recruitment firm Robert Half indicating half of Canadian workers are planning to seek new jobs in 2023 – nearly double the amount from a year ago. That poll, conducted this past fall from among 1,100 workers from multiple sectors, showed that 50% of respondents would be seeking new employment in the next six months (up from 31% six months ago). The top reasons for this shift not only include higher salaries, better benefits, and perks, but greater flexibility to decide when and where they work.[164]

As current and potential employees weigh their options and re-valuate their priorities and goals when it pertains to employment, Canada continues its concentrated effort to reach its immigration target of 1.4 million in three years – 465,000 newcomers in 2023, 485,000 in 2024 and 500,000 in 2025 – to fill these widening labour gaps.

In an effort to achieve these goals, the federal government announced new 'selection tools' this past fall aimed at ensuring skilled immigrants find work in their areas of expertise, noting via an Angus Reid Institute poll that at least one third of 500 newcomers surveyed downgraded their jobs to achieve an easier entry to Canada.[165] Canada's immigration efforts have already seen a record-number 406,000 newcomers welcomed as permanent residents in 2021, with more than 191,000 work and study permit holders transitioned from temporary to permanent resident status.[166]

While an influx of immigrants is welcomed news in hopes of easing labour shortages, the need to ensure resources are available to serve this growing population is imperative. Besides an adequate supply of housing, language training is just as important to provide them with a basic tool they need to enter the workforce even faster.

Currently, the federally-funded LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers) program is available through many post-secondary institutions, but all avenues at the provincial level - such as Ontario's Adult Non-Credit Language Training Program, which received a $60 million boost from the province in 2020 – must also be explored to ensure there are enough spaces available for these potential learners at the community level, such as with organizations like the Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership.[167]

In addition, while immigration is key when it comes to the rejuvenation of our labour force, an effort also needs to be made to explore other avenues when it comes to cultivating a potential workforce that may already exist, namely among some of the thousands who currently access the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).

The province announced it was increasing the monthly earnings exemption this past fall for those on ODSP from $200 to $1,000 per month, allowing individuals on the program to keep 25 cents on the dollar, in hopes of allowing the 25,000 people currently in the workforce to keep more of their earnings and potentially encouraging an additional 25,000 more to enter the labour market.[168] Recent StatsCan figures indicate there were 372,000 job vacancies in Ontario during the third quarter of 2022 and that 60% of these required a high school education only, providing much opportunity for employment, but on average paid less than $20 an hour.[169]

While these job vacancies could be a positive step in assisting those ODSP recipients who have the capability to work, the province needs to provide assistance towards covering the costs of their needed supports (i.e. prescribed medications) especially if their employers do not, which could allow more to enter the labour market

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[164] https://bit.ly/3HtCGGT- Half of Canadian workers will job hunt in 2023: poll - CBC

[165] https://bit.ly/3R692KZ-Canada to admit 1.4 million immigrants in three years to address labour shortages – Financial Post

[166] https://bit.ly/403eHWr-2022 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration

[167] https://bit.ly/3HA0GIz-Ontario spends $60M on free language training for all immigrants – Immigration.ca

[168] https://bit.ly/3WAatm8-Ontario boosts income cap for ODSP recipients but no new changes for those who can't work – CTV News

[169] https://bit.ly/3kVEkbD-Noticing a labour shortage? Here's what's really going on in Ontario's job market - CBC