

Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the Upcoming Federal Budget

World Education Services (WES)

October 2022

Summary of Recommendations

- 1. Build an immigrant-inclusive economy** as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic
 - **Improve access to timely, disaggregated labour market information** and tools so that people and businesses can make informed decisions about training and employment options
 - **Catalyze innovation and support scalable solutions** that improve labour market alignment with immigrants' skills, credentials, and experiences
 - **Invest in programs to enable racialized immigrant women and youth** to enter high-quality employment in sectors with skills shortages
 - **Take tangible steps to confront racism** (e.g., requesting Canadian experience) in Canadian society, which impacts immigrants and refugees' integration into the labour market and local communities
 - **Invest in social procurement models**, such as Community Benefits Agreements, that can drive local economies and provide social and economic benefits for all
 - **Implement tax incentives** for small and medium enterprises to encourage immigrant recruitment and retention to ensure Canada benefits from increased immigration targets
- 2. Rebuild the health care workforce by ending the underutilization of immigrant health professionals**
 - **Expedite permanent residency status and work permits** for internationally educated health care professionals (IEHPs)
 - **Streamline the Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) process** for individuals seeking to enter health occupations in Canada
 - **Convene relevant stakeholders to develop and implement a cohesive pan-Canadian health care workforce strategy** that addresses the immigration, licensure, and workforce inclusion pathways of immigrant health professionals. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) should convene in collaboration with Health Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)
 - **Improve IRCC's data collection** on educational background and intended occupation for all classes of immigrants and continue IRCC's collaboration with Statistics Canada to develop the Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB)
 - **Leverage 2021 Census data on fields of study and current occupations of IEHPs** to identify how many IEHPs are in Canada and whether they are working in the fields they trained for

- **Allocate funding to the provinces and territories** with clear deliverables and accountability measures that prioritize the inclusion of IEHPs
- 3. Address the needs of international students and temporary work permit holders**
- Accept all **the recommendations from the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration (CIMM)**. Example:
 - **Expand scope of settlement and integration services** to include international students and temporary work permit holders
 - **Monitor the impacts of Post Graduate Work Permit (PGWP)** reforms on international student outcomes
 - **Expand two-step pathways** that enable international students and temporary work permit holders who are currently working in Canada to transition to permanent residency
- 4. Ensure that all provinces and municipalities benefit from immigration**
- **Expand on successful regional immigration initiatives** such as the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot, Atlantic Immigration Program, and the Municipal Nominee Program (MNP) that enable immigrants and refugees to obtain employment and settle long-term in small, rural, and northern communities
- 5. Build seamless immigration and settlement model**
- Ensure that **labour market information, including international credential recognition, registration/licensure requirements, and information about alternative career pathways**, is easily accessible to immigrants and refugees at the appropriate time in their immigration journey
 - **Undertake a detailed review of the current settlement model** to determine opportunities for improvements that can create a seamless end-to-end immigration and settlement experience

Detailed Recommendations

1. Build an immigrant-inclusive economy as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic

With an aging population and low birth rates, Canada is one of many countries globally that **relies** on the migration of internationally-educated immigrants and students for economic and workforce stability. However, the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have disproportionately and negatively affected new **immigrants**, in particular, **racialized** immigrant women and **youth**. Employment rates for these populations **dropped** more significantly throughout 2020, and were slower to recover throughout 2021.

At the same time, economic recovery from the pandemic has resulted in a sharp rise in job vacancies throughout 2021 and in 2022, with vacancies reaching an **all-time high** of 997,000 in Q2 of 2022. As Canada looks to **welcome** over 1.3 million immigrants and refugees between 2022 and 2024, it is more

important than ever to ensure that all individuals are able to fully contribute their skills and experience to the labour market through meaningful, commensurate employment.

Recent shows that individuals who participate in skills development interventions earn higher incomes and are **more likely** to find jobs after training. Wraparound supports, including **childcare** and mental-health services are critical to supporting immigrant women enter and advance in the workforce. As educational and skills-training programs adapt to digital and hybrid-delivery, ensuring equitable access to technology-enabled services, including through digital literacy training, will also be critically important.

Achieving equitable economic and labour market integration for immigrants and refugees will also require an expansion of targeted, demand-driven training and re-skilling programs, including sector-based training.

The success of Community Benefit Agreement **initiatives** supported by WES have facilitated high quality employment opportunities for immigrants and refugees in the construction sector in Ontario. These types of social procurement models should be amplified and scaled to promote maximum benefits for workers and communities.

Achieving equitable economic and labour market integration will also require inclusive attitudes and behaviors on the part of employers.

An inclusive economy and labour market ultimately requires inclusive and welcoming attitudes from community members. Recent **displays** of xenophobia and racism in Canada must be confronted.

Recommendations:

- Improve **access** to timely, disaggregated labour market information and tools so that people and businesses are able to make informed decisions about training and employment options
- Catalyze innovation and support scalable solutions that improve labour market alignment with immigrants' skills, credentials, and experiences
- Invest in programs to enable racialized immigrant women and youth to enter high quality employment in sectors with skills shortages
- Take tangible steps to confront racism (e.g., requesting Canadian experience) in Canadian society, which impacts immigrants and refugees' integration into the labour market and local communities
- Invest in social procurement models, such as Community Benefits Agreements, that can drive local economies and provide social and economic benefits for all
- Implement tax incentives for small and medium enterprises to encourage immigrant recruitment and retention to ensure Canada benefits from increased immigration targets

2. Rebuild the health care workforce by ending the underutilization of immigrant health professionals

The pandemic has exposed vulnerabilities and strained the health care workforce globally. Across Canada, provinces are facing **critical staffing shortages** in health care, including long-term care. Thousands of internationally educated health professionals (IEHPs) stand ready to contribute their skills and training in Canada, but too many struggle with unreasonable barriers to re-entering and advancing in their professions. The contributions of IEHPs are vital to Canada's health system, with immigrants **comprising** 25.5% of the health care and social assistance sector in Canada. However, 47% of IEHPs, in particular, racialized, immigrant women, are **underemployed** or unemployed outside the health sector.

Recommendations:

- Expedite permanent residency status and work permits for IEHPs
- Streamline Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) processes for workers in health care occupations
- Convene relevant stakeholders to develop and implement a cohesive pan-Canadian health care workforce strategy that addresses the immigration, licensure and workforce inclusion pathways of immigrant health professionals. IRCC should convene in collaboration with Health Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)
- Improve IRCC's data collection on educational background and intended occupation for all classes of immigrants and continue IRCC's collaboration with Statistics Canada to develop the Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB)
- Leverage 2021 Census data on fields of study and current occupations of IEHPs to identify how many IEHPs are in Canada and whether they are working in the fields they trained for
- Allocate funding to the provinces and territories with clear deliverables and accountability measures that prioritize the inclusion of IEHPs

3. Address the needs of international students and temporary work permit holders

Canada remains a top destination globally for international students **because** of the quality of the education system, and Canada's reputation as an inclusive, safe society. A recent **survey** of 3,650 students from 55 countries worldwide showed that 39% of students identified Canada as their first choice for postsecondary studies.

The international student population in Canada has **tripled** in the last ten years. In 2021, there were **621,600** international students in Canada, a 17% increase since just 2020. International students make up **roughly** 18% of Canada's post-secondary enrollment and it is estimated that this group contributes over \$22 billion to the economy annually, **supporting** over 170,000 jobs. According to a recent survey from CBIE, **approximately** 60% of international students are interested in becoming permanent residents in Canada after completing their postsecondary education. Enabling this pool of young, skilled, and motivated individuals to pursue their personal and professional goals in Canada should be a priority for the Canadian government.

The pandemic has exacerbated longstanding issues facing international students. This includes **financial** barriers; lack of **access** to settlement and career services through postsecondary institutions, and; **delays** securing Post-Graduate Work Permits (PGWP).

Recommendations:

- Accept all **the recommendations from the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration (CIMM)**. Example:
 - Expand the scope of settlement and integration services to include international students and temporary work permit holders.
 - Monitor the impacts of PGWP **reforms** on international student outcomes
 - Expand **two-step pathways** that enable international students and temporary work permit who are currently working in Canada to transition to permanent residency

4. Ensure that all provinces and municipalities benefit from immigration

Settlement and immigration patterns **reveal** that most immigrants and their families settle in large cities, such as Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. Smaller, rural, and northern communities continue to face **challenges** in recruiting and retaining immigrant and refugee talent to fill labour shortages.

Recent initiatives, including the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot, Atlantic Immigration Program, and the Municipal Nominee Program (MNP) complement federal immigration programs and have shown **positive outcomes** in terms of attracting immigrants to rural and smaller communities across Canada.

Recommendations:

- Expand on successful regional immigration initiatives that enable immigrants and refugees to obtain employment and settle long-term in small, rural, and northern communities
- Communicate employment opportunities to new immigrants and refugees through enhanced pre- and post-arrival information
- Deepen support to small, rural, and Northern communities in their **efforts** to combat xenophobia

5. Build a seamless immigration and settlement model

A major **challenge** in Canada's immigration and settlement model is overlap in services, which can be confusing and frustrating for immigrants, refugees, and international students who want to access resources, support, and programs easily and quickly. Web-based information on available programs and services is overwhelming and difficult to navigate and services are often delivered in isolation leading to the duplication of efforts.



Recommendations:

- Ensure that labour market information, including international credential recognition, registration/licensure requirements, and information about alternative career pathways, is easily accessible to immigrants and refugees at the appropriate time in their immigration journey
- Undertake a detailed review of the current settlement model to determine opportunities for improvements that can create a seamless, end-to-end immigration and settlement experience

About World Education Services

World Education Services (WES) is a non-profit social enterprise dedicated to helping international students, immigrants, and refugees achieve their educational and career goals in Canada and the United States. For more than 45 years, WES has set the standard of excellence in the field of international academic credential evaluation. Through WES Global Talent Bridget, the organization joins with institutional partners, community-based organizations, and policy makers to help immigrants and refugees who hold international credentials fully utilize their talents and education to achieve their academic and professional goals. Through its grant making, impact investing, and partnerships, the WES Mariam Assefa Fund seeks to advance economic and social inclusion for immigrants and refugees. Since 2013, WES has been a designated provider of Educational Credential Assessments (ECAs) for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.