



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

World Education Services

April 2026



Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Invest in systemic reform of foreign credential recognition.

- **Invest** in a cross-departmental mechanism bringing together Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), Health Canada, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED), and Global Affairs Canada to align immigration selection with workforce planning, licensure pathways, and employment integration outcomes.

Recommendation 2: Build the data systems to track credential recognition from start to finish.

- **Pilot and fund** a digital credential wallet that provides internationally trained professionals with a secure, verified, portable record of their credentials and licensure progress.

Recommendation 3: Expand the Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) Action Fund.

- **Expand** the FCR Action Fund for internationally trained professionals and the Canadian Apprenticeship Strategy for tradespeople to cover additional high-demand sectors beyond health and construction.

Recommendation 4: Reduce reliance on temporary migration and design clear, predictable pathways from temporary to permanent residence for current temporary residents.

- **Invest** in supports to businesses, such as skills training and productivity investments to reduce reliance on temporary migration.

Recommendation 5: Invest in infrastructure and accountability mechanisms that make clear, accurate information on high-stakes topics available to international students.

- **Invest** in the creation of a single, centralized platform in plain language where international students can find a one-stop shop of accurate information.



Unlocking Canada's Untapped Economic Potential

Canada continues to face a [convergence of economic and demographic pressures](#). Amid a constrained fiscal environment and a rapidly changing world, the federal government must invest in cost-effective solutions that have the potential to drive long-term growth.

One of the highest-return investments available is in internationally trained professionals and tradespeople already in Canada who are [unemployed or working outside their field](#). They bring skills that strengthen productivity and address labour shortages in critical sectors. Yet systemic barriers prevent them from contributing at full capacity, at a significant cost to Canada.

Recognizing and bridging their education, skills, and experience can be [faster and less resource-intensive](#) than retraining workers domestically. With domestic supply unable to meet projected demand, investing in the integration of professionals who are already here is cost-effective.

The economic case is clear. RBC estimates underutilization of immigrant talent results in [\\$50 billion in lost GDP annually](#). Thousands of immigrant degree holders are [overqualified for their current employment](#). Nearly [42% of internationally educated health professionals](#) in Canada are unemployed or working outside their field.

Currently, federal investments in credential recognition and labour market integration produce fragmented results. IRCC, ESDC, Health Canada, provincial governments, regulators, and employers are involved in different parts of the system, but no mechanism ensures accountability for outcomes. This fragmentation diminishes the effectiveness of public investments and leaves individuals navigating disconnected processes.

Addressing these challenges requires a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach that strengthens coordination across ministries and sectors, engages civil society and employers, and anchors federal investments in measurable objectives.

Budget 2025 signaled a commitment to this direction through the [\\$97 million FCR Action Fund](#). Budget 2026 must: invest in systemic reform, back coordination with data, and reduce structural barriers that prevent internationally trained professionals from contributing fully. By doing so, Canada will strengthen its workforce, improve productivity, and continue to be recognized as a place where immigrants can thrive.

Recommendation 1: Invest in systemic reform of foreign credential recognition by adopting a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach; funding coordination mechanisms at the federal and pan-Canadian levels; and ensuring that federal investments are aligned, accountable, and produce measurable workforce outcomes.

Federal investments in credential recognition will continue to produce uneven results without dedicated coordination across departments. Addressing the systemic barriers that prevent internationally trained professionals and tradespeople from working in their fields requires alignment across federal ministries, provinces, regulators, and employers through a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.



The recently established Forum of Labour Market Ministers and Forum of Ministers Responsible for Immigration (FLMM-FMRI) Task Force on Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) is a promising step, but its resources must be sufficient to implement structural change that produces meaningful impact.

WES recommends that the federal government:

- **Fund a standing cross-departmental coordination mechanism** bringing together IRCC, ESDC, Health Canada, ISED, and Global Affairs Canada to align immigration selection with workforce planning, licensure pathways, and integration outcomes
- **Fund a pan-Canadian FCR coordinating body** with federal, provincial, regulatory, employer, and internationally trained professional representation to guide strategy, align investments, and establish accountability for licensure and employment outcomes
- **Commit resources of the FLMM-FMRI Task Force on FCR** to advance the study and implementation of pan-Canadian solutions to systemic credential recognition barriers, including harmonized standards, competency-based assessment models, and scalable licensure pathways; and to support the design and implementation of a case-managed approach for candidates in regulated professions selected through Category-Based Selection, ensuring viable pathways to licensure and direct connections to relevant regulatory bodies

Recommendation 2: Fund a national data infrastructure and digital credential wallet to track outcomes across the credential recognition continuum, support evidence-based workforce planning, and reduce duplication.

Effective program design and coordination require reliable data to make evidence-based decisions. Canada lacks the infrastructure to assess whether its investments in credential recognition are producing meaningful results.

Building this data architecture is a prerequisite for any meaningful reform. Right now, data collection across the system is siloed. Immigration, licensure, and employment data are not systematically linked. This gap is particularly acute in health care. With reliable, linked data, and effective coordination mechanisms among key actors, the federal government will be better positioned to strengthen accountability for outcomes.

A digital credential wallet could serve as a key tool within this coordinated infrastructure, creating a secure, portable digital record consolidating an individual's academic credentials, professional experience, assessment results, language exams, and licensure progress in one place. Rather than submitting documents separately to each regulator, employer, or government body, a verified record would be accessible to authorized parties across the system.

WES recommends that the federal government:

- **Fund the underlying consent-based data infrastructure** connecting IRCC, ESDC, Health Canada, provinces and territories, national assessment bodies, and provincial regulators, creating a longitudinal view of the credential recognition continuum from selection to employment



- **Fund health workforce-specific data systems** that link immigration pipeline data with health workforce planning, building on Health Workforce Canada and the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI), to project how many internationally trained health professionals are arriving, where they are in the licensure process, and where capacity gaps exist
- **Fund the development and piloting of a digital credential wallet** that provides internationally trained professionals with a secure, verified, portable record of their credentials and licensure progress, and that feeds into the broader data infrastructure to support system-level planning and evaluation

Recommendation 3: Expand the Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) Action Fund and scale proven practices that reduce time-to-licensure for internationally trained professionals and tradespeople.

While systemic reform and data infrastructure are developed, the federal government should invest in scaling practices that already demonstrate measurable results in reducing time-to-licensure. [Proven models](#) exist that connect internationally trained professionals with employers, reduce unnecessary retraining, and help individuals navigate complex regulatory processes.

WES recommends that the federal government:

- **Expand the FCR Action Fund and the Canadian Apprenticeship Strategy** to cover additional high-demand sectors beyond health and construction, and increase funding to match the scale of the challenge
- **Fund the scaling of supervised practice and assessment models** that allow internationally trained professionals to demonstrate competency in clinical or workplace settings, reducing unnecessary retraining and delays; and invest in competency-based assessment pathways in regulated professions and trades that provide fair, transparent, and efficient routes to licensure and certification
- **Fund occupation-specific career navigation supports, case management models, and pre-arrival assessment capacity**, enabling internationally trained professionals to access information, connect with regulatory bodies, and begin the licensure process before or immediately upon arriving in Canada

Recommendation 4: Reduce structural reliance on temporary migration and design clear, predictable pathways from temporary to permanent residence for current temporary residents.

Across Canada, employers depend on the labour and skills of workers born abroad. Too often, those workers come to Canada through temporary migration programs, even though many fill vacancies in occupations with structural or recurring seasonal labour market shortages. While some temporary residents are able to transition to permanent residence, doing so is increasingly difficult. Today, [over 2.6 million people hold temporary status in Canada](#), many of them working in critical sectors and contributing to Canadian communities.



A large temporary residence program, and a significant number of people living in Canada for years with temporary status, are cause for concern. Temporary permits put employers at risk of losing valued workers. Additionally, reliance on temporary migration leaves essential industries susceptible to shocks to global migration patterns. For the workers themselves, temporary residence can be harmful due to family separation, barriers to integration, erosion of health and well-being, and elevated risk of exploitation in the workplace.

By contrast, permanent immigration enables individuals to plan for the long term, invest in their futures, and contribute fully to the Canadian economy and to the communities where they live.

WES recommends that the federal government:

- **Develop a long-term labour force strategy** that addresses structural labour market shortages. This will enable a transition away from reliance on temporary migration, by investing in skills training, productivity investments, and better wages and working conditions
- As a transitional measure, **design short-term pathways to permanent residence** for the eligible temporary residents already in Canada and include a timeline to a return to one-step immigration
- In making **regulatory reforms to federal immigration programs managed by Express Entry**, preserve eligibility of individuals with work experience in all TEER categories and with a CLB/NCLC 4-5 to enter the Express Entry pool
- **Fund expanded oversight mechanisms for the Temporary Foreign Worker Program**, including unannounced site visits and inspections, that enhance protections from unsafe work conditions, exploitation at work, and exploitation in recruitment

Recommendation 5: Invest in infrastructure and accountability mechanisms that make clear, accurate information on high-stakes topics available to international students.

In April 2026, the [Standing Parliamentary Committee on Citizenship and Immigration recommended](#) that IRCC do more to provide plain language information to international students. This recommendation aligns with [WES research](#), which showed that the IRCC website is a key resource for international students, while noting that the format and writing style are confusing. [WES' own analysis](#) of online information for international students from IRCC and EduCanada revealed that key information is missing and that [outdated “study and stay” messaging is still online](#).

WES recommends that the federal government:

- **Provide funding to enact Recommendation 5 of Reconstituting Canada’s International Student Program: Report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration**, enabling creation of a single, centralized platform in plain language where international students can



find information. The platform should include Canadian labour market information, data about employment outcomes of international student graduates, and data about international student transitions to permanent residence

- **Work with provinces and territories** to create, or to incentivize creation of, a body **to register and license education agents**
- **Require that post-secondary institutions** who wish to enrol international students **regularly survey international students about their experience working with their education agent** and share survey results with the licensing body

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 for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.