

## New Survey: Most Canadian Companies Not Planning to Expand Workforce as Lockdowns End

### *Large Companies Almost Three Times More Likely than Small Businesses to Increase Employee Count*

**TORONTO, July 14, 2021** – Although hiring is ramping up as lockdowns end around the country, most businesses are not planning to expand the size of their workforce, according to a new survey from The Harris Poll, commissioned by Express Employment Professionals.

Only 36% of companies plan to increase their number of employees in the second half of this year, while over half (51%) of Canadian hiring decision-makers surveyed say their employee count will stay the same. Fewer than 1 in 10 (8%) expect to decrease the size of their workforce.



While 36% of businesses in the service industry and 29% in the manufacturing sector anticipate adding workers in the second half of this year, white collar work is the most likely to see increases in employee counts (39%).

Additionally, there is a significant difference when it comes to the size of the company in terms of hiring intentions, with large businesses (with 100 or more employees) more than twice as likely to increase the size of their workforce (48%) than small companies with fewer than 10 employees (23%).

Among Canadian companies that are increasing their number of employees, the most common reasons are to manage the increased volume of work (52%), to fill positions that are open due to employee turnover (45%) and/or to fill newly created positions (42%).

However, these encouraging signs of growth may present a challenge as half (50%) say they need more employees to manage their workload but do not have the capacity to hire.

According to Dan Purdy, an Express franchise owner in Abbotsford, British Columbia, companies are no longer feeling risk-averse or cautious and are looking to expand their workforces.

“Businesses accept that in order to survive after the pandemic, government lockdowns and border closures, they must immediately invent, produce, sell and earn,” Purdy said. “The global supply chain is stabilizing, while inventories continue building to pre-pandemic levels. There is significant, pent-up demand for skilled workers right now.”

He adds that both large and small companies in his area, as well as most sectors (including manufacturing, distributing, retail, light/heavy industrial and professional/office services) plan to increase their employee counts in the second half of this year.

In Guelph, Ontario, Express franchise owner Dwayne Williams reports that most companies cannot find enough workers to meet their current needs, let alone fulfil the backlogged demand caused as a result of the pandemic. As such, employee counts will not be able to increase until there are enough job seekers available.

“Prior to the pandemic, there was a shortage of available workers and the pandemic escalated this problem,” Williams said. “Many companies we speak to cannot find enough qualified employees to deal with their daily needs and that is putting pressure on existing staff to meet the demand. So, that is preoccupying many employers instead of expanding their workforce.”

Williams believes the shortage of available workers won't disappear quickly and could hamper the ability of employers to have full staff loads or expand their workforce numbers.

“With the easing of lockdowns and CERB funds being reduced, we are optimistic that more workers will begin the employment search, but there still could be many positions unfilled due to an overall shortage of willing workers,” Williams added.

Terry Stewart, an Express franchise owner in Surrey, British Columbia, is seeing the same problem with a shortage of qualified workers. He points out that these shortages are becoming more acute in some sectors as businesses that were locked down during the pandemic begin to open up and employees return to their pre-pandemic jobs.

“Most business leaders I have spoken with are feeling positive and motivated to get back to pre-pandemic normal,” Stewart said. “But businesses in some sectors are concerned about how they will fill positions as they lose staff going back to their former jobs in hospitality, food service and tourism, and university students head back to school in the fall.”

He adds that companies that rely on international students or international residents coming into the country on work visas for part of their workforce are still being impacted by the inability of many to enter the country.

Signs point to a robust economic recovery from 2020, but employees are desperately needed in every industry, Express CEO Bill Stoller said.

“The uptick in hiring is a welcome change, but it’s apparent we need to pull workers off the sidelines to solve the backlog of services and goods,” he said. “Meaningful work provides more than just a paycheque, and after a year of isolation, these benefits are needed more than ever.”

### **Survey Methodology**

The survey was conducted online within Canada by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals between March 23 and April 12, 2021, among 505 Canadian hiring decision-makers (defined as adults ages 18+ in Canada who are employed full-time or self-employed, work at companies with more than 1 employee, and have full/significant involvement in hiring decisions at their company). Data were weighted where necessary by company size to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population.

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If you would like to arrange for an interview to discuss this topic, please contact Ana Curic at (613) 858-2622 or email [ana@mapleleafstrategies.com](mailto:ana@mapleleafstrategies.com).

### **About Bill Stoller**

William H. "Bill" Stoller is chairman and chief executive officer of Express Employment Professionals. Headquartered in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, the international staffing company has more than 830 franchises in the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Since inception, Express has put more than 9 million people to work worldwide.

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