

Review

# Settlement and Integration Needs of Skilled Immigrants in Canada

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**Abstract:** It is often believed that the settlement and integration of skilled immigrants is moderately easy in Canada, and that skilled immigrants do well in Canada after a brief adjustment period. However, numerous barriers prevent the effective integration of skilled immigrants in the mainstream society. Despite being famous for its Federal Skilled Worker Program, which includes the immigration of skilled workers through Express Entry, Canada shows disappointing results in the economic and social outcomes of the integration of skilled immigrants. This has socioeconomic implications for the immigrants and affects their health and wellbeing. Therefore, there is a need for all those who are involved with immigrant integration to explore and be conversant about the contexts and issues faced by skilled newcomers in Canada. In reviewing the academic and grey literature on the settlement and integration of skilled immigrants in Canada, this paper highlights the challenges faced by skilled immigrants in Canada and the needs experienced by them in facing these challenges. It provides an overview of the experiences and expectations of skilled immigrants related to their settlement and integration in Canada. This paper indicates a need to evaluate the availability of immigrant services focused on skilled immigrants and the effectiveness of the existing support offered to them by various government and non-government agencies.

**Keywords:** skilled immigrants; immigrant integration; barriers to integration; settlement and integration needs

## 1. Introduction

Compared to other industrialized countries, Canada has a fairly high net migration rate (difference between total immigrants and total emigrants per 1000 population). In 2017, the net migration rate for Canada was 5.7%, whereas for the United States it was 3.9% ([Central Intelligence Agency 2018](#)). In 2016, Canada had a foreign-born population of 7.5 million people representing 21.9% of the total population ([Statistics Canada 2017](#)). Between 2011 and 2016, around 1,212,075 foreign-born people immigrated to Canada ([Statistics Canada 2017](#)), and, between 2004 and 2015, Canada has welcomed an average of approximately 250,000 immigrants every year (Citizenship and Immigration Canada ([Citizenship and Immigration Canada CIC](#))). A large number of immigrants are accepted for entry under the Federal Skilled Worker Program to address labour shortages identified by the Government of Canada in the Canadian labour market ([Sakamoto et al. 2010](#)). For instance, between 2002 and 2014, Canada took 983,887 skilled immigrants, of which 408,895 were principal applicants under the Federal Skilled Worker Program ([Citizenship and Immigration Canada CIC](#)). In 2016, 59,999 skilled workers were accepted under this program, out of which 46.8% were principal applicants and 53.2% were spouses or dependents ([Government of Canada 2017e](#)). On 1 January 2015, the Government of Canada introduced a new electronic Express Entry system to manage the applications for permanent residence under federal economic immigration programs, including the Federal Skilled Worker

Program ([Government of Canada 2017a](#)). Express Entry is a faster and more flexible system for managing immigration application through which “CIC selects candidates that are most likely to succeed in Canada” ([Government of Canada 2017a](#), para. 3). Recently, Canada’s immigration minister unveiled that Canada is all set to raise its annual immigrant intake to historic levels. This multi-year plan will bring approximately one million new immigrants to Canada by 2020. Of those, approximately, 58% will be skilled immigrants ([Government of Canada 2017d](#)).

Canadian immigration policy views immigrants as a significant asset to the country’s social and economic vitality. For that reason, Canada is globally recognized for its well-established immigration policies and integration programs and for the public discourse surrounding the importance of immigrants for local and federal economies ([Sidney 2014](#)). Immigration has emerged as a de facto population and labour force policy which has provided solutions for several demographic challenges in Canada, such as an aging population and shrinking birth rate, a declining dependency ratio, and skills shortages in a global and information-based economy ([Boyd and Alboim 2012](#); [Elabor-Idemudia 2005](#)). To address these challenges, Canadian immigration policy has evolved from being racially discriminatory until the 1960s, to introducing a purportedly objective point system in 1967, to adjusting the immigration inflow between the late 1970s to the early 1980s according to the fluctuating business cycle. In recent times, Canadian immigration policy has been emphasizing immigration for “designated” occupations, to attract highly skilled workers with advanced educational credentials and professional experience to best address Canada’s economic needs ([Boyd and Alboim 2012](#); [Green and Green 2004](#); [Henry and Tator 2006](#); [Reitz 2007](#)). Recent policy initiatives focus on perfecting the immigration system to best address Canada’s economic needs ([Sidney 2014](#)). The current system prioritizes the entry of immigrants with advanced educational achievements and skills; however, it does not guarantee their successful settlement and integration ([Casson 2013](#)).

Canada is a member of the Group of Seven (G7) leading industrial economies and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). It is one of the world’s wealthiest and most developed nations. Canada boasts a high standard of living and steady economic growth and has built itself a global reputation for being a welcoming and inclusive society. For all these reasons, it is tempting to believe that the settlement and integration of skilled immigrants is moderately easy in Canada and that skilled immigrants do well in Canada after a brief adjustment period, provided they remain motivated and work hard ([Hum and Simpson 2004](#); Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council ([TRIEC 2018a](#))). However, numerous challenges prevent their effective integration in mainstream society ([Picot and Sweetman 2012](#)). In fact, [Lowe and Ortiz \(2015\)](#) have characterized Canada as showing “disappointing” results in the economic and social outcomes of the integration of skilled immigrants.

The goal of this article is to provide a general overview of the current literature on the settlement and integration of skilled immigrants in Canada. This article adds to the existing literature by incorporating new material from academic peer-reviewed articles and grey literature including government and stakeholder reports. When examining the integration of skilled immigrants in Canada, most authors focus largely on the economic integration (i.e., employment outcomes) of the skilled immigrants. The intent of this article, however, is to explore and identify the needs of skilled immigrants related to their settlement and integration in Canada with respect to information, employment, language, and culture. In addition, this paper draws together different factors associated with the health outcomes of skilled immigrants in Canada. The paper presents key concepts that are relevant to the settlement and integration of immigrants in Canada, discusses the challenges to effective social and economic integration of skilled immigrants, and makes recommendations for future research.

## 2. Concepts Related to Settlement and Integration of Skilled Immigrants

The settlement and integration of immigrants is complex and multifaceted. Therefore, it is important to define the terms “settlement” and “integration” prior to exploring this area. In the literature, the term

settlement is often used to indicate the preliminary steps in the integration process in which the initial needs of immigrants are met in domains such as housing, school registration for immigrant children, initiation of language training for adults, accessing mainstream services, and gaining a basic understanding of rights and responsibilities (Drolet et al. 2012; Government of Canada 2017b; Handford and Tan 2003; Mwarigha 2002; Valtonen 2008). On the other hand, the term integration is used to refer to the “ability to contribute, free of barriers, to every dimension of Canadian life—economic, social, cultural, and political” (CIC 2001, p. 6)—and is often used as an umbrella term to discuss the settlement process of immigrants in Canada (Li 2003). Integration entails a desirable outcome, as immigrants become members of the host society. It is used to gauge the success and failure of immigrants and to determine the efficacy of the Canadian immigration policy. For instance, it is used to assess the extent to which immigrants converge to the average economic performance of their Canadian-born counterparts or to their average normative and behavioural standards (Li 2003). An immigrant is considered to be successfully integrated if s/he adopts an official language (English or French), moves away from ethnic enclaves, and participates in social-economic and political activities of the mainstream society (Dorais 2002; Li 2003; Tam 2003).

Settlement and integration is a two-way process, which requires commitment on the part of the immigrants to adapt to the life in Canada and a supportive attitude on the part of Canadians to welcome new people and cultures (Thomson 2010). The process varies depending on individual needs and does not take place within a fixed time frame. The process of settlement and integration requires that housing, education, nutrition, and healthcare needs of the immigrants are met; that immigrants participate fully and satisfyingly in the labour market, local economy, society, and community; that immigrants achieve a sense of belonging in the community (Murphy 2010).

### 3. Challenges to Effective Social and Economic Integration of Skilled Immigrants

Recent immigrants to Canada are the most educated and highly trained immigrants to date (Banerjee and Verma 2011), yet they continue to face difficulties in the settlement process (Man 2004; Reitz 2007). As skilled immigrants are economically motivated, professionally trained, and vocationally oriented, their settlement experiences are distinct from those of other classes of immigrants (Chen 2008; Meraj 2015). Migrating as permanent residents, they carry high expectations about their settlement in Canada, with all their demands fulfilled for a more professionally successful life than in their home countries (Trumper and Wong 2010). However, many skilled immigrants face significant challenges in their social and economic integration (Gauthier 2016).

The major factors that are considered to be the biggest challenges to effective social and economic integration of skilled immigrants include: (a) lack of information and guidance; (b) lack of recognition of foreign credentials; (c) lack of recognition of previous work experience or employers' requirement for Canadian experience; (d) lack of language skills; (e) difficulties in obtaining references; (f) prejudices, stereotypes, and discrimination; (g) cultural integration; (h) social and emotional support; and (i) health and wellbeing (Alboim and McIsaac 2007; Banerjee and Phan 2014; Chen et al. 2010; Drolet et al. 2015; Esses et al. 2007; Gauthier 2016; George and Chaze 2009; Government of Canada 2006; Lowe and Ortiz 2015; Murphy 2010; Ng and Omariba 2010; Reitz 2007; Sakamoto et al. 2010; Weiner 2008). In the following, the literature on the above nine factors will be reviewed under four broad categories: (a) information and guidance; (b) employment; (c) language and culture; (d) health and wellbeing.

#### 3.1. Information and Guidance

In 2006, the Government of Canada conducted a series of focus groups with immigrants and immigrant serving agencies in Ontario cities to study the settlement and integration needs of immigrants. The findings revealed that the written resources available at the time when the participating immigrants first arrived in Canada were insufficient to meet their needs. The need for authentic and immigrant-friendly information about the benefits and challenges of immigrating

prior to when immigrants leave their home countries so that they can make informed decisions about migrating to Canada was also observed ([Government of Canada 2006](#)).

In a similar initiative in 2014, CIC funded a survey to gather information about the experiences, expectations, and service needs of the overseas and prospective skilled immigrants to Canada. The survey identified an urgent need for pre-arrival information and guidance on employment support, such as career paths, education, training, professional licensing. The findings highlighted that even though the exact point at which prospective skilled immigrants are ready to receive information about settlement may vary, the fact that they want this information while still overseas means that there are particular pre-migration information and guidance needs. ([Lowe and Ortiz 2015](#)). The Canadian Immigration Integration Program (CIIP) also suggested that the settlement process often takes longer and poses significant difficulties to immigrants, who do not receive pre-migration information ([Centre for Community Based Research 2010](#)). CIIP is a Government of Canada-funded initiative involving the Government of Canada, the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC), and a network of partners across Canada. The program was launched as a pilot project in 2007 and transformed into a full-fledged program in 2010. It provides free pre-departure orientation to federal skilled workers, provincial nominees, and their spouses and adult dependents, while they are still overseas during the final stages of the immigration process ([Government of Canada 2015a](#)).

Other studies have confirmed the need for information and guidance prior to arrival in Canada. For instance, a study of university-educated South Asian immigrant women in Toronto revealed that skilled immigrants would be better prepared for finding employment, housing, or for securing accreditation of qualification if they were provided realistic information before or during the application process ([George and Chaze 2009](#)). [Goldberg \(2002\)](#), who reported that the lack of pre-immigration licensing information affected the new skilled immigrants' access to regulated occupations in Ontario, identified a similar need earlier. Lack of licensing information is identified as a major challenge for the skilled immigrants in regulated professions, especially for the internationally trained engineers. The information on government websites does not include practical details related to the settlement and living in Canada or employment-related information, such as educational requirements, requirements related to Canadian experience, and job search strategies such as resume building and networking ([George and Chaze 2009, 2012](#)). To address this concern, [Banerjee and Phan \(2014\)](#) suggested that making available the detailed information about occupational requirements and expectations to the skilled immigrants prior to immigration can help them better prepare for integration in Canada.

It is increasingly clear from the literature that information and guidance enable the settlement and integration of immigrants. Therefore, these should be recognized as a necessary resource. To address this need, the [Government of Canada \(2015a\)](#) administers a funding program for the delivery of targeted and high-quality pre-arrival settlement services related to information and orientation, language training, employment-related services, community connections, needs assessments and referrals, and support services. However, it is important to make the information and guidance accessible, usable, and culturally meaningful to the prospective immigrants. Therefore, it should be made available in several immigrant languages ([Caidi and Allard 2005](#)).

### 3.2. Employment

In the literature, employment is widely discussed as a highly prioritized area for the majority of immigrants ([Murphy 2010](#)). Despite the fact that there is a shortage of skilled labour in Canada and that skilled immigrants gain entry in Canada on the basis of a positive evaluation of their potential to contribute to Canada's economic well-being ([Reitz 2005](#)), skilled immigrants experience high rates of underemployment and unemployment in Canada compared to their Canadian-born counterparts ([Desjardins and Cornelson 2011](#); [Sakamoto et al. 2010](#); [Statistics Canada 2005](#)). Major factors that are considered to be barriers to employment include a lack of recognition of foreign credentials, lack of recognition of previous work experience or employers' requirement for Canadian experience, difficulties in obtaining references, and discrimination ([Alboim and McIsaac 2007](#);

Murphy 2010; Statistics Canada 2005; Weiner 2008). These barriers to employment intersect with each other and complicate the economic integration of skilled immigrants. For instance, in a collaborative research project involving several Toronto-based community agencies serving immigrants, Sakamoto et al. (2010) explored what Canadian experience means in the context of skilled immigrant employment and found that Canadian experience is not only seen as a necessary requirement for obtaining employment, but it is also used by employers as a tool to discriminate against immigrants. Similarly, Houle and Yssaad (2010) found that the recognition of foreign credentials and work experience impedes not only the economic integration of skilled immigrants, but also their broader integration within the Canadian society.

A number of studies have indicated that new skilled immigrants face devaluation of foreign credentials and work experience in Canada, which poses a significant difficulty in finding an appropriate employment consistent with their qualifications and previous work experience (Aydemir and Skuterud 2005; Banerjee and Phan 2014; Green and Worswick 2009; Houle and Yssaad 2010; Li 2001; Reitz 2005; Sakamoto et al. 2010). Immigrants who are qualified to work in regulated professions in their home country experience significant downgrading of their foreign credentials in Canada (Banerjee and Phan 2014). In fact, the downgrading of foreign credentials does not stop at highly regulated professions, such as physicians, engineers, teachers, social workers, but it also takes place in unregulated professions (Reitz 2005). Other studies have explored the issue of devaluation of immigrants' foreign credentials from the perspective of racial discrimination. For instance, Esses et al. (2007) examined the role of bias against visible minorities in the devaluation of immigrants' foreign-acquired qualification and credentials and concluded that racial biases against visible minorities may result in the devaluation of immigrants' foreign credentials.

The challenges faced by skilled immigrants in the area of employment have implications not only for immigrants and immigrant serving agencies, but also for Canadian employers and Canadian society at large (Murphy 2010). Therefore, there is a need to mitigate the barriers faced by skilled immigrants in finding an appropriate employment in line with their qualification and experience (Muthui 2012). In this regard, the role of foreign credential accreditation has also received attention. Statistics Canada (2005) maintains that accredited foreign credentials enhance the employability of skilled immigrants, boost their economic success, and facilitate their integration process. The accreditation of foreign credential makes a greater pool of resources available for Canada and facilitates the likelihood of skilled immigrants becoming contributors to rather than dependent on the Canadian society and the Canadian government (Statistics Canada 2005).

A need for a proper process of assessment of the foreign credentials has also been indicated (Alberta Employment and Immigration 2010; Brooks 2009). A major hurdle that the professional immigrants experience after arriving in Canada is the delay in the recognition of their foreign credentials (Newton et al. 2012). More often than not, the immigrants find the process of getting foreign credentials accredited and previous work experience recognized very lengthy, time-consuming, and expensive. Sometimes, this process requires further education, leaving immigrants feeling frustrated (Statistics Canada 2005).

Skilled immigrants frequently experience difficulties in gaining a professional license or getting accreditation for their foreign qualifications for regulated professions, especially when there are specific gaps in their training. This is evident when professional training may be relevant for the home country, but it may not contain some key elements that are required in Canada. In such cases, the immigrants are almost always obliged to repeat their entire professional training in Canada (Reitz 2005; Reitz et al. 2014).

There are suggestions that immigrant bridging programs, such as occupation-specific programs that involve collaborations among educational institutions, governments, and regulating bodies, can efficiently fill the specific skills gaps (Reitz 2005; Reitz et al. 2014). In fact, there are several bridging programs available throughout Canada, such as Career Bridge internships initiated by the TRIEC, Qualification En Pharmacie offered by Université de Montréal, the Engineering and Technology Upgrading Program offered by Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, the International Pharmacy

Bridging Program offered by the Bredin Centre for Learning in Edmonton and Calgary, and the Bridge to Canadian Nursing Certificate program or Ready to Teach program offered by Mount Royal University and SAIT Polytechnic in Alberta (Government of Alberta 2018; Reitz 2005; Reitz et al. 2014). However, the policy development in this domain has proceeded unevenly across the provinces. As Ontario leads in policy initiatives, bridging programs to optimize immigrant skill utilization may be more advanced there (Reitz et al. 2014). For instance, the TRIEC initiative has been influential not only in Toronto but also in other regions in Ontario. Ontario's Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration has funded the most extensive number of bridge training programs for internationally trained individuals in Canada (TRIEC 2018b), including bridge programs from pharmacy and nursing to midwifery or biotechnology (TRIEC 2018b). Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council (CRIEC) and Edmonton Region Immigrant Employment Council (ERIEC) also provide employment support to immigrants in their respective regions; however, we need more such initiatives across Canada (Reitz et al. 2014).

The Government of Canada (2006) suggested that bridging programs with minimal salaries can be used by immigrants as a means of gaining Canadian experience, to enhance their knowledge of the Canadian workforce, and to avail opportunities to demonstrate their existing skills. Also, stakeholders across Canada acknowledge that multi-layered bridging programs can help immigrants obtain clinical or workplace experience, skills training, academic upgrading, examination preparation, language training, and other knowledge and competencies that they may lack, but are often a prerequisite for obtaining credential recognition (Government of Canada 2015b). The federal government and the stakeholders insist that bridging programs are highly effective in facilitating the professional integration of skilled immigrants in Canada (Government of Canada 2015b; Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants 2017; Pharmacists' Gateway Canada 2014); however, empirical research has problematized the bridging programs. For instance, Hathiyani (2017) has argued that bringing programs are often surrounded by inconsistencies and instabilities making them incapable of addressing systemic issues and making the business sector, rather than immigrants, their main beneficiary.

Sakamoto et al. (2010) indicated that there is a need for mentoring programs to facilitate a connection between a skilled immigrant and an established Canadian professional in the same or a related occupation. In addition, a need for volunteer work, internship, and/or co-op programs has been indicated, as some previous skilled immigrants found them very helpful in gaining the much desired Canadian experience (Sakamoto et al. 2010). Addressing this need, several government and non-government immigrant-serving agencies collaborate with employers to offer mentorship programs to help immigrants develop their professional networks, improve their job search strategies, enhance their professional understanding, and gain insights into Canadian workplace culture. One-on-one and Small Group Mentoring Programs by Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council (CRIEC), Career Mentorship Program by Edmonton Region Immigrant Employment Council (ERIEC), and the Mentoring Partnership initiated by TRIEC are few examples of mentorship programs in Canada.

### 3.3. Language and Culture

The need for language training and support also figures heavily for immigrants in terms of settlement and integration. Approximately 99% of the principal applicants under the Federal Skilled Worker Program and roughly 85% of skilled workers' spouses and dependents are able to speak English and/or French (Statistics Canada 2005). Currently, to be eligible for Express Entry, the applicants for Federal Skilled Worker Program must meet the minimum language requirement as per the Canadian Language Benchmark for listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities in English or French (Government of Canada 2017c). However, these abilities vary and may not always be considered to be sufficient for effective communication in day-to-day life, or for employment (Murphy 2010). Lack of Canadian accent or rhythm of speech, knowledge of specific linguistic skills such as job, position, or industry-specific jargons, knowledge of Canadian expressions, idioms, and/or slangs,

and cross-cultural communication may affect the employment outcomes ([Government of Canada 2006](#); [Social Planning Council of Ottawa 2009](#)).

Language skill is repeatedly identified as an important factor that facilitates access to the intended occupation and determines the occupational outcomes of skilled immigrants ([Grenier and Xue 2011](#); [Grondin 2005](#)). Official language ability is one of the most heavily emphasized pathways to integration. There is a general consensus among immigrants, particularly, skilled immigrants, that improving language abilities can facilitate their settlement and integration into the mainstream Canadian society ([Galiev and Masoodi 2012](#)). Nonetheless, inadequate access to cultural knowledge, inadequate local language skills, and lack of opportunities to interact with those who speak official languages are barriers to immigrant integration ([Derwing and Waugh 2012](#); [Kaushik et al. 2016](#)). Therefore, there is a need to include information about Canadian culture, workplace norms, soft skills training, and other practical information in language and culture training programs ([Murphy 2010](#); [Sakamoto et al. 2010](#)).

The federal and the provincial governments in Canada are addressing these needs by developing comprehensive language and culture training programs for new immigrants. One such federal initiative is the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program delivered by the Government of Canada ([Government of Canada 2017f](#)). The program provides English and French language training. Another such initiative is the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) ([CIC 2011](#)), which helps immigrants in the adaptation, settlement, and integration into the Canadian society and institutions. However, more programs focused on providing advanced language training for the professional immigrants are needed to address specific needs of the skilled immigrants ([Grant 2007](#)). One way to address this need is to provide on-site language and communication skills training offered by the employers ([Brooks 2009](#)).

### 3.4. Health & Wellbeing

It has been widely documented that the health status of immigrants is generally better as compared to their Canadian-born counterpart; however, it deteriorates after they arrive in Canada ([Ali 2002](#); [Bergeron et al. 2009](#); [Lou and Beaujot 2005](#); [Newbold and Danforth 2003](#); [Ng and Omariba 2010](#)). This phenomenon is repeatedly referred to as the “healthy immigrant effect” ([Ng 2011](#)) and is widely used as a paradigm to study immigrants’ health ([Diaz 2017](#)). Literature outlines several potential explanations for the healthy immigrant effect, such as pre-immigration health screening or medical exam, relatively healthy behaviours of new immigrants prior to migration, immigrant self-selection—the hypothesis that the healthiest and wealthiest individuals are the most likely to migrate—and finally the hypothesis that the less healthy immigrants return home ([Jasso et al. 2004](#); [Kennedy et al. 2015](#); [McDonald and Kennedy 2004](#)). The healthy immigrant effect extends to both physical as well as mental health outcomes. The phenomenon has been observed in the context of self-reported health ([Fuller-Thomson et al. 2011](#); [Newbold 2009](#)), self-perceived mental health ([Ali 2002](#); [Lou and Beaujot 2005](#)), chronic diseases ([Meshefedjian et al. 2014](#)), and mental illness ([Newbold 2009](#); [Smith et al. 2007](#); [Vang et al. 2017](#)).

Stress is considered a major risk factor for a variety of physical and mental illnesses ([Health Canada 2008](#)). The immigrants may develop poor health outcomes as they face multiple psychological stressors during settlement and integration, including change of social environment, adapting to new cultural norms, inability to speak the new language, finding a suitable employment, experiencing a decreased socioeconomic status, separation from family and friends, and lack of social support ([Chadwick and Collins 2015](#); [CIC 2011](#); [Robert and Wilkinson 2012](#)). On the other hand, the immigrants are also less likely to experience declining health if they are highly satisfied with their settlement experience. In other words, there is a positive association between the settlement experience and the health and well-being of immigrants ([Newbold 2009](#); [George et al. 2015](#)).

The social determinants of immigrant health include employment and income ([Dean and Wilson 2009](#)), socioeconomic status ([Ng and Omariba 2010](#)), and race and ethnicity, in particular racism and discrimination ([Hyman 2009](#)). As discussed earlier in this paper, skilled immigrants face a

number of barriers and, as a result, they often end up in jobs that underutilize their education and skills. Unemployment and underemployment negatively impact the overall health of immigrants, more specifically, their mental health (Dean and Wilson 2009). For instance, in a longitudinal survey, skilled immigrants who were over-qualified for their current employment reported a decline in their mental health and persistent feelings of sadness, depression, or loneliness. The survey indicated a direct link between immigrants' poor mental health and their unmet expectations or general dissatisfaction with employment (Chen et al. 2010).

Poor mental health leads to low morale, reduced productivity, rapid employee turnover, and higher rates of absenteeism, injuries, and long- and short-term disabilities in general (Institute for Work and Health 2011). However, there is a lack of clear guidelines from the government on how to deal with mental health issues of immigrants. Moreover, there is a need for additional funding to settlement programs to hire mental health workers and/or to train the existing settlement agencies' staff on how to better deal with this issue (CIC 2011). To tackle the issue of immigrant mental health, Puyat (2013) recommended a social support system to increase the conviction amongst immigrants that they will receive help whenever they need it and feel valued by other people. He also suggested that this model of social support would help immigrants cope with adverse circumstances during the settlement phase and provide a buffer against health problems. Immigrant services with increased lingual support and cultural competency can also provide better social support to immigrants. In addition, counselling or psychological services are also warranted within immigrant settlement agencies (Chadwick and Collins 2015; Mental Health Commission of Canada 2012).

#### 4. Conclusions

Canada proudly welcomes immigrants from around the world, acknowledges their economic contributions, and understands their importance for the country's future economic growth, job creation, and overall prosperity. For this reason, Canada's immigration policy lays emphasis on the point system which is designed to attract skilled immigrants who show promise of being able to join in and contribute to the Canadian economy and society. However, despite the fact that our immigration policies favour skilled professionals and highly educated persons, our skilled immigrants often find themselves in a disadvantaged position while searching for an employment corresponding to their aptitudes and professional experience. As a result, questions arise concerning Canada's integration capacity, the quality of the welcome extended to the skilled newcomers, and the efficacy of the public machinery in producing and promoting the socioeconomic inclusiveness of the newcomers in Canada (Government of Canada 2017e; Pathways to Prosperity 2018; Riddell et al. 2016).

This review of the literature highlights the challenges faced by the skilled immigrants in Canada and the needs experienced by them in facing these challenges. It provides an overview of the experiences and expectations of the skilled immigrants related to their settlement and integration in Canada. The article builds an understanding of the landscape of programs and practices and how they affect and support skilled immigrants through the process of settlement and integration. It points to the gap between the needs of the skilled immigrants and the existing support offered to them and indicates that skilled immigrants require effective needs-driven settlement services when they first decide to migrate to Canada and linguistically and culturally appropriate health and social services as they navigate the process of settlement and integration in a new environment. To achieve a successful social and economic integration of skilled immigrants in the mainstream Canadian society, further support is needed that meets the socioeconomic, linguistic, cultural, and health and wellbeing needs of the skilled immigrants and their family members.

There is a need to evaluate the availability of settlement services focused on skilled immigrants and the effectiveness of the existing support offered by employers, government, and non-governmental organizations. Future research can systematically review and present a comparison of the settlement and integration provisions for skilled immigrants across the provinces and territories of Canada. Future research can also review international literature. International comparisons would allow for a

better understanding of the issue and for better recommendations for the improvement of immigration and settlement policies for skilled immigrants in Canada. An analysis of the political will to develop better programs and policies to foster a smooth and successful socioeconomic integration of skilled immigrants will also make for an interesting study.

Denying skilled immigrants access to programs and services, which can facilitate their integration in the mainstream Canadian society, is unjust and can lead to their marginalization and exclusion. The effective integration of skilled immigrants requires collaboration between various stakeholders such as the immigrants, social services providers, researchers, policy makers, governments, and employers. This paper is a contribution to the literature that informs all those who are involved with immigrant integration about the need to advocate for immigrant needs, to augment collaboration so to achieve full integration of skilled immigrants, and to promote a holistic approach to immigrant integration and wellbeing.

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