

SUPPORT NETWORK FOR RURAL NEWCOMERS

MEETING #4

JUNE 2023



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LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

AAISA acknowledges Treaty 7 territory—the traditional and ancestral territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy: Kainai, Piikani and Siksika as well as the Tsuu T’ina Nation and Stoney Nakoda First Nation. We acknowledge that this territory is home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3 within the historical Northwest Métis Homeland. We acknowledge the many First Nations, Métis and Inuit who have lived in and cared for these lands for generations. We are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers and Elders who are still with us today and those who have gone before us. We make this acknowledgement as an act of reconciliation and gratitude to those whose territory we reside on or are visiting.

INTRODUCTION

This fourth meeting was held on June 15, 2023. There were follow-up discussions regarding the tools and professional development courses designed for the *Support Network for Rural Newcomers* Project. There were also important discussions around the catch-22 many newcomers face when trying to obtain permanent residency. They need Canadian work experience to secure permanent residency, but they can't gain this experience without a job, and some jobs require them to have permanent residency before they can work, creating a frustrating cycle of obstacles. There were broad conversations about Alberta's Rural Renewal Stream and its ongoing challenges and opportunities. AAISA has developed a new tool for the Rural Support Network participants and will continue to develop a few more tools before the project ends in February 2024.

KEY THEMES

CHALLENGES

The following challenges have been experienced by newcomers and those who are supporting newcomers on their journey towards permanent residency.

QUALIFICATION RECOGNITION

Many in demand jobs require qualifications by a regulatory body such as a Red Seal certification for Mechanics. The catch-22 that seems to be occurring from municipalities regarding attracting newcomers to fill very specific job market openings is that the newcomers are ineligible to obtain their qualifications without existing permanent residency status first. On the other hand, nominees under the Rural Renewal Stream are unable to obtain permanent residency without the facilitation of the Rural Renewal Stream. Thus, creating a significant challenge in the labour market for skilled workers, and the individual newcomers seeking to pursue a career in their field of expertise.

This catch-22 is not an isolated instance to rural Alberta and can be found among other policies requiring newcomers to have Canadian work experience to obtain a job in their designated field. As there are many nuances and requirements for [regulated occupations](#) in Alberta, it can be difficult to obtain employment in one's designated field of expertise.

RECOMMENDATION

To minimize the strain on the economy, labour gaps, and on newcomers' morale, there can be some policy mitigations to decrease barriers and increase access to employment for skilled workers. One solution could involve streamlining the process for newcomers to first obtain temporary work permits that allow them to work in their respective fields while they pursue the necessary Canadian qualifications (i.e., education, experience, certification). This would involve a

degree of collaboration between regulatory bodies, municipalities, and government to create a more flexible system that allows newcomers to remain in their field of expertise while taking steps towards permanent residency.

TOOLS FOR SUPPORT NETWORK PARTICIPANTS

Newcomer Welcome Package Template

AAISA has finished the Newcomer Welcome Package template for the Support Network participants and encourages everyone to use the template and customize it to their municipality's unique programs and services available. The Newcomer Welcome Package template can be downloaded from [this link](#). The template is comprehensive, providing information about immigration streams, basic needs for the first 14 days of arrival, housing information, newcomer services, community services, healthcare services, employment opportunities and more.

Tools to Engage Landlords and Employers

One of the significant challenges faced by settlement workers and community partners dedicated to helping newcomers settle in rural areas is the engagement with local landlords and employers. Frequently, there is a lack of awareness about the systemic barriers newcomers face when seeking housing and employment. To address this issue, creating engagement tools and informative documents for landlords and employers becomes essential to encourage better integration for newcomers in their communities.

NEXT STEPS

Rural Renewal Stream

The virtual Rural Renewal Summit will be held on July 25th, where AAISA will be inviting all *Rural Support Network* participants, and all Rural Renewal Stream designated communities, along with any other interested parties. The summit will provide a space for designated communities to voice their concerns, challenges, and potential opportunities moving forward to better support newcomers pursuing permanent residency via the Rural Renewal Stream. Following the summit, AAISA will be creating a document outlining the key themes of the summit, along with background knowledge and context to clarify any confusion regarding the different immigration streams and pathways to permanent residency.

The next Rural Support Network meeting will be held on September 14, 2023.