



**IRCC Consultation on Immigration Levels**  
**Written Submission from World Education Services**  
**August 2025**



World Education Services (WES) is a non-profit social enterprise that supports the educational, economic, and social inclusion of immigrants, refugees, and international students. WES welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of the 2026–2028 Immigration Levels Plan.

## **Summary of Recommendations**

- 1) Embed annual levels planning within a renewed vision for immigration in Canada that is aligned with long-term economic growth and population sustainability; and based on articulated principles, measurable outcomes, and a whole-of-government approach.
- 2) Unlock the potential of internationally trained professionals and tradespeople by removing systemic barriers to licensure, certification, and workforce integration.
- 3) Prioritize permanent residence as the foundation of a stable, future-focused system and reduce reliance on temporary immigration.
- 4) Create clear, coordinated, predictable, and sustainable pathways from temporary to permanent status.



## Recommendation 1:

**Embed annual levels planning within a renewed vision for immigration in Canada that is aligned with long-term economic growth and population sustainability; and based on articulated principles, measurable outcomes, and a whole-of-government approach.**

### A Renewed Vision for Immigration Levels Planning

Immigration levels planning must move beyond short-term target-setting and become part of a long-term national growth strategy that connects labour market, social, and demographic planning in a coherent and coordinated way. This requires treating immigration not as an isolated policy lever but as core infrastructure for national resilience, population renewal, and productivity growth.

The One Canadian Economy framework and the adoption of Bill C-5 reflect a growing commitment to long-term thinking and system-wide coordination. These efforts underscore the potential of a Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society approach to immigration levels planning grounded in intergovernmental cooperation, shared objectives, and transparent mechanisms.

At the same time, Canada is facing a [convergence of economic pressures](#): rising living costs and public debt, trade uncertainty, demographic decline, global instability, and mounting demand for housing, infrastructure, and skilled labour. These conditions are deeply interrelated, and they expose the limits of fragmented policy responses.

Yet immigration is often treated as peripheral to economic and social planning. This disconnect undermines Canada's ability to respond to the challenges ahead. Labour market planning depends on adequate housing and transit; child care and healthcare systems need qualified professionals; and infrastructure development hinges on a stable, skilled workforce. Each of these pillars, in turn, must be sustained by smart, inclusive immigration planning.

### A Strategic Opportunity

Without a unifying vision, levels planning risks being driven by short-term pressures rather than long-term objectives. A clear, guiding vision that embeds immigration planning within long-term demographic and economic goals can enhance coordination across sectors, strengthen public confidence, and ensure that immigration contributes meaningfully to Canada's economic stability and population sustainability.

Canada now has the opportunity to break down policy silos and align immigration levels planning with these objectives, delivering a system that is coherent, predictable, and inclusive.



In order to achieve these goals, WES recommends:

- Establishing a pan-Canadian planning framework that aligns population growth, labour market needs, infrastructure priorities, and regional development goals. Provinces, municipalities, and Indigenous governments should be treated as equal partners in a long-term, outcomes-based process;
- Setting clear objectives and outcome measures for the national immigration strategy to track progress, ensure accountability, and guide adjustments over time;
- Creating a cross-ministerial task force housed within the Privy Council Office to embed immigration levels within a Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society approach to planning—linking immigration with labour, housing, infrastructure, healthcare, and fiscal strategies, and ensuring measurable national outcomes;
- Establishing an independent national advisory council on immigration and economic coordination, with representation from labour, business, and civil society, to ensure transparent, cross-sector input into immigration levels planning and long-term system coherence;
- Basing immigration levels on forward-looking economic evidence, including labour market forecasting, productivity data, and demographic modeling, to ensure alignment with long-term workforce and fiscal planning needs.

## **Recommendation 2:**

### **Unlock the potential of internationally trained professionals and tradespeople by removing systemic barriers to licensure, certification, and workforce integration.**

#### **Leveraging Immigrant Skills**

Canada's economic growth and social cohesion depend on how effectively it can leverage the skills of internationally trained professionals. Yet, systemic barriers to licensure, certification and workforce integration continue to limit their contributions.

Immigration planning can be a powerful lever to change this reality if it is intentionally linked to strategies that address credential recognition, certification processes, regulatory coordination, and targeted labour market needs across both professions and trades.

#### **The Untapped Potential**

According to RBC, the underutilization of immigrant talent results in up to [\\$50 billion in lost GDP annually](#). Despite their qualifications, many immigrants remain [excluded](#) from regulated



professions due to fragmented credential recognition systems, inconsistent licensure requirements, and limited transitional supports.

This disconnect is particularly visible in critical sectors:

- In skilled trades, [over 700,000 workers are expected to retire by 2028](#), yet many newcomers with relevant experience face barriers to both employment and permanent residency.
- In health care, [nearly 42% of internationally educated professionals are either unemployed or working outside their field](#), despite widespread shortages across the country.

This untapped potential includes not only principal applicants in economic immigration streams but also family-class immigrants, dependants, and humanitarian newcomers—many of whom arrive with [valuable work experience, skills, and career aspirations](#) but face similar systemic barriers to recognition, certification, and workforce entry.

To be effective, immigration planning must address not only volumes but outcomes. It must ask not just “how many are arriving?”—but “are they succeeding?”

Recent rounds of Category-Based Selection (CBS) under Express Entry have focused on priority occupations in health, STEM, and the skilled trades.

Public reporting on whether individuals selected through CBS are ultimately working in the occupations for which they were selected would strengthen its value as a labour market tool. Establishing a coordinated, case-managed system to link selection with viable licensure pathways, along with an outcomes framework and outcomes data, is essential to assess whether category-based invitations are translating into real labour market impact.

### **The Need for Systemic Change**

While Canada has invested in [Foreign Credential Recognition programs](#), and while individual navigation supports remain important, these measures alone are insufficient. Improving labour market outcomes requires systemic reforms that expand licensure and certification access for all qualified internationally educated professionals and workers.

A forward-looking approach would integrate demand forecasting, harmonized licensing pathways, and transparent outcome measures, ensuring that immigrants selected for their expertise can work in their fields.



In order to attain this objective, WES recommends that IRCC work alongside ESDC as part of the Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society strategy to:

- Invest in structural reforms to eliminate barriers to licensure and credential recognition, including national coordination on interprovincial harmonization, benchmarking, and mutual recognition of standards for high-demand occupations;
- Ensure that Category-Based Selection aligns with realistic licensure pathways and labour market entry, by ensuring that there are clear and specific pathways to licensure for selected candidates and by coordinating with licensing bodies and provinces to ensure they are supported through those pathways;
- Develop a national data strategy and outcome indicators to monitor credential recognition outcomes, labour market performance, and licensure pathways across regulated sectors and jurisdictions.

### **Recommendation 3:**

#### **Prioritize permanent residence as the foundation of a stable, future-focused system and reduce reliance on temporary immigration.**

Canada's immigration system has become increasingly reliant on temporary streams to fill labour market gaps—particularly in essential but lower-wage sectors. While temporary immigration may serve limited, short-term purposes, its growing scale and scope have contributed to the emergence of a fragmented, reactive system that undermines long-term planning, economic stability, and newcomer well-being.

This overreliance has significant consequences. Temporary programs often lack adequate rights protections, limit access to services, and place newcomers [in conditions of precarity](#). Employers and communities become dependent on a rotating workforce, while migrants face uncertainty, limited mobility, and [exploitation risks](#). These dynamics are incompatible with a fair, inclusive, and future-focused immigration system.

Canada must re-establish permanent immigration as the foundation of its economic immigration strategy. This includes reducing the number and use of temporary work programs, especially in sectors where long-term needs are well-established, and building out permanent streams that support both employer needs and immigrant stability.

This shift must also strengthen the effectiveness of Canada's existing hybrid selection model, which balances high human capital attributes with labour market needs. Ensuring that the current model works as intended requires aligning CBS with long-term goals, establishing clear outcome measures, and coordinating with provinces, regulators, and employers to remove systemic barriers to workforce entry.



This process should occur within a broader vision that preserves the integrity and complementarity of all three immigration streams—economic, family, and humanitarian—ensuring that the economic stream does not displace or diminish the core values underpinning family reunification and Canada’s humanitarian commitments.

One promising example is the Economic Mobility Pathways Pilot (EMPP), which demonstrates how humanitarian and economic objectives can be mutually reinforcing. By enabling skilled refugees to immigrate through economic streams, EMPP offers a model for how Canada can link global responsibility with workforce development.

To support this vision, WES recommends:

- Capping and narrowing the use of temporary immigration to situations of clear, short-term labour need, while actively reducing reliance on temporary pathways for roles where there is ongoing workforce demand;
- Expanding permanent economic immigration programs to meet a broader range of skill levels and occupational needs—ensuring that sectors currently dependent on temporary labour have access to sustainable, permanent recruitment channels;
- Strengthening the hybrid selection model through improved workforce integration grounded in evidence and supported by integration infrastructure, with effective outcome tracking;
- Establishing transparent selection principles and outcome metrics that reflect long-term national objectives and ensure that economic immigration remains inclusive, equitable, and responsive to population and regional needs;
- Maintaining an appropriate balance across economic, family, and humanitarian streams to ensure immigration policy reflects Canada’s full range of national priorities and international obligations.

#### **Recommendation 4:**

#### **Create clear, coordinated, predictable, and sustainable pathways from temporary to permanent status.**

As of 2025, more than [2.9 million people remain in Canada on temporary permits](#), including international students, post-graduation work permit (PGWP) holders, and temporary foreign workers who are studying, working, and contributing to their communities. They are not future applicants—they are Canada’s present and future workforce.

Despite this, the current system offers no clear or consistent pathways to permanent residency. Transition options remain complex, opaque, and highly competitive. Without coherent mechanisms



for transition, these individuals face [long-term precarity and underemployment](#), while governments and employers struggle to plan for workforce and infrastructure needs.

International students are a visible example of this broader dynamic. For years, Canada promoted a “study-work-stay” model that encouraged long-term integration. However, recent changes, including caps on study permits and PGWP restrictions, have disrupted that model, creating widespread uncertainty. Similar uncertainty affects many temporary foreign workers in essential sectors like care, construction, and agriculture, who remain excluded from meaningful pathways to permanent residency despite their sustained contributions.

Successful transition requires not only transparent pathways but also adequate supports. Many temporary residents remain ineligible for federally funded settlement services—even though they are already studying, working, and integrating into Canadian communities. Expanding eligibility and increasing investment in the settlement sector would ensure that those navigating transition pathways receive the guidance, training, and resources they need to succeed.

Immigration levels planning can and should play a central role in this alignment. Transition flows and pathways are not marginal to the system—they are core to its structure. To address these challenges and unlock the full potential of today’s temporary residents, WES recommends:

- Developing a national TR-to-PR transition framework for those who are in Canada with temporary status already, with transparent, criteria-based pathways aligned with labour market needs and long-term planning goals;
- Integrating TR-PR projections into immigration levels planning;
- Stabilizing and harmonizing federal and provincial selection criteria, particularly within Express Entry and Provincial Nominee Programs, to reduce uncertainty and ensure equitable, timely access to permanent residency;
- Expanding eligibility for federally funded settlement services to include temporary residents on pathways to permanence, and increasing funding to ensure service providers can meet growing demand.





**About WES:**

World Education Services (WES) is a non-profit social enterprise that supports the educational, economic, and social inclusion of immigrants, refugees, and international students. For over 50 years, WES has set the standard for international academic credential evaluation, supporting millions of people as they seek to achieve their academic and professional goals. Through decades of experience as a leader in global education, WES has developed a wide range of tools to pursue social impact at scale. From evaluating academic credentials to shaping policy, designing programs, and providing philanthropic funding, we partner with a diverse set of organizations, leaders, and networks to uplift individuals and drive systems change. Together with its partners, WES enables people to learn, work, and thrive in new places. Since 2013, WES has been a designated provider of Educational Credential Assessments (ECAs) for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).