



World Education Services
Submission
to the
Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration
(CIMM)
Study: Canada's Immigration System
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A Renewed Vision for Canada's Immigration System

Throughout Canadian history, immigration has been a key driver of the country's economic prosperity and social identity. Rooted in long-term planning, this approach once gave Canada an edge on the world stage.

In recent years, however, that vision has begun to erode. Policy responses have leaned toward short-term fixes aimed at managing immediate pressures rather than advancing a coherent, forward-looking plan.

Anti-immigrant narratives have taken hold in public discourse, portraying newcomers as a strain on Canada's infrastructure despite [clear evidence](#) that such pressures result from long-standing structural issues rather than immigration. This trend is now threatening the consensus that has supported immigration for generations, at the very moment when a healthy immigration system is more critical than ever.

At WES, we believe a renewed vision for the immigration system is urgently needed. Such a vision must embed immigration policy into a broader set of economic and social objectives that lay the groundwork for prosperity in the decades ahead. A clear, comprehensive, and future-oriented strategy is critical to rebuild consensus around immigration.

Reflecting this approach, we offer these recommendations to improve the order, fairness, and effectiveness of Canada's immigration system.

1. Immigration Levels

Levels planning cannot be reduced to numbers alone. Rather, it must be executed through a robust whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach that gives provinces, territories, municipalities, and employers the opportunity to plan for the future. This approach will maximize the potential, credibility, and effectiveness of the immigration program. Its implementation should be grounded in principles of fairness and inclusion and be held accountable to measurable outcomes.

A well-designed and implemented Levels Plan, coupled with investments in critical supports, can shift away from short-term fixes toward building a stronger Canada, where newcomers put down roots, thrive in the workforce, and contribute fully to society, just as they have across generations.

Operating with a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach is the most effective way to meet Canada's goals while addressing persistent challenges such as an overreliance on temporary residence programs, underutilization of newcomer talent, and weak retention outside major cities. Addressing these challenges is essential to sustaining public



trust, strengthening system stability, and ensuring immigration continues to drive Canada's long-term economic and social development.

This can be achieved through the creation of a cross-departmental coordinating body comprised of key federal ministries such as Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), Employment and Social Development Canada, Health Canada, Innovation, Science and Economic Development, and Global Affairs.

Such broader coordination would also help preserve 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.

2. Prioritize Permanent Residency

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

Canada must re-establish permanent immigration as the foundation of its economic immigration strategy. This includes reducing the number and use of temporary work permits, especially in sectors where the labour needs are in fact long term but have relied too long on temporary workers. Building out permanent streams that support both employers long term needs and the needs of immigrants for stability is essential.

3. Unlock Potential of Internationally Trained Professionals

Canada must unlock the potential of internationally trained professionals and tradespeople by removing systemic barriers to licensure, certification, and workforce integration.

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 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.



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.

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.

Without such alignment, selecting specific candidates to address critical labour shortages without tackling systemic issues that limit access to skills-commensurate employment risks expanding the pool of underutilized talent rather than filling workforce gaps.

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 and contribute fully to Canada's long-term growth.

Summary of Recommendations:

- Embed annual levels planning within a renewed vision for immigration in Canada that is aligned with long-term economic growth and population sustainability and is based on articulated principles, measurable outcomes, and a whole-of-government approach.
- Prioritize permanent residence as the foundation of a stable, future-focused system, reduce reliance on temporary immigration
- Create clear, coordinated, predictable, and sustainable pathways from temporary to permanent status, designed as an interim measure as Canada transitions from a system of temporary migration to a system of permanence.
- Create a one-time temporary work permit extension and a one-time pathway to permanent residence for eligible international students and graduates who were in Canada when policy changes made it difficult for former international students to transition to permanent residence.
- Develop a stable federal permanent residence program designed for international students, with predictable eligibility criteria and selection goals.
- 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.

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. Since 2013, WES has been a designated provider of Educational Credential Assessments (ECAs) for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), providing over 240,000 ECAs to applicants for the Express Entry system in 2024.



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.