

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada Consultation: Immigration Levels

Written Submission from World Education Services

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Services

[World Education Services \(WES\)](#) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of the 2027–2029 Immigration Levels Plan. WES submitted a response to the [online survey](#) as part of the consultation and is supplementing the survey response with this written submission to inform the Immigration Levels Plan.

Summary of Recommendations

1. Align immigration policy and levels planning with a long-term national growth strategy, grounded in a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, with clear objectives, articulated principles, measurable outcomes, and accountability for results.

- E.g., Establish a cross-ministerial coordination mechanism involving 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 better align policies that influence, and are influenced by immigration.

2. Build the data infrastructure required for strong economic outcomes.

- E.g., Develop and pilot a digital credential wallet that provides internationally trained professionals with a secure, verified, portable record of their credentials and licensure progress, and that integrates with the broader data infrastructure to support system-level planning and evaluation.

3. Re-establish permanent residence as the foundation of economic immigration, ensure immigration selection serves Canada's long-term objectives and the needs of rural, remote, and northern communities, and reduce structural reliance on temporary migration.

- E.g., Develop a long-term labour force strategy that addresses structural shortages through complementary policy tools (skills training, productivity investments, improved wages and working conditions), enabling a transition away from temporary migration.

4. Advance systemic reform of foreign credential recognition (FCR) to unlock the potential of internationally trained professionals and tradespeople.

- E.g., Prioritize pan-Canadian FCR solutions at the Forum of Labour Market Ministers and Forum of Ministers Responsible for Immigration (FLMM-FMRI), including harmonized standards, competency-based assessment models, and scalable licensure pathways.

As the federal government assesses the impact of recent policy changes, considers future temporary and permanent resident levels, and identifies its long-term immigration priorities, WES believes there are concrete steps IRCC can take in the short, medium, and long term to maximize the impact of immigration and support an environment where newcomers can thrive and achieve positive outcomes.

Reflecting this approach, Recommendations 1 and 2 set out the long-term foundation needed to maximize immigration's impact, while Recommendations 3 and 4 identify concrete actions the federal government can take now to strengthen the system and deliver meaningful results in the short term.

Recommendation 1: Align immigration policy and levels planning with a long-term national growth strategy, grounded in a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, with clear objectives, articulated principles, measurable outcomes, and accountability for results.

Immigration is core infrastructure for Canada's economic growth, demographic sustainability, and workforce development. Like other critical policy portfolios, it delivers the strongest results when integrated into a broader national strategy.

Realizing immigration's full potential requires integrating the program into a national strategy for economic growth, supported by clearly defined long-term objectives, articulated principles, and measurable outcomes.

A whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach to immigration policy and levels planning, with coordination across federal departments, provinces, sectors, and civil society, would provide the foundation for this kind of long-term, strategic planning. This approach would ensure that immigration continues to contribute meaningfully to Canada's prosperity, and that the country continues to be a place where immigrants can thrive.

With this foundation in place, the government would be positioned to evaluate the impact of recent policy changes, and to hold the system accountable for outcomes in the short, medium, and long term, strengthening immigration's potential and reinforcing the stability and predictability the system needs.

WES recommends:

- Grounding decisions about immigration levels in a national strategy that connects immigration with long-term objectives for Canada's economy, labour force, and population sustainability.
- Adopting a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach to immigration policy, including decisions about levels planning and its composition, and equipping the federal government with the resources to coordinate across federal departments, provinces and territories, municipalities, employers, and civil society.
 - Establishing a cross-ministerial coordination mechanism involving IRCC, ESDC, Health Canada, ISED, and Global Affairs Canada, to better align policies that influence, and are influenced by immigration.

Recommendation 2: Build the data infrastructure required for strong economic outcomes.

To operationalize the accountability mechanisms outlined in Recommendation 1, the country needs reliable, linked data to support evidence-based decisions and demonstrate whether its immigration policies are producing intended results. Yet, data collection across the system continues to be fragmented.

Immigration, licensure, employment, and retention data are often collected by different entities and are not systematically linked, making it difficult to assess whether Canada's investments in selection and workforce integration are producing results. This gap is particularly acute in health care.

As WES outlined in its [submissions](#) to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance (FINA) and to IRCC on Express Entry reforms, building this data architecture is a prerequisite for evidence-based reform, meaningful accountability, and effective coordination across departments and jurisdictions.

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 that consolidates 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:

- Developing national data infrastructure that links selection, credential recognition, licensure, and employment data, creating a longitudinal view of outcomes from arrival to integration.
 - Establishing standardized outcome reporting across all immigration programs, regardless of category, with indicators for commensurate employment, time to licensure, and retention by region and occupation.
 - Publicly reporting on whether Category-based Selection (CBS) draws are producing intended labour market outcomes, including whether selected candidates are achieving licensure and working in their intended occupations.
- Developing and piloting a digital credential wallet that provides internationally trained professionals with a secure, verified, portable record of their credentials and licensure progress, and that integrates with the broader data infrastructure to support system-level planning and evaluation.

Recommendation 3: Re-establish permanent residence as the foundation of economic immigration, ensure immigration selection serves Canada's long-term objectives and the needs of rural, remote, and northern communities, and reduce structural reliance on temporary migration.

While the foundation outlined in Recommendations 1 and 2 is essential for the long term, there are steps the federal government can take in the short term to improve outcomes for newcomers and communities.

WES continues to advocate for permanent residence as the foundation of Canada's economic immigration strategy.

Temporary immigration may serve limited, short-term purposes, but many of the vacancies filled by individuals with temporary permits are, in fact, structural vacancies, including positions held by home care workers who continue to meet the needs of Canada's aging population. Reliance on temporary streams to meet ongoing workforce needs undermines long-term planning, economic stability, and newcomer well-being.

This is particularly relevant in rural, remote, and northern communities, where immigration plays a vital role in addressing population decline and workforce shortages that threaten the viability of core services, industries, and infrastructure.

Addressing structural labour shortages requires complementary policy tools beyond immigration alone. Where immigration is the appropriate response, permanent residence offers greater stability for workers, employers, and communities alike. For temporary residents already in Canada, clear and predictable pathways to permanence are essential.

As WES outlined in its recent submission on Express Entry reforms, while IRCC seeks to optimize how candidates are selected for economic immigration, it becomes critical to ground the definition of success in the diverse ways that immigration benefits receiving communities and countries, and to ensure that regulatory changes do not narrow the Express Entry pool in ways that increase reliance on temporary migration.

WES recommends:

- Prioritizing permanent residence as the foundation of a stable, future-focused system, and considering it as the primary mechanism for selecting immigrants.
 - Developing a stable federal permanent residence program designed for international students with predictable eligibility criteria and selection goals.
 - Maintaining a balance across economic, family, and humanitarian streams, ensuring that economic priorities do not displace Canada's commitments to family reunification and humanitarian protection.
 - Designing clear pathways from temporary to permanent residence for eligible temporary residents already in Canada. These pathways should remain available until the population of temporary residents consists only of migrants filling genuinely temporary vacancies.

- Developing a long-term labour force strategy that addresses structural shortages through complementary policy tools (skills training, productivity investments, improved wages and working conditions), enabling a transition away from temporary migration.
- Ensuring the demographic and labour needs of rural, remote, and northern communities are reflected in Canada’s immigration and labour force strategies.
- Grounding selection criteria across federal economic immigration programs in Canada's long-term objectives and preserving the ability to select immigrants across the occupational and skill spectrum to avoid increasing reliance on temporary migration.
 - Redefining how success is measured in economic immigration to capture long-term value, including rate and time to commensurate employment, retention, sense of belonging, and median working-years income.
 - Improving the predictability and transparency of CBS by announcing priority categories and anticipated balance between different Express Entry draw types in advance.

Recommendation 4: Advance systemic reform of foreign credential recognition to unlock the potential of internationally trained professionals and tradespeople.

Canada faces [interrelated economic pressures](#). Within a constrained fiscal environment, the federal government must prioritize cost-effective investments with the potential to drive long-term growth.

One of the highest-return investments available to the federal government is in internationally trained professionals and tradespeople already in Canada who are unemployed or working outside their field. With domestic supply [unable to meet projected demand](#) in critical sectors, recognizing and bridging their education, skills, and experience represents a [cost-effective](#) and urgent priority.

Yet systemic barriers to licensure, certification, and workforce integration continue to limit their contributions. This is particularly significant within the health sector. RBC estimates that the underutilization of immigrant talent results in up to [\\$50 billion in lost GDP annually](#).

This untapped potential extends beyond economic immigration and includes family-class immigrants, dependants, and humanitarian newcomers, many of whom arrive with valuable work experience and career aspirations but face the same systemic barriers to recognition and workforce entry.

As WES has recommended in [previous submissions](#), improving labour market outcomes requires moving beyond individual navigation supports toward systemic reforms that have the potential to expand licensure and certification access for all qualified internationally trained professionals and tradespeople.

WES recommends:

- Establishing pan-Canadian Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) coordination mechanisms with federal, provincial, regulatory, employer, and immigrant representation to guide strategy, align investments, and establish accountability for licensure and employment outcomes.

- Ensuring that any occupation selected through CBS has a viable pathway to licensure or direct entry to the workplace.
- Prioritizing pan-Canadian FCR solutions at the Forum of Labour Market Ministers and Forum of Ministers Responsible for Immigration (FLMM-FMRI), including harmonized standards, competency-based assessment models, and scalable licensure pathways.
 - Streamlining and harmonizing licensing pathways for Internationally Educated Health Professionals across provinces and territories.

About WES

World Education Services 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 IRCC.