



December 5, 2014

Office of the President and
Chief Executive Officer

Cabinet du président
et chef de la direction

Hon. Chris Alexander, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Citizenship and Immigration
Citizenship and Immigration Canada
365 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1L1

Dear Minister:

In September, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce concluded its 85th Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Charlottetown, PEI. A highlight of the Canadian Chamber's AGM is the Policy Session, where the resolutions submitted by local chambers of commerce and boards of trade from across Canada are debated and voted on by accredited delegates. Once approved, these resolutions become policy of the Canadian Chamber for the following three years.

In 2014, our delegates issued a clear and decisive national policy mandate that we intend to pursue vigorously with the federal government over the coming months. Our renewed national policy mandate includes the following issues which fall within your portfolio:

Easier Access to Visa Programs

Canada's visitor visa system could better facilitate economic trade and tourism and the business opportunities for Canada. Visas impact Canada's competitiveness as a tourism destination, the attractiveness of our international airport hubs for connecting traffic, the viability of potential new international routes, and the capacity, traffic volume and competition on existing routes, international and domestic.

The Canadian Chamber recommends that the federal government support the amendment of the Visitor Visa program by: streamlining the process for travellers who need visas and remove the obstacle of surrendering passports for visitors who pose no threat to Canada's security; considering low risk and proven ways, based on international best practices, that allow legitimate visitors to forego a visa altogether for travel to or through Canada; and expanding the Transit without Visa program.

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Improving Canada's Immigration System: Visa Processes and Foreign Qualification Recognition

The projected shortfall of labour resources remains a major concern for Canadian businesses. Innovative policies are needed to attract people from around the world with the right mix of skills and talents to support economic growth. To reinvigorate the current immigration process, improvements to visa processes for various classes of immigrants and foreign qualification recognition are important places to start.

The Canadian Chamber recommends that the federal government: reduce the complexity of foreign credential assessment by directing Canada's Foreign Credential Recognition Program to provide policy guidance, in addition to strategic financial support, to provincial and territorial governments and organizations involved in the credential assessment process; and develop an education profile of the main source countries of immigrants in order to have a transparent and comprehensive description of their educational systems.

Improving the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP)

Canada's future economic growth will be determined by our ability to access and retain workers with the necessary skills to strengthen our workforce. The Chamber network has watched, with growing concern, moves by the federal government to restrict businesses' ability to utilize the TFWP.

With regard to CIC's responsibility for immigration policy, the Canadian Chamber recommends that the federal government negotiate with provinces and territories new Annexes to the immigration agreements regarding the Temporary Foreign Worker Program in ways that will increase the provinces' and territories' flexibility to use the TFWP.

Meeting Canada's Labour Needs by Attracting and Retaining International Students

International students are increasingly seen as an excellent talent pool and there is a strong push to keep international students in Canada after they finish their studies through the post-graduation work permit and permanent immigration through the Canadian Experience Class. The federal government recently announced a new International Education Strategy which proposes to double the number of foreign students studying in Canada to 450,000 by 2022. It is important to recognize that these individuals are integrating into and

contributing to Canada with no interventions from the government, and are the new Canadians we want to attract and retain.

For those reasons, the Canadian Chamber recommends that the federal government: change the length of time for which a post-graduation work permit can be valid to five years regardless of the program of study, so long as obtained from a recognized Canadian institution; improve its student visa procedure to make it quicker and easier for potential international students to receive study and work visas; and when considering applications for permanent residency, take into account the working experience that an international student gains through working off campus, working on campus and in co-op and internship programs.

Copies of the complete texts of these resolutions are attached. I hope to discuss them in more detail with you or your staff. My assistant will be contacting your office to schedule a meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Perrin Beatty". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

Perrin Beatty
President and Chief Executive Officer

Attachments