Addressing the Labour Market Gap: North Coast & Nechako Region

In recent years, employers have found themselves grappling with the pressing need to adapt to the needs and expectations of job seekers to attract and retain skilled staff. Meanwhile, job seekers face the daunting task of securing employment despite the myriad opportunities available. The *Addressing the Labour Market Gap Report* is the culmination of an extensive research effort, drawing upon the valuable input of 1,225 job seekers and 812 employers across the province.

Within the North Coast and Nechako region, 90 job seekers and 45 employers participated in the provincial survey between February 7 and March 3, 2023.

In the North Coast and Nechako region, 62% job seekers indicated that they are employed either on a full time or part-time basis. This is reflective of the provincial average (65%). However, among employers in this region, only 9% indicated that they are sole business owners, which is significantly less than the provincial average (24%). Job seekers in the North Coast and Nechako region were more likely to participate in the gig economy compared to other regions surveyed. Only 27% of job seeker respondents indicated that they had *never* participated in the gig economy, compared to 36% provincially. Finally, while both employers and job seekers across BC expressed challenges finding one another after the pandemic, the proportion of respondents who rated this as very difficult from the North Coast and Nechako region is lower than provincial averages. This suggests that the pandemic may have impacted the labour market differently in the North Coast and Nechako region compared to other regions surveyed.

Key highlights of the findings from the North Coast and Nechako region are outlined below.

- **Top Challenge |** Employers in the North Coast and Nechako region identified finding qualified applicants that match the job description as the largest challenge facing employers currently. Job seekers in this region most commonly cited finding jobs that meet their salary expectations as their top challenge. Both of these findings reflect the top challenges cited by employers and job seekers province-wide.

- **Recruitment Process |** Employers in the region found it most difficult to deal with applications from unqualified applicants. This differs from findings from across BC, where employers identified defining salary ranges and offers as the most difficult part of the recruitment process. Job seekers in this region felt that negotiating salaries and offers was the greatest challenge, which is reflective of findings at the provincial level.

- **Job Postings |** Regional employers and job seekers had different ideas about what features are most important in job postings. Employers ranked work/office environment as the most important "selling feature" of a job posting. In contrast, salary and opportunities for advancement were the most important features of any job posting according to job seekers. These findings reflect provincial-level data.

- **Salaries |** 47% of employers described challenges finding qualified candidates within the salary range they offered while 39% of job seekers found it challenging to find jobs that met their salary expectations.

- **Diversity and Inclusion |** Both job seekers and employers in the North Coast and Nechako region identified the presence of a "safe and fair environment that is welcoming to workers of different backgrounds" as one of the most important factors influencing worker retention. However, the *Report* illustrates gaps in policies to support this: while 68% of employers in the region reported having policies in place to support a diverse workforce, only 54% of job seekers reported experiencing such policies at their previous workplace. This gap between employer policies and job seeker experience is reflective of findings from across BC.

To access the full "Addressing the Labour Market Gap Insights Report," please visit
https://bcchamber.org/addressing-the-labour-market-gap/