communicated that the program has experienced delays due to staffing capacity and over-time pay. A pause in the program allowed staff to cut their number of “applications-in-queue” by 50% and reduce processing times for TFWs awaiting the status of their application. However, this consequently resulted in TFWs experiencing an insecure status during this time. The data on the minimum number of AINP applications in the queue reflects this reality [Table 1].

During December of 2015, there were a substantial number of applications being processed. Comparatively, by September 2016, many of these numbers have been significantly reduced. The Government of Alberta (2016a) publicly states that any application received before the most recent posted dates are being assessed by an AINP officer. There are still doubts with application processing, as one respondent asserted that an increase in staff may not address processing times for TFWs who remain in the queue. Once 5,500 nominations have been awarded; other applications cannot be processed until the following year. The scan revealed that many applications remain in the AINP queue [Table 1].

⁶ Source: Government of Canada. (2015b). *Open Data Portal*. Retrieved from <http://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset>.

Table 1: Minimum Number of Pending AINP Applications for Each Stream and Category⁷

Stream	Category/Industry	Applications in the Queue received since August 2015	Applications in the queue received in August 2016
Employer Driven Stream	International Graduate	2,640	2,100 ⁸
	Foodservices	245	10
	Hotel & Lodging	25	10
	Food and Beverage Processing	45	10
	Manufacturing	2	10
	Skilled Worker	2,475	1,600
	Trucking	110	10
Strategic Recruitment Stream	Compulsory & Optional Trades	25	40
	Engineering Occupations	80	90
	Post-Graduate Worker	340	500

Streams

There are a number of streams and categories through which applicants may apply for a provincial nomination, each with their own eligibility criteria [Table 1]. The PNP agreement allows a province to establish their own selection streams and criteria; there are over 50 categories nation-wide under existing PNPs (Baglay, 2012). One key informant noted these streams and categories are a way to make decisions about who receives a nomination given the limited quota. However, many new low-skilled migrants who apply for the limited number of nomination spots may face higher educational and experiential requirements than Canadian-born workers working in the same jobs (Byl & Foster 2009). One respondent noted that streams and categories, and their eligibility criteria, are negotiated with employers and industry associations as a means to facilitate nominations where they are deemed to be needed most.

However, respondents observed the shifting criteria of different streams and categories. Eligibility is difficult for applicants and employers to navigate. One interviewee expressed the difficulty processing times to take place during the time it's supposed to, due to the shifting policy realities, with various streams changing over time whether they are open and accepting workers or not. Another respondent also noted that many employers often give inaccurate National Occupational Categories (NOC)⁹ on nominees' files to facilitate their application and/or provide inappropriate pay. This often renders applicants ineligible for nomination once they are assessed.

⁷ Source: Government of Alberta. (2016a). *Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program (AINP) Application Processing and Inventory*. Retrieved from <http://www.albertacanada.com/opportunity/immigrating/ainp-processing-inventory.aspx>.

⁸ Note that for the Skilled Worker and International Graduate categories, up-to-date numbers reflect applications received from September 2014 until August 2016. For all other categories, up-to-date numbers reflect applications received in August 2016.

⁹ NOC is a classification system that categorizes occupation duties, skills, talents and work settings with a four-digit code for every job.

Program Evaluation

As shown, challenges such as a changing policy environment, limited resource capacity, confusing processes that result in denied applications, and the introduction of new immigration streams and programs have resulted in delays and an under allocation of resources. It was clear that the program required an evaluation to determine its relevance and performance in achieving provincial and federal economic, immigration and labour market goals.

At the federal level, an evaluation of provincial nominee programs was conducted by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) in 2012 (Government of Canada, 2012). At the provincial level, it was reported that program evaluation is conducted by the Economic Working Group Committee, an internal group of directors and staff of the program. This group meets consistently to assess the quality and diligence of the program as well to address *ad hoc* issues. One of the more recent issues was maintaining temporary residency for TFWs in the program queue with expired work permits.

Many respondents commented that the staff working with AINP must respond to policy changes initiated by the federal government, including the introduction of Express Entry, NOC changes, and the numerous TFWP changes. More so, changes put forward by the provincial government must be negotiated with and approved by the federal government. Staff working with the AINP conduct annual reporting to the federal government; they note the federal government designates twelve to thirteen common indicators to be worked on. While the Liberal Federal government's mandate may align with the NDP provincial government's social goals for the AINP, it is likely there will still be an economic emphasis.

A number of authors contend that demographic and economic indicators are insufficient for measuring the success of PNPs and call for more indicators based on the settlement experiences of nominees and their families (Lewis 2010; Carter et al., 2008). Based on the literature, the definition of program 'success' should perhaps be expanded past nomination quotas and provincial retention rates.

More qualitative data on the lived experiences of nominees and their families, and their experience of settlement services in the immigration process would be beneficial in understanding the success of the program. Evidence suggests this may be a new policy direction for the AINP. As one respondent elaborated, during the past few years, AINP staff have started to look at pre and post program surveys. It is intended that these surveys would inform AINP staff on the needs of the nominees and information that would have benefited them before their arrival.

Assessing the Labour Market

The PNP agreements were put in place to allow provinces to play a more active role in the attraction and retention of newcomers to meet their specific economic and labour market needs. It is necessary then that the labour market itself is assessed to determine these needs.

Key informants engaged during the environmental scan identified two tools to assess the future of the labour market: the Short Term Employment Forecast (STEF) and the Occupational Demand and Supply Study. While STEF provides a three-year overview of occupations expected

to be in high demand in the short term (Government of Alberta, 2012b), the *Occupational Demand and Supply Outlook* is a long-term, 10-year labour forecast (Alberta Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour, 2014). These tools identify which occupations are expected to grow. They also track growth in the supply of labour. As noted during the interview these tools are currently limited to projecting labour demand, rather than potential labour shortages. Nevertheless, the projected cumulative shortages of a number of occupational categories received in the AINP queue are summarized in [Figure 6] below. Alberta’s economy is markedly different in 2016 than when the outlook was first crafted in 2013, consequently, many of the forecasts may need to be updated.

Table 2: Project Cumulative Shortages in AINP-Relevant NOCs¹⁰

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

Some of the occupations that the AINP focuses its streams and categories towards are not necessarily the occupations that will be in high demand by 2023. This includes occupations such as truck drivers, administrative clerks, retail trade supervisors, and food service supervisors. One interviewee remarked that the AINP has not used these tools to any large degree because of the program’s unique situation with high TFW demand. Since employers must conduct a labour market impact assessment (LMIA) and advertise jobs to Canadians before recruiting or maintaining a TFW, oftentimes the presence of a TFW verifies a labour market demand. For example, one respondent asserted that one metric of labour shortage would be the presence of 90,000 TFWs, in addition to employers being able to acquire LMIA’s.

Authors suggest that a reliance on short-term, temporary labour may place TFWs in a more difficult position and actually interfere with the country’s long-term labour market needs (Nakache & Kinoshita, 2010). Likewise, environmental scan respondents also indicated that the AINP’s labour market assessment is geared towards industry. It has been suggested that some industry associations have greater negotiating power than individual employers when it comes to

¹⁰ 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.

the program, and are also responsible for providing a business case to explain the demand in their industry.

Subsequently, several streams and categories are geared to this assessment. While many of these shifting streams and categories are meant to address immediate labour market needs, respondents emphasized an opportunity for the AINP to conduct more robust labour market assessments. More specifically, one expert asserts labour market needs do not necessarily change every six months. They emphasize the need for broader forecasting trends and eligibility criteria that addresses those needs, thus a more in depth longer term labour market assessment should be used to inform long term labour market needs.

It has been shown that the program is primarily the main route used by low/semi-skilled TFWs to attempt to achieve residency as the federal system has generally had more stringent requirements. The program has received criticism as it places TFWs in vulnerable positions due to it requiring significant money and time to apply with no guaranteed outcome, low success rates, in addition to employers having great negotiating power over the program and the nominees. The provincial short labour market needs, which are influenced by employers, do not necessarily reflect the federal government's long term immigration goals or labour market needs.

Federal and Provincial Immigration Goals

When assessing the AINP's success and relevance, it is essential that the immigration goals of the federal and provincial governments are continually considered. Through the course of this study it became evident that the relationship between long-term goals of federal immigration policy, such as permanent settlement and integration, and the short term provincial labour market needs needed to be analyzed more intentionally. The results of the scan revealed that in line with the intention of the AINP, retention and economic immigration are shared foundational policy considerations at the federal and provincial levels, yet the enactment and use of these processes may not necessarily always align between them.

Retention

As mentioned, programs such as the AINP were partly created to retain immigrants in economically-deprived and underpopulated areas (Flynn & Bauder 2014; Krahn et al. 2003). Successful PNPs support federal and provincial immigration goals by retaining immigrants in these under-populated areas, meeting province-specific labour market needs, and providing access to permanent settlement (Flynn & Bauder, 2014; Krahn et al., 2003; Tolley & Young, 2011; Carter et al., 2008). As one respondent reflected,

“one of the reasons why PNPs are lauded as a success is that people do stay in the area where they settle ... And I think it's partially because there were incentives to make sure that the nominees who were successful had existing Canadian families and offers of employment. So the incentive for nominees to leave is drastically reduced. I think nominees do stay and that's one of the strengths of the PNP.”

Recent literature as well as feedback from respondents suggested that nominee retention is generally achieved through the provision of community and family support, including family re-

unification, and employment incentives (Lewis, 2010). While in Alberta high retention has been reported as key success of the program, it is also attributed to the province's unique, high-growth economy.

Generally, the AINP is described as a primarily economic program not as a community-building or family reunification strategy. For instance, one interviewee stressed how they understood the PNP's main goal to be economic, in terms of allowing province setting priorities. Family reunification has been made more difficult as the Family Stream of the AINP was permanently closed in 2013. However, recent policy developments with the introduction of the new Liberal federal government suggest that family reunification will become a large priority of theirs (Mas, 2016).

Some authors make a case for the significance of employment when it comes to immigrant retention. To this point, a study of immigrant retention in Alberta found over one half of survey respondents left their initial community of settlement due to insufficient employment and/or educational opportunities (Krahn et al., 2003). It remains to be seen whether an employment-driven provincial immigration program may experience declining retention rates in the event of an economic down turn.

In Canada, immigration remains a federal responsibility. Due to the jurisdictional framework of immigration policy, caps and quotas are used to allocate a limited capacity to provinces. Some of the study's informants query whether a cap and quota system is the most efficient way to meet province-specific labour market needs as well as long term economic goals. Differing goals were noted between the long-term goals of federal immigration policy, such as permanent settlement and integration, and the short-term provincial labour market needs. While the AINP is a significant pathway to permanent settlement for TFWs, relatively small caps and quotas may make it difficult for many TFWs to rely on the AINP. This was highlighted during the interviews with respondents stating that the current program quota may be too low given the number of TFWs working in the province.

Economic Immigration Mechanisms

One of the mechanisms through which the federal government aims to achieve its immigration goals, is through the Federal Express Entry. The system aims to accelerate the application process for high-skilled immigrants to become residents. The system recruits, assesses and selects skilled immigrants for residency under the following immigration programs:

- The Federal Skilled Worker Program;
- The Federal Skilled Trades Program; and
- The Canadian Experience Class.

As of January 2015, the launch of the federal government's Express Entry system for Canadian immigration created two distinct types of provincial nomination certificates that can be granted – base and enhanced allocations. Many provinces are now able to nominate a certain number of candidates through the Federal Express Entry system and reserve a portion of their quotas for 'enhanced' nominations (Canada Visa, n.d.). Candidates in the Express Entry pool are able to

obtain a nomination from the province which, when combined with human capital and skills transferability points, results in an Invitation to Apply¹¹ for permanent residence. 'Base' nominations are nominations made under the regular PNP streams outside of Express Entry. The AINP does not operate with enhanced nominations.

The advantages of a provincially managed, employer-driven immigration strategy are its ability to respond to local labour market needs, maintain flexibility during economic cycles, and help provinces meet their specific goals and objectives, such as rural area retention (Tolley & Young 2011; Carter et al., 2008). However, reflections from key informants also revealed how an employer-driven immigration program, where selection criteria are largely market influenced, may undermine the federal government's nation-building goals, such as pursuing the social and cultural benefits of immigration, fulfilling their mutual obligation to foster respect for immigrant rights, recognizing foreign credentials, and reuniting immigrants with their families.

Respondents emphasized that employers are in need of immigration streams for low-skilled people to immigrate, and that federal selection criteria do not meet Alberta's labour market needs. There is therefore an opportunity to open more pathways to permanent residency for low/semi-skilled TFWs while at the same time providing them with the services and community support they need to integrate successfully.

Similarly, Flynn and Bauder (2014) find that private recruiters and employers are gaining significant influence over the selection of immigrants. Consequently, it may be argued that an immigration program that relies on labour market shortages and private recruitment practices may not support other national immigration goals such as family reunification and humanitarian response to the global refugee crisis (Tolley & Young, 2011).

Relationships

One of the most significant findings of the scan was the centrality of the relationships between different stakeholders and how they may influence the development of the program. It has been noted that there has been an increased role of provinces in the selection and settlement of immigrants (Paquet, 2014 as cited in Schertzer 2015). Some have argued that this move towards a multilateral approach is due to a shared provincial concern with economic immigrant selection and settlement, in addition to the federal government wanting to reassert its own role in reform (Schertzer, 2015). However, provincial governments do not have the option to work with the federal government if it is not a priority advanced by the government's leadership. During his time in office, Stephen Harper demonstrated a reduced role in social policy, avoiding multilateral meetings with provincial premiers, and showed a clear preference for a unilateral pan-Canadian approach to immigration (Collins, 2015). There is therefore a need to examine the relations between the different levels of government and other stakeholders as it can have important implications for the program.

¹¹ Express Entry candidates who appear to meet the minimum entry criteria are automatically entered into the Express Entry pool. Once in the pool, candidates are eligible to be issued an Invitation to Apply (ITA) for the program(s) whose requirements they appear to meet based on the self-declared information in their profile (Government of Canada, 2015c).

Intergovernmental Relations

During the environmental scan, respondents touched upon a number of developments that provide insight into the future of the AINP and its alignment with federal immigration policy. It has been noted that the AINP is collaborating with non-industry stakeholders more frequently, however the result of these consultations still remains unclear. One respondent commented that changes in government at both the provincial and federal level have created a delay in decision-making concerning the AINP and very little is known as to how the program will adapt to new government priorities. At the federal level, IRCC has conducted consultations across Canada throughout the summer of 2016 and new immigration policy directions will be announced in the fall of 2016.

Many key informants engaged during the scan observed that the provincial government requests greater autonomy over immigration targets, such as caps and quotas. However, one respondent also expressed concern about conceding provincial immigration to a program that has a marked employer focus. More specifically, it was highlighted that the federal government deems the 'human capital factor' of the AINP selection criteria too low. Human capital generally refers to the collective skills, knowledge, or other intangible assets that are used to create economic value for individuals, employers, and/or local communities. For example, education level is considered an investment in human capital that eventually pays off in higher productivity. In cases where it is not demonstrated that AINP applicants possess these assets, the federal government may decline permanent residency.

The interviewees perceived a misalignment between federal and provincial immigration programs when it came to the provision of permanent residency for low/semi-skilled workers. During the interviews, the AINP was often portrayed as the only means for low/semi-skilled TFWs to gain residency, due to the more stringent selection criteria in federal programs, with a larger percentage of successful AINP nominees being low/semi-skilled workers. However, they also note this characterization is changing, as AINP selection criteria now requires standards such as related work experience in country of origin. As one respondent asserted, "there were huge tensions between the federal and provincial government, tension around the fact that the federal government did not want low skilled programs."

Similarly, Byl and Foster (2009) contend that one of the drawbacks to the program is that it targets skilled workers, which may exclude a growing unskilled portion of the TFW population. For example, foreign workers applying to work in a meat packing plant must have three years related work experience and an equivalent of a grade 12 education; requirements that are absent for Canadian-born applicants. Consequently, Alberta's shortage of unskilled labour is being left unresolved, as many immigrants who may fill this gap are unable to do so. This preference for higher skilled individuals gaining residency in Canada is creating tension and misalignment between provincial and federal governments.

Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

One contentious area of misalignment between the different levels of government is that of quotas. The transcription of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration (House of

Commons 2011) gives us more insight into the ongoing provincial-federal relations involved in the AINP quota. The committee was established to oversee the Department of Citizenship and Immigration (CIC), and to study matters related to immigration and citizenship (Parliament of Canada, 2015). As one member asked the implications of increasing PNP quotas, David Manicom responded that increasing numbers of provincial nominees would have to be offset by decreasing numbers in a federal economic program. Given the high priority afforded to skilled workers, therefore, the unique scenario created by Alberta's lower-skilled industries poses an interesting scenario in the arena of provincial-federal relations. As Manicom states,

"the pattern over recent years has been for the provincial nominee program to increase dramatically as a share of the overall economic program component. At this time, the federal government has felt that it is important to maintain the space for the federal skilled program, which works on broad national needs in of course a very mobile labour market."

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux responded by speculating that provincial demand will continue to increase and thus produce upwards pressure on the federal government to determine an ultimate quota determination. These criteria used by the federal government to meet national immigration goals are creating further tension with the provincial government as they are not best suited to meeting the needs of a changing labour market.

National Occupational Categories

The AINP's use of National Occupational Categories (NOCs) was observed during the interviews as a specific area of policy misalignment. The NOC system organizes over 40,000 job titles into 500 occupational groups, with each job defined by its duties, skills, training and experience required. These codes are used to determine an individual's eligibility for the AINP. While NOCs are meant to correspond to the policies of the program, respondents expressed how the NOCs used to assess eligibility for AINP streams and categories are misaligned with labour demand, are difficult to interpret, and may screen low/semi-skilled work as their job title may not align with the codes present.

The interviews highlighted that the province does not have control over the NOCs, rather they are managed federally by Service Canada. Respondents relayed occasions in which NOCs do not line up with actual occupations that people are performing. For example, there is a sophisticated code for carpentry, but if an individual is employed as a framer (an activity done under carpentry) the immigrant will lose their work permit as they are not under the carpentry classification, resulting in a declined application.

Another respondent asserted, "[the NOCs] are supposed to line up with the policies of the AINP... [applicants] theoretically align with this NOC code and not that NOC code, but I find the rationale behind which NOC codes they pick, and which ones are not eligible, doesn't make a lot of sense to me." Similarly, one respondent found that from a practical perspective, many employers and employees may have been misusing the system by providing job titles and descriptions that fit a NOC code that was eligible, even though they were not necessarily performing this work. Employers' inaccurate NOC code reporting may be done to evade paying workers equitably for the work being performed, could be a product of confusion with AINP streams and categories, or

even an attempt to retain vital workers despite their ineligibility for the AINP. This issue with confusing immigration streams and codes may also be exacerbated by limited communication between the federal and provincial governments when introducing new systems and programs.

Intergovernmental Communication

Intergovernmental consultation was a key theme that emerged during the environmental scan. For example, many respondents noted how federal policy changes in 2014 surprised provincial policy makers, most notably with regards to the TFWP. Particularly, respondents reflected that provincial policy makers were caught off guard with regards to changes to the TFWP. Some felt that the provincial government was not adequately consulted, and would have preferred more discussion on how changes to the TFWP may affect other immigration streams such as the AINP. Given that federal and provincial immigration streams are linked, one key informant identifies an opportunity for more “non-hierarchical and lateral dialogue” between both levels of government. This would mean advance or *a priori* consultation before significant policy changes are made by either level of government. The advantages of this kind of dialogue is that it would allow the provincial government to more fully understand the shifting policy environment and adapt their provincial immigration programs accordingly. The federal government could also adapt or stagger pending changes to allow provincial nominee programs to adjust.

Due in part to the fact that immigration is primarily a federal responsibility; it may mean that additional strategies in addition to collaborative dialogue are necessary for provincial policymakers to accommodate additional demand on their immigration programs. Consequently, much of the capacity to manage immigration rests with the federal level of government, while provincial nominee programs are limited in their ability to increase/decrease caps and quotas in the event that demand for their program changes. It is detailed how they believe this partly due to its structure, as they believe the number of nominees may be too low and that perhaps arrangements with the federal government should be shifted to increase quotas.

Considering the election of new provincial and federal governments in mid and late 2015, how intergovernmental collaboration on policy development will unfold in the future remains to be seen. However, increased public engagement by the new federal government and initiatives, such as the joint Helping Immigrants Succeed¹² strategy, indicates increased collaboration between the two levels of government. This strategy aims to support immigrants in achieving successful integration through strong support in the areas of social connections, official languages, and employment. Furthermore, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has created the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs to establish greater collaboration and communication between the provincial, territorial and federal governments. From what has been observed so far, it may be argued that the new federal government will strive for greater intergovernmental communication and collaboration.

12. Helping Immigrants Succeed is a new plan developed by the 14 provincial and federal governments. The plan covers three areas: language, social connections and labour markets, and seeks to create a client-centered approach to service offerings for future newcomer arrivals.

Employer and Industry

Although intergovernmental relations are integral to understanding the development of the AINP, it is also vital that the stakeholder relationships within the program such as between the varying levels of government and employers are examined.

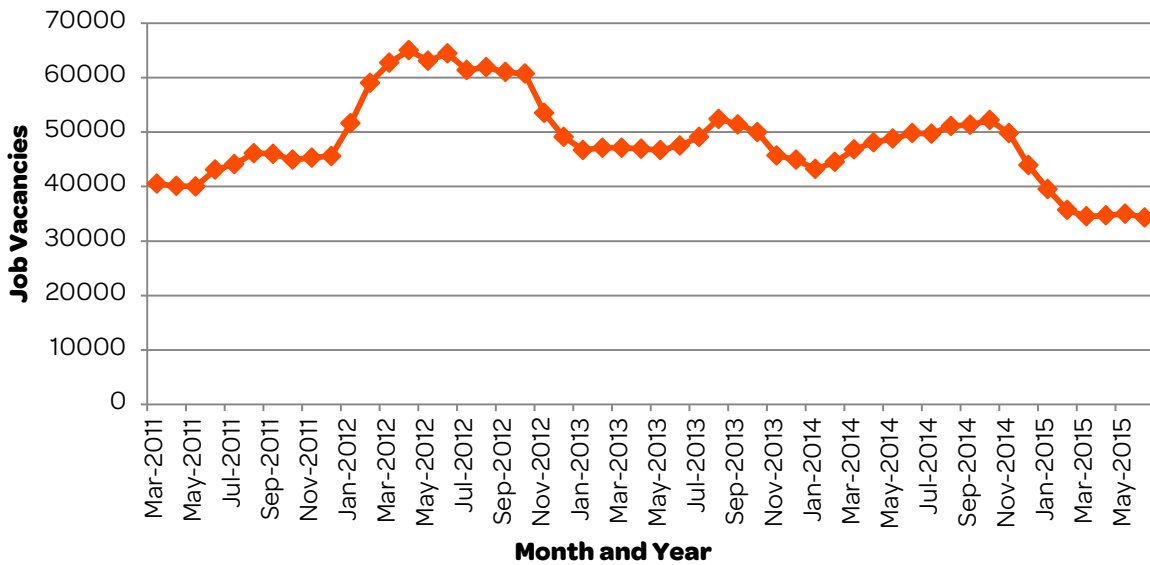
The AINP has typically worked closely with employer and industry groups such as Restaurants Canada, Hotel and Lodging Association, and Alberta Construction Association to designate streams and categories within the program that address specific labour market needs. Labour market assessment is considered industry-driven; employer and industry groups make a case to AINP administrators that there is a labour shortage in their industries. One key informant remarked that the presence of a TFW in an occupation, by virtue of the labour market impact assessment (LMIA) that precedes their presence, constitutes a demand.

The influence of these groups over AINP streams, categories, and caps and labour market assessment was frequently questioned throughout the key informant interviews. It is argued that industry-driven labour market assessments are prioritized over independent, long-term labour market forecasts. On the other hand, one key informant noted that these streams, categories, and caps are constructed in partnership with employer/industry groups in order to build criteria that align with the way specific industries attract and retain labour.

Despite these long-standing partnerships, respondents observed that collaboration between certain industries and the AINP has declined over the years and as a result more stringent requirements have been imposed on employers of low/semi-skilled workers. One of these requirements includes previous work experience in a related industry. Some industries, particularly those who hire low/semi-skilled labour, question why this is important. In contrast, one key informant indicated that more stringent requirements elevate the recruitment standard in the industry overall. By being aware of the necessary criteria for AINP nomination, industries will proactively hire to AINP standards. This indicates a compromise between meeting the needs of industry and employer groups while also guaranteeing that labour is well-equipped to perform the work required and to do so in conditions that guarantee their health and safety.

Many respondents emphasized the difficulties faced by employers when the federal government introduced changes to both the TFWP and Federal Skilled Worker Program. Employers felt forced to push their TFWs through the AINP in order to retain workers. Moreover, employers have emphasized that the 'first come, first serve' structure of the AINP does not correspond with Alberta's unique shortages of employees in particular industries. As one respondent noted, "I think the employers think it's a great program, and wish they could access it more. It's just there is a barrier of the limited number." As indicated in Figure 5, job vacancies in Alberta were high from January 2012 to November 2012 [Figure 5].

Figure 5: Job Vacancies in Alberta¹³



Byl and Foster (2009) also point out that employers are limited in the number of sponsorships they can make to the AINP, despite the fact that many have several TFWs they would like to retain. Additionally, “many employers commented in the government sponsored round table discussions on low skilled Temporary Foreign Workers, held in January 2009, how they need these workers on a permanent basis, not temporary” (p. 18).

Temporary Foreign Worker Vulnerabilities

Stakeholder relations, shifting policies and the underlying structure of the AINP were frequently cited by respondents as creating working conditions that create vulnerability and insecurity among TFWs. It was emphasized during the interviews that the pause on processing of AINP applications in 2015 and the resulting number of TFWs who were locked out of applying for a nomination has reduced faith in the program as a reliable means to secure permanent residency in Alberta.

Many TFWs invest significant amounts of time and money in the immigration process and settlement in Canada, with no guaranteed outcome. As one informant described, TFWs may lose their nomination no matter what the circumstances of their employment, such as a temporary layoff, and/or how close they are to completing their nomination. Similarly, Byl and Foster (2009) point out that the fact an AINP sponsorship can be withdrawn if a TFW loses their employment before obtaining permanent residency is unfair. If a TFW is laid off months before the AINP process is complete, they must start the process all over again. A TFW’s status in the province is also often compromised if an employer fails to assign the correct NOC on an AINP application. In sum, program rules contextualized by broader policy changes create a difficult environment for TFWs to navigate.

¹³ Source: Government of Alberta Open Data Portal. (n.d.). *Job Vacancies*. Retrieved from <http://open.alberta.ca/opendata/job-vacancies>.

Given the complexity of a multi-tiered immigration process, it is not surprising to find that TFWs often spend significant amounts of money on immigration consultants and recruiters to help them navigate the AINP process, despite the illegality of the practice (Nakache & Kinoshita, 2010). Lewis (2010, p. 251) contends that “[i]n the end, the burden of successful application and resettlement is passed on to the provincial nominees themselves as they become responsible for negotiating a revised, rescaled policy landscape that frames their admission in competitive and sometimes opaque terms.”

Oftentimes exploitation goes unreported, as one respondent noted the federal government has challenges monitoring this program. They assert, “We’ve always had a law in Alberta, you can’t charge recruitment fees. There is hardly a TFW that has not paid recruitment fees. People are paying ten thousand dollars to come here and work as a janitor. It’s standard, absolutely standard.” Other authors also contend that exploitation persists due to a lack of enforcement mechanisms (Nakache & Kinoshita, 2010). Other respondents also emphasized that such practices continue to exacerbate the precarious economic circumstances of TFWs trying to achieve permanent residency.

Vulnerability for TFWs is further compounded in cases of employer exploitation. Many authors emphasize that employers may, and often do, use the prospect of AINP nomination in order to ensure acquiescence to unreasonable requests from TFWs, such as unpaid labour (Byl & Foster 2009; Flynn & Bauder 2014). Respondents similarly noted that many TFWs perform uncompensated work or inadequate pay in exchange for an employer’s potential nomination. One respondent expressed disappointment with the fact that in many cases where an employer is not paying a TFW according to their listed NOC code on the AINP application, the nomination is pulled regardless of who is at fault for the grievance.

It is also often difficult for TFWs to understand their employment rights in a foreign country. While workers in these circumstances are referred to a Temporary Foreign Worker Advisory Office or put in contact with employment standards to file a complaint, most do not proceed with such practices. Additionally, the unique policy overlap in Alberta between the TFWP and the AINP make it difficult to assign responsibility for labour abuses. As one respondent commented, many of the hotlines available to TFWs to report labour abuse are not equipped to deal with issues specific to the AINP nomination process. This issue is further exacerbated as TFWs do not have access to settlement and integration services. Although, many of these issues are planned to be addressed as detailed in the HUMA report on the TFWP, there have been concerns in regard to the short time frame for the review, which was conducted over the course of five meetings in May and June, with worries that this prevented a thorough consideration of recommendations (Dharssie, 2016).

Recently, the federal government recognized there is a significant demand on the AINP program. As TFWs are beginning to see the AINP as a less secure route, some are seeking different pathways to residency such as the federal Express Entry system. The introduction of systems such as this can have a significant impact on the AINP, and consultation on their introduction has not always been considered with previous governments - as shown with the new Express Entry system. How these relations may change in the future and the implications they may have need to be taken into account when addressing the AINP.

Future Relations

Relationships which underpin the AINP are continuously changing due to political factors such as the election of new governments at both levels. A change in government at the federal level can have significant implications for programs such as the AINP. For example, the new Liberal Federal Government's Immigration Levels Plan will increase the number of new permanent residents welcomed to Canada from the previous Conservative government by up to 45,000. One of the main priorities of this plan is to advance their aim of supporting family reunification, tackle processing times and respond to Canada's economic needs. This is a paradigm shift away from economic centric immigration towards one that emphasizes the reunification of families, with the goal of increasing immigrant retention (Government of Canada, 2016c).

Although the Liberal government has doubled the cap for parent and grandparent sponsorship applications to 10,000, they aim to issue up to 20,000 visas, a target the same as last year. This target is at odds with the NDP's target to reduce wait times as the applications will be doubled, yet the issuing of visas will remain the same. Conversely, the Liberals have promised to budget an additional \$25 million to reduce application processing times as such as these in 2016-17, in addition to \$50 million a year for the following three years.

Policy Developments, Adaptations, and Alignment

As shown, federal and provincial policy development and alignment can have important implications for programs such as the AINP. It is vital that the development of policies and programs is thoroughly examined to determine the effect they have on the AINP.

The following section will detail the election of new federal and provincial governments, their platforms on immigration and how they align with each other, the implications of economic integration strategies on the AINP, while exploring how federal control over caps, quotas and selection criteria of immigration streams can place pressure on PNPs.

Election of New Federal and Provincial Governments

With the election of both a new federal government (Liberal) and provincial government (New Democratic Party) in October and April, 2015 respectively, there was ostensibly a change in policy alignment at the provincial and federal levels. There has been a greater alignment of policy priorities on immigration between the two governments than there was during the Conservative government's time (Collins, 2015).

There are three main areas in which both the NDP and the Liberals have emphasized as priorities (CIC News, 2015; Canadian Immigrant, 2016; Liberal, n.d.; Canadalm, 2015; Sharma, 2015; NDP, 2015a):

- Family reunification – the NDP has expressed placing a greater priority on reunifying families. The NDP has called for a removal of the cap on parent and grand-parent sponsorships, with the Liberals doubling the number of applications allowed. The Liberals have also put forward platforms such as eliminating LMIA fees for families, bypassing

conditional permanent residence for spouses of sponsored individuals, increasing points for those who have siblings in Canada, and increasing the maximum age of dependents to make it easier to bring.

- Wait times – both levels of government would like to see an increase in resources to reduce backlogs. The Liberal government has doubled the budget for family class applications to reduce these wait times.
- Refugees – there has been unilateral agreement on bringing more refugees to Canada, in addition to restoring healthcare for refugees whose decision is still pending.

In contrast to these unilateral priorities, the provincial NDP government has expressed a keen interest in reviewing the TFWP, with suggestions for its closure, seeking an end to any and all abuses of the program, and opening up direct paths to citizenship for temporary foreigner workers (NDP, 2015b; CBC News, 2010). In 2016, the federal government did open a review of the TFWP under HUMA, but critics emphasized the short time frame it was conducted over and that the recommendations were skewed towards favouring employers (Dharssie, 2016). The Liberal government have put a greater emphasis on international students, with aims to remove barriers to residency for them and restoring residency time credit. Although there has been little dialogue by either levels of government on the AINP directly, due to the innate connection between TFWs and international students with the program, it is likely that this will change (Sharma, 2015; Harper, 2014).

Currently Canada's federal government is implementing an Immigration Levels Plan, in which they will welcome between 7 to 15% more permanent residents in 2016 than the previous Conservative government's 2015 goal. The plan aims to support family reunification, reduce application processing times, respond to economic needs and allow the government to meet its humanitarian objectives (Government of Canada, 2016c). This is a significant shift in immigration policy away from economic immigrants towards an emphasis on reuniting families, with a review of the conditions imposed on Canadians looking to sponsor their children and spouses who live overseas (Mas, 2016). John McCallum is quoted as saying "The government of Canada will make family reunification an important priority because when families are able to stay together, their integration to Canada and ability to work and grow their communities all improve" (Mas, 2016).

Economic Integration Strategies

The federal Express Entry system, an economic immigration mechanism which was inherited from the former Conservative government, has significantly impacted the AINP. Express Entry operates by allowing applicants to complete an online profile which is then assessed and accepted into a pool of candidates should the applicant meet a number of criteria. The intended goal of the system was to strive to make the immigration process simpler, faster and more flexible, and to ensure that Canada's economic and labour market needs are met (Government of Canada, 2014). The system only accepts applications who have been invited to immigrate to Canada under certain immigration programs. The intention was that this new method will prevent the growth of backlogs by ensuring that only the individuals who are most likely to succeed are able to immigrate to Canada. This was a significant shift away from a first come, first serve system (Government of Canada, 2014).

The highest ranking candidates in the pool are invited to apply for permanent residence (Government of Canada, 2015c). One respondent noted how the Canadian Experience Class of the federal government's new Express Entry system does not exclude a group of skilled workers such as cooks, retail sales, and retail food supervisors who were previously disadvantaged by federal changes to immigration selection criteria for the Federal Skilled Worker Program. Evidently, the top 10 invited occupations as of January 2016 included food service supervisors, cooks, and retail sales supervisors (Government of Canada, 2016a). One informant also notes that many immigrants obtaining permanent residency through Express Entry are TFWs.

More recent literature on the PNP (House of Commons, 2015) involves discussion of this Express Entry initiative. Of the 3,594 individuals that have been invited to apply under the program, a portion of this amount includes provincial nominees. A number of round tables were conducted with employers in order to gear the initiative to their needs, in addition to the establishment of an employer liaison network. As Mr. Wilma Vreeswijk states, "the way the Express Entry system is structured means that to the degree that there are job offers, we facilitate entry. The link between the demand from employers and the immigration system is very tight." The introduction of Express Entry in early 2015 by the previous Conservative government suggested further centralization of immigration policy.

As of January 2016, 78% of invited candidates were already working in Canada (Government of Canada, 2016b). Over 190,000 profiles have been submitted to the Express Entry Pool, and over 31,000 invitations to apply for residency have been issued with almost 10,000 individuals already having landed in Canada as permanent residents (Government of Canada, 2016b). Of the 190,000 submissions, nearly 90,000 were found not eligible as they did not meet the criteria of at least one of the three programs managed by the system (Government of Canada, 2016b). The 2015 Year-End Report states that, "[i]n the early months of Express Entry, Canada was the predominant country of residence for invited candidates because of the high number of foreign workers with LMIA backed job offers that wished to settle in Canada permanently." (Government of Canada, 2016b).

Unlike other provinces, Alberta does not have Express Entry candidates invited to apply into the Provincial Nominee Program, as all streams of the AINP are 'base' streams, meaning that they are not aligned with the federal Express Entry system. This creates a unique situation for the AINP, since as another respondent mentioned; some candidates sitting in the AINP queue have applied for Express Entry as a separate process. Currently, staff working on AINP applications are not made aware of who has been invited to apply for Express Entry. The separate nature of these two programs can result in a worker achieving residency through both programs when in fact they are designed to address different immigration policy goals.

Caps, Quotas and Inventory

Provincial nominee programs were first implemented in the late 1990s and early 2000s and intended to address a situation in which a handful of major cities were accepting a disproportionately larger number of immigrants than smaller cities (Carter et al., 2008). By 2003, the federal government acknowledged small caps and quotas limited these programs' effectiveness and relaxed the limits placed on the number of provincial nominees. In Manitoba,

the quota was entirely eliminated in 2006. Subsequently, this was the period that the Manitoba government, on its own accord, doubled its quota.

Federal changes to the TFWP in 2014 created a significant impact on the AINP. In 2015, many TFWs faced an impending deadline to renew their work permits following TFWP changes. The federal government decided to return to a one-year work permit for TFWs in order to enable flexibility and responsiveness to labour markets (Bandali, 2014). This resulted in an overwhelming number of applications within the AINP as employers sought to retain their TFWs in industries such as food service and hotel and lodging. Though the provincial government wants to double the current AINP quota of 5,500, significant human resources will likely be necessary to process upwards of 10,000 applications per year.

Currently, the AINP inventory is largely composed of food service applications due to the federal government removing six occupations from their skilled worker category in 2014. One report highlights the fact that after 2012, the number of eligible occupations in the Federal Skilled Worker Program was reduced from 35 to 24 occupations (Bragg, 2013). Preference was also given to applicants with Canadian work experience, and a language benchmark of 7 was instated. It was frequently mentioned by respondents that these federal changes have impacted the size and content of the AINP inventory. As Bagley (2012, p. 126) asserts, "eligibility restrictions on FSWP will likely make PNP more popular as ineligible applicants will be looking for alternative avenues for immigration to Canada." However, it was also reported that many low/semi-skilled national occupational categories (NOCs) remain ineligible under the AINP, and may contribute to employers' inaccurate occupational records for TFWs.

Former Conservative Minister Jason Kenney rejected this proposal on the basis that the federal government should remain the primary institution selecting immigrants and that immigration is about nation-building (Wood & Neil 2012). He also pointed out that federal data demonstrates skilled workers perform better under the federal program. However, the pressure exerted on the AINP by TFWP led Minister Kenney to provide a work permit extension to TFWs working in Alberta and in queue for an AINP nomination (The Canadian Press 2015). Minister Kenney argued that Alberta merits the federal adjustment since it has the largest backlog in their nominee program for immigration.

More recently, in 2016 the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA), reviewed the TFWP with proposed changes. The report's main recommendations were to ease the limitations on the number of TFWs an employer can hire and how easily they can access them, streamline and standardize the LMIA application process, re-establish the TFWP to reflect the current labour market needs in Canada, and that the government should provide more access to permanent residency for TFWs who are filling permanent labour market needs. Additionally, there were recommendations for greater information and resource sharing between federal and provincial governments to function in collaboration with one another and reduce the duplication of work. Lastly, there were calls for collaboration between stakeholders to ensure that incoming migrant workers and employers are informed of their rights and responsibilities under the TFWP, with best efforts to provide this information in the migrant's preferred language. (Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, 2016)

Key Learnings

Although the AINP may have a great deal of assets in facilitating the successful attraction of immigrants as permanent residents, there are a number of key areas in which the program could be enhanced to ensure greater efficiency and policy alignment while reducing misuse of the program, and helping achieve both provincial and federal immigration goals.

The scan reveals that the AINP has taken on a broader scope in regional development to help achieve economic and labour market needs than in the past. The program is largely used by low/semi-skilled TFWs to achieve residency as the federal system processes contain more stringent requirements. The program received some criticism because it requires significant money and time to apply with no guaranteed outcome. The application process is also found to be confusing, and the number of applicants is limited. There have been calls for AINP's success indicators to be centred towards the settlement experiences of nominees rather than the economic elements.

In terms of immigration goals, nominee retention was observed to be best achieved through the provision of community and family support. Although the family stream of the AINP was closed in 2013, this may change as the liberal government is prioritizing family reunification as an immigration goal. The AINP also has the ability to respond to local labour market needs, but this may undermine federal nation building goals. There have been suggestions to negate this through more federal pathways for low/semi-skilled workers to apply for residency.

Misalignment between provincial and federal immigration programs is highlighted as a key issue. The AINP is often the only means for low/semi-skilled workers to gain residency, but pressure from the federal government is raising the requirements for applicants. Often the NOC codes have not lined up with the policies of the AINP, leading to confusion and misreporting. This has been exacerbated by little intergovernmental communication and the introduction of new federal streams that may affect programs at the provincial level. With the creation of the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs by Justin Trudeau, intergovernmental dialogue may increase and reduce some of these issues. Employers are highlighted as having large influence over the program, which has resulted in TFWs being placed in a vulnerable situation.

Lastly, family reunification, reducing wait times and a commitment to bring in refugees were identified as three main areas in which the Albertan provincial government aligns with the federal Liberal government. It was recognized that changes to federal systems and program can have large implications for programs such as the AINP. The NDP has also taken a keen interest in the TFWP, and following their call for its review, the Liberal federal government completed a review of the program under the HUMA committee. Suggestions included greater collaboration between all stakeholders, and ensuring that incoming migrant workers and employers are more informed. However, it has been criticized for skewing recommendations in favour of employers and conducting the review over a short time period.

Recommendations

Considering the findings and key learnings that resulted from the environmental scan, this section outlines four core recommendations to address the challenges associated with the AINP. These recommendations are informed by the broad review of literature and resources, in addition to the suggestions and comments collected from respondents through in-depth interviews.

The recommendations will speak to several key areas that were identified during the environmental scan. Particular attention will be paid to relationships and communication between the provincial and federal governments, in addition to the design and use of the AINP, and how to reduce misalignment, increase efficiency and prevent misuse. The intent is to put forward preliminary suggestions and steps where the program could be adapted to foster improved alignment of provincial and federal immigration policy. The recommendations focus on intergovernmental relations, program design and labour market assessment, program evaluation and areas for further investigation.

Intergovernmental Relations

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.

Policy misalignment between federal immigration policies and the AINP has created inefficiencies for a variety of stakeholders, including employers, potential nominees, and program staff. This recommendation is grounded in the acknowledgement that each level of government has unique immigration goals that must be clearly defined, particularly around the demand for low/semi-skilled labour and temporary foreign workers.

However, these different pathways to immigration do interact and overlap with one another in significant and often unforeseen ways. Baglay (2012, p. 138) asserts how “[g]iven that different selection criteria may create different pull and push factors for prospective applicants, both levels of government need to watch each other’s programs and changes to them.” Throughout the interviews it became clear that once one pathway to immigration is too restrictive for a particular group, they will often migrate to an alternative pathway. Experience with TFWP changes and the AINP pause demonstrates this can create unanticipated demand on program capacity, particularly for PNPs with limited cap and quota systems.

Provincial-federal immigration strategies such as the PNPs could be more effective if communication between both levels of government was enhanced so that may recognize the effect that changes in one level of government’s immigration policy will have on the other. Lateral dialogue between both levels of government regarding policy changes will enhance the collaborative elements of a multi-tiered immigration system; different pathways to immigration can and should complement one another.

Steps to Consider:

A. Conduct Provincial Impact Assessments for federal immigration policy changes.

Given that provincial nominee programs have become a more prominent pathway to immigration over the past two decades, any federal change in immigration policy should be followed by a provincial impact assessment to determine *a priori* how PNPs can adapt. This could be facilitated by providing the provincial government the time and flexibility to adjust for anticipated impacts. Furthermore, a PNP intergovernmental committee could be formed to assess and review changes to governmental policy and both provincial and federal levels. Caps and quotas could potentially be more flexible and used as a tool to anticipate changing demand from various segments of the labour market.

B. Develop selection criteria collaboratively by engaging both levels of government and creating standards that meet nation-building goals and province-specific needs.

Acknowledging that different immigration streams may impact one another highlights the importance of selection criteria. While one level of government may find selection criteria restrictive to achieving their goals, another may determine that such criteria are essential to meeting broader goals. Based on the interviews conducted during this environmental scan, the primary area for improvement for stakeholders involved in the program centered on National Occupational Categories (NOCs), particularly the categories related to low/semi-skilled labour.

Alberta's unique situation with respect to TFWs and a traditionally high growth economy emphasizes the need for more flexible labour-related criteria that those utilized in other provinces. Eligible NOCs in the AINP should also be determined with flexibility in the event of a recession. In Manitoba, the MPNP was opened to all levels of eligibility which resulted in a substantial majority of its TFW population achieving permanent residency (Baglay 2012; Byl & Foster, 2009). TFWs can also apply to Manitoba's provincial nominee program (MPNP) after working for only six months (Lewis 2010). Evidently, the number of TFW-to-PNP workers doubled between 1998 and 2007. There is a significant opportunity for AINP to foster inclusivity for immigrants not prioritized at the federal level of government.

C. Increase collaboration in multi-tiered immigration by employing both provincial and federal administrators.

A number of areas to increase efficiency associated with AINP relate to human resources and coordination between the provincial and federal levels of government. Experts identify a lack of staff and significant overtime pay as an indicator that more resources are needed. Long processing times are also inextricably linked to this capacity. What is more, nominees must be validated by both levels of government. At the same time, the introduction of Express Entry at the federal level has resulted in a number of wasted certificates, as some nominees may acquire a 'double' permanent residency through both programs.

Given that AINP is part of a broader multi-tiered immigration system, it could be better supported by an administration that is comprised of both levels of government. Coordination and access to essential information can help facilitate nominees' transition through the program and maximize efficiency through the pooling of resources. Moreover, consistent collaboration between administrators based in two different levels of government may be a more effective way to co-manage multi-tiered immigration.

Program Design and Labour Market Assessment

2. Increase the AINP quota and match with a more robust and objective labour market assessments to better meet province-specific labour market needs.

The way in which labour market assessment is conducted by the AINP is unique in that the program largely serves TFWs; demand is authenticated by their presence in different industries throughout Alberta. Shifting streams and categories provide employer and industry groups with the flexibility they need to maintain valuable labour and adjust to labour market conditions. Employers and industry groups rely on the AINP over other immigration streams to hire and retain valuable low/semi-skilled labour and have expressed a desire to have greater access to the program, such as higher caps and quotas, but also a program that is less structured around a 'first come, first serve' rationale.

Steps to consider:

- A. *A more long-term and transparent labour market assessment.*

Given that the vast majority of TFWs are unable to gain permanent residency through the AINP, a more objective, long-term, and transparent labour market assessment can help prioritize permanent residency for TFWs who are needed most. Transparency can provide TFWs looking to settle in Alberta with the information, security, and clarity they need to achieve a successful long term settlement and integration experience.

3. Reduce the structural complexity of the AINP so it is more inclusive, consistent, and easy to access.

There are a number of challenges facing the AINP that are associated with the program's complexity. The program often requires a considerable amount of human resources to navigate. These issues include: a large number of streams and categories, shifting eligibility criteria, long wait times, and inaccurate reporting on behalf of employers. This complexity can be reduced without losing the flexibility those employers and industry groups value most in the program.

Steps to consider:

- A. *Create more inclusive AINP eligibility criteria, reduce complexity, and maintain consistency over time.*

Immigrant settlement and integration is a multi-faceted process that requires a combination of economic, social and language supports. Considering the program's objective, there is an opportunity to build more broad and inclusive eligibility criteria for the many streams and categories of the AINP. Manitoba has opened its provincial nominee program to all levels of eligibility which has resulted in a substantial majority of its TFWs gaining permanent residency (Baglay 2012; Byl and Foster 2009), with the number of TFW-to-PNP workers doubling between 1998 and 2007.

By broadening/widening/opening eligibility this may address many of the exclusions and difficulties faced by employers and nominees. The practice of this strategy in Manitoba could be replicated in Alberta as it demonstrates a significant opportunity to provide permanent residency to the vast majority of TFWs working in the province.

- B. Work with employers to ensure compliance with the AINP regulatory environment and ensure responsibility for inaccurate applications falls upon employers rather than potential nominees.*

A major challenge emphasized in the scan was the practice of penalizing TFWs with denied nominations in the event an employer reported inaccurate occupational information. Given the complexity of AINP and nominee reliance on an employer-driven immigration program, responsibility should be appropriately designated. Suitable pay for a nominee classified under any given NOC should be enforced rather than denying a nominee's application. It may be beneficial to provide employers the opportunity to adjust inaccurate applications prior to a denial. Publicly available educational materials and transparency around the AINP process can also help employers better navigate and understand the nomination process and the consequences of malpractice or negligence.

Program Evaluation

4. Provide greater accountability and oversight mechanisms for labour abuse among AINP nominees in the program queue.

All nominees who enter the AINP should be provided with standard information about their labour rights and responsibilities such as the illegality of predatory recruitment practices prior to their arrival. Applicants should also be provided with contact information for services that can help them address labour issues such as uncompensated work, employer exploitation, and hazardous working conditions. In addition to the input provided by the scan's respondents, there is significant evidence to suggest TFWs applying for permanent residency through the AINP do not engage with employment standards supports or temporary foreign worker hotlines if they were experiencing abuse.

Steps to consider:

- A. Increase access to settlement and integration services for AINP nominees.*

Due to their pending status, TFWs in Alberta often lack the networks and knowledge to address these issues. There is an opportunity to increase TFW access to settlement and integration services that improve their language skills, social connection, integration, and overall ability to advocate on their own behalf. Many of AAISA's member agencies provide labour and employment related services for TFWs.

B. Set up an independent ombudsperson or protective legislation to settle labour disputes.

An independent body such as a provincial ombudsperson and/or protective legislation may also be necessary to settle labour disputes without compromising nominees' applications as detailed in the HUMA report. The program should become more transparent with greater accountability to reduce labour abuses among nominees. In Manitoba, the Manitoba Worker Recruitment and Protection Act has been lauded as good practice in mitigating worker exploitation, especially given Manitoba's broad eligibility standards, and may be a suitable practice for Alberta to replicate (Baglay 2012).

C. Conduct periodic assessments of the AINP to determine its effectiveness at meeting national and provincial needs.

It has been shown in this study that the AINP would better serve the interests of provincial and federal government policy objectives through a cooperative and coordinated approach to immigration. This could be achieved through continual assessment and mutually beneficial and standardized criteria that meet both national and provincial needs. Quotas should also be increased and the process simplified to reduce wait times and ease the program's burden on the governments' resources.

Further Study

Based on the learnings from the environmental scan, it is recommended that several changes be made to the AINP program so that it meets local needs, nation building goals, and aligns with both provincial and federal policy. 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 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 PNPs. This further study should include a greater number of in-depth interviews with various stakeholders across the region, how provincial nominees settle and integrate, in addition to a comparison between provincial programs to assess the individual impact of federal policies on PNPs.

Conclusion

The environmental scan provided a unique opportunity to conduct a preliminary scanning of the current state of the AINP and how it aligns with the current governments' long and short term goals for immigration. A greater understanding of the program and an overview of the impact of federal policy has been established through this mixed methods approach. Changing policy

environment and the introduction of new immigration streams significantly impacts the AINP, and can create misalignment between the immigration goals of both levels of government. However, with the election of a new federal government, it appears that there will be greater intergovernmental communication and alignment going forward.

The interviews conducted during the scan brought forward unique perspectives from experts working with the AINP in Alberta. The qualitative reflections of these experts, as well as the review and analysis of current literature and quantitative data uncovered several key strengths and gaps that underpin the program's ability to serve provincial labour market and community needs. Recommendations from the findings highlight that increased communication and dialogue between provincial and federal governments would allow them to more effectively corroborate and align their immigration goals, pool their resources, and reduce inefficiencies. Furthermore, both levels of government's short and long term immigration goals would be better achieved through a simpler and more consistent AINP that includes transparency and broader, more inclusive occupation categories. Lastly, employers and nominees should be better informed about the AINP regulations, processes, service availability, and the rights they are entitled to. This will ensure that nominees and employers are treated fairly and are aware of the help available to them. It will also inform employers and employees of the rules and regulations of the program.

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Appendices

Limitations of Methodology

Due to the use of mixed-methods research design, there were several limitations that were identified. The use of interviews for data collection created a number of obstacles. For instance, there may have been a lack of disclosure with participants or a reluctance to disclose sensitive information. To mitigate issues such as this, all participants were ensured anonymity, and rapport was built between interviews and interviewees to facilitate dialogue and the disclosure of information. Additionally, the risk of a lack of participation or an unwillingness to participate was identified when attempting to recruit participants for interviews, this was limitation was reduced through systematically communicating about the environmental scan to a wide range of stakeholders via suitable channels. Lastly, due to the topical and politically-based nature of the project, researcher bias could create a limitation in the collection and analysis of data. To reduce bias, the environmental scan strove for consistency in the analysis and remained open to new interpretations and findings that differ from expectations or the possibility that the findings are incomplete. Lastly, findings were shared with multiple readers and analysts so that alternate interpretations can be included in the final analysis.