



Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration study: International Student Program and Study Permits

Written brief from World Education Services
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Context

Throughout 2024 and 2025, reforms in the international student program have, among other things, capped the number of study permits, limited access to spousal work permits and post-graduate work permits, and increased study permit cost-of-living requirements.¹

In addition, the government introduced changes to the broader immigration system that affect international students and graduates, such as reforms to the temporary foreign worker program (TFW Program)², elimination of Express Entry points for having a job offer³, and a reduction in planned immigration levels.

Taken together, these reforms make it more difficult for international students who were in Canada already to transition to permanent residence (PR). This cohort of international student recruitment was largely recruited on the basis that Canada is a place to “study and stay.” According to surveys conducted prior to the reforms, 90 percent of international students either planned to apply for PR or were considering applying for PR.⁴

As Canada reorients its international student program and seeks to maintain standing as a study destination of choice, Canada must uphold principles of fairness and stability for those students who came to Canada in good faith, attracted by this promise.

The outstanding concerns and recommendations below are summarized from WES’ international student policy brief.⁵

Outstanding Concerns

- Changes to international student policy and immigration policy were not paired with transition measures for those whose visas were close to expiry and who had otherwise planned to stay in Canada on temporary permits until they were invited to apply for PR.
- Sudden policy changes make it more likely that large numbers of people will lose authorized immigration status and become undocumented.

¹ <https://www.cicnews.com/2024/12/year-in-review-whats-changed-for-international-students-and-post-graduation-work-permits-in-canada-in-2024-1249791.html>

² <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/news/2024/08/minister-boissonnault-reducing-the-number-of-temporary-foreign-workers-in-canada.html>

³ <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2024/12/canada-takes-action-to-reduce-fraud-in-express-entry-system.html>

⁴ https://cbie.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/CBIE_2021_International_Student_Survey_National_Report.pdf

⁵ <https://www.wes.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/0225-spr-international-student-policy-brief-digital.pdf>



- Anti-international student and anti-immigration rhetoric are fueling an increase in instances of harassment and hate crimes.
- There is a continued need for accountability mechanisms to ensure ethical recruitment practices and to strengthen support services for international students.
- The post-secondary sector remains over-reliant on international student tuition fees to sustain fiscal health.

Recommendations to Address These Concerns

To strengthen the post-secondary sector and deliver on the potential of international education, WES recommends:

1. A **collaborative, multi-sector roundtable** to design and implement international student system accountability measures. Robust compliance, monitoring, and enforcement mechanisms must be a central priority of the roundtable.
2. An **advisory council of international students** to provide student feedback on study conditions and proposed changes to international student policy.
3. A stable **federal pathway to PR** designed for international students, with clear eligibility criteria and clear information about selection targets.
4. A **one-time temporary work permit** for eligible international students and graduates who were already in Canada when reforms to immigration policy and international student policy were announced.
5. Creation and enforcement of **minimum standards for essential services** including academic, settlement, career, and immigration services, as well as health and mental health supports.
6. **Expanded eligibility for federally funded settlement services** to allow provision of services to current and former international students.
7. A dedicated **regulatory body to oversee education agents**, including aggregators and their subcontracted agents. This body would institute and enforce a standard of practice, as well as grant licensure to agents and maintain a registry of licensed agents.
8. Collaboration with top sending countries to **monitor and enforce recruitment standards**.
9. A **post-secondary funding strategy** to secure the long-term fiscal health of the post-secondary sector without financial dependence upon international students.
10. **Prohibition of exorbitant differences in tuition fees** between domestic students and international students.

**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. Since 2013, WES has been a designated provider of Educational Credential Assessments for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).