"To be able to innovate at the speed of global businesses, tech companies in Canada need to be able to grow and hire just as quickly," said Danielle Lovell, co-founder of BLANKSLATE Partners, a Vancouver human resources outsourcing company that helps tech firms with foreign hiring. "Six months is a lifetime in a tech company, and more than enough time for a competitor to [get ahead], while our Canadian companies watch the calendar hoping for approval. The high tech, high skilled talent we're wooing and working to bring to Canada are in demand everywhere."

A story in this week's [Report on Business in the Globe and Mail](#) quotes [BLANKSLATE's own Danielle Lovell](#) on the subject of immigration and high tech workers.

Industry experts are lobbying the Canadian government to reduce the time delay caused by the [Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA)](#) process for high tech companies.

Recruiting for high tech companies

It's something we know a lot about. Recruiting highly skilled, experienced high tech workers in Vancouver is not for the faint of heart. You have to be resourceful, employ lots of out-of-the-box thinking and be quick. If you don't talk to these people first, you may never get the opportunity.

At BLANKSLATE we work with a lot of tech startups to help them find the "needle in the haystack" employees they need to build their dev teams. But it's not easy. In any given week, we might be talking to developers and software engineers from Brazil (experiencing its own brain drain), Eastern Europe, Hong Kong, Spain or New Zealand. All are highly skilled with anywhere from 8 to 15 years experience. But once you find that amazing candidate, actually getting them landed in Canada and legally permitted to work is a time-consuming and costly journey. We are lucky that we have global mobility experts and licensed immigration consultants on our team, which means we can work seamlessly to guide our clients and the candidates through the process.

Building a local talent pool

In a [Vancouver Sun](#) story from last year, Hootsuite's VP of Talent talks about both the brain drain south – highly skilled tech workers leaving Canada for the richer pastures of the Silicon Valley – and some of the initiatives underway in Vancouver to build our own pool of talent. These include the new [Microsoft Centre for Excellence](#) located in downtown Vancouver, which bills itself as "a state of the art facility for for innovation, training and software development." Coincidentally, the Centre received a Labour Market Exemption from the Canadian government, allowing them to bring in foreign workers without conducting an LMIA to see if there wer qualified Canadians to fill the jobs.

A recent market outlook study from the [Information and Communications Technology Council](#) for 2015-2019 shows there will be an estimated demand for 182,000 tech jobs across Canada, and that we don't have a deep-enough pool of homegrown talent to fill those jobs.

With big players like Microsoft, Google, and Amazon moving into Vancouver, joining big gaming industry players like Electronic Arts, how do small tech startups compete for talent?

This [March 28, 2016 article from VanCity Buzz](#) has 12 of the bigger tech startup companies in Vancouver looking to fill 300 technical roles. That doesn't even include all the smaller companies trying to compete for talent.

Image: Casey Yee

Vancouver is working on building its own talent pool. We work closely with local incubators, accelerators, coding academies and post-secondary institutions to source junior talent, but they still need mentoring and time to grow. Lighthouse Labs, CodeCore and Red Academy are turning out talented young developers and designers, but they're new in their careers, without experience building a scaleable enterprise yet. After looking inside Canada, we look abroad to find candidates who have gone through a hyper-growth cycle and maybe even IPO,

and will bring that knowledge and skill set to our tech startups.

We have a strong and growing tech community in Vancouver – [Silicon Valley North](#) – but we need experience to continue to compete on the international stage. Easing the requirements to bring highly skilled, high wage, experienced technical workers to Canada would go a long way to easing the talent shortage. Changes would benefit both tech companies and young Canadian talent who can learn from some of the best in the world.