

## Looking forward: 2020

*Canadian business leaders are cautious but hopeful*

*It remains difficult to fill skilled worker positions*

*Work ethic/integrity and attitude are most important when hiring*

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**TORONTO, Dec. 30, 2019** – As Canadians prepare to ring in the new year, unemployment has increased slightly to 5.9%, and there are more people seeking work in Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia.

To answer questions about the 2020 outlook, Express Employment Professionals released the results of a survey of business owners, decision makers and human resource professionals. While respondents are generally optimistic about the year ahead, there is some apprehension.

A total of 585 business leaders surveyed were asked, “How easy is it for you to recruit and fill open positions?” The majority of respondents (78%) find it difficult, included in that number are 28% who find it very difficult.

In answering that question, Bradley Jenkins, an Express Employment Professionals franchise owner in Cambridge, Ontario, notes that the type of position dictates whether it will be difficult to fill. According to Jenkins, “Administrative and customer service roles can be filled quickly and effectively, while manual labour, skilled trades and even semi-skilled trades remain challenging.”

Jenkins points to the Ontario minimum wage increase introduced in January 2018 as an important factor. Although the current provincial government decided to cap minimum wage increases at \$14 until 2020, the initial increase “was focused on those making minimum wage, and not \$16 or \$17 an hour. These workers felt left out and are disgruntled, making it harder to retain skilled and semi-skilled workers,” Jenkins noted. “Entry-level positions remain much easier to fill.”

While 46% of respondents said they do not foresee the country entering into another recession within the next two years, there is still some concern.

- 1% expect a recession within 3 months
- 3% expect a recession within 3 to 6 months
- 12% expect a recession in 6 months to 1 year
- 18% expect a recession in 1 to 2 years

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- 20% expect a recession in 2 years

When asked whether there could be a recession on the horizon Jenkins says, "It is still uncertain."

Hanif Hemani, Express Managing Director in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, shares this worry.

"Western Canada (especially Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta) is concerned about the current economic situation, with oil, mining, and agriculture all facing pressures domestically and from foreign players," he said.

He notes that there is some hope among Westerners, that the government in Ottawa recognizes the concerns of the region and is prepared to address them.

Respondents also had a generally positive outlook for wages, with 45% saying wages will increase at their companies over the next six months and 54% saying they will stay the same. Nineteen percent expect benefit increases in the next year.

Although Saskatchewan's unemployment rate is currently at 5.6%, comparable to the national average, Hemani agrees with 54% of respondents who do not see wages increasing in the first two quarters.

While experience and culture fit are important traits when hiring, respondents noted that work ethic, integrity and attitude are still the most critically important traits.

Hemani echoes that response; when it comes to what clients are looking for—particularly in temporary or entry level roles—it is most often "hard working and reliable" candidates. His advice to clients is similar "When possible, hire for attitude and train for skill."

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In the Next Three Months,  
Do You Anticipate Your Business Will?

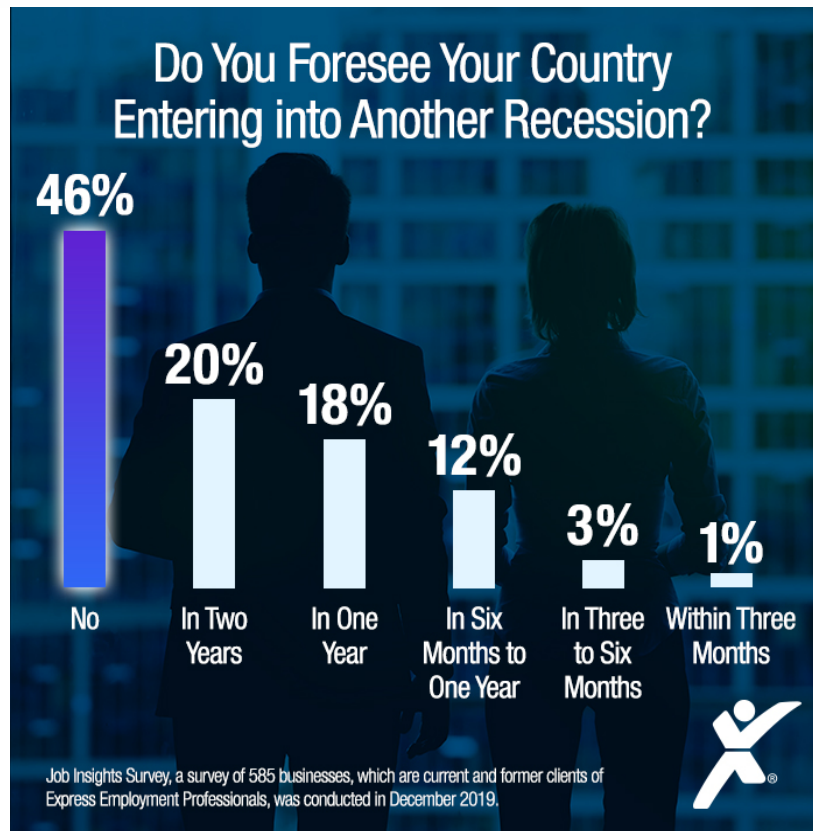
**42%**  
Trend Up

**13%**  
Trend Down

**44%**  
Stay the Same

Job Insights Survey, a survey of 585 businesses, which are current and former clients of Express Employment Professionals, was conducted in December 2019.





“Not long ago, the conventional wisdom said that 2020 would be the Year of the Recession. But from all indicators, it looks like 2020 could turn out to be a year of stability, if not strong growth,” said Bill Stoller, CEO of Express. “As in any economy, surprises are always possible. But as 2019 comes to an end, business leaders are ready to welcome 2020.”

### About the Survey

In December 2019, Express Employment Professionals surveyed 585 business owners, decision makers, and human resource professionals about the overall national hiring trends in the market today and how their business is impacted.

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If you would like to arrange for an interview with Bill Stoller to discuss this topic, please contact Adria Minsky at (416) 620-7111 or email [adria@mapleleafstrategies.com](mailto:adria@mapleleafstrategies.com)

### About Bill Stoller

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William H. "Bill" Stoller is chairman and chief executive officer of Express Employment Professionals. Headquartered in Oklahoma City, the international staffing company has more than 800 franchises in the U.S., Canada and South Africa. Since its inception, Express has put more than 7.7 million people to work worldwide.

### **About Express Employment Professionals**

Express Employment Professionals puts people to work. It generated \$3.56 billion in sales and employed a record 566,000 people in 2018. Its long-term goal is to put a million people to work annually. For more information, visit [ExpressPros.com](http://ExpressPros.com).