

January 23, 2009

Hon. Jason Kenney, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism  
365 Laurier Avenue West  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 1L1

Dear Minister:

In October, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce concluded its 79<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Quebec City. One of the highlights of Chamber's AGM is the Policy Session. It is during the Policy Session that resolutions submitted by local chambers of commerce and boards of trade from across the country are debated and voted on by accredited delegates. Once approved, these resolutions become the policy position of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce for three years. This year our delegates issued a clear and decisive national policy mandate that we intend to pursue vigorously with the federal government over the coming months.

Beyond those issues we have already brought to your attention, our renewed national policy mandate includes a number of additional issues that fall within your portfolio.

**Reform of the Immigration Process:** Immigration has always been an important source of net labour force growth in Canada and will be even more important in the future, given our rapidly-aging population. The Canadian Chamber's members call upon the federal government to work with the provinces and territories to continue to streamline the immigration process giving priority to applicants who possess skills that are in short supply in Canada; review the connections amongst HRSDC, Citizenship and Immigration Canada and firms seeking a specific skill and to hire immigrants due to a lack of domestic talent ensuring the process truly reflects supply and demand; and provide education overseas to better prepare immigrants for integration into Canada.

**Employer Focused Strategy for Employment Integration of Immigrants:** The employment integration of immigrants into the Canadian economy is, by far, the most important aspect of the permanent and successful settlement of newcomers. The Canadian Chamber recommends the government develop an employer-focused strategy for effective employment integration of immigrants that includes the involvement of/collaboration with local chambers of commerce and settlement organizations.

**Better Matching Immigrants with Regional Labour Needs:** We ask the federal government to collect relevant and timely information on current and future labour needs in cities and regions across Canada and promote it to immigrants before they immigrate; that research be conducted in partnership with chambers of commerce, municipalities, post-secondary institutions and other community agencies and that the data collected be used by Citizen and Immigration Canada to determine effective immigration policies and targets.

The full text of these resolutions is attached and we would be pleased to discuss them with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Perrin Beatty". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and a long, sweeping underline.

Perrin Beatty  
President and CEO

Attachments

cc: Mr. Rick Dysktra, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration  
Mr. Richard Fadden, Deputy Minister, Citizenship and Immigration Canada



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Ottawa, Canada K1A 1L1

The Honourable Perrin Beatty  
President and CEO  
The Canadian Chamber of Commerce  
420 — 360 Albert St.  
Ottawa ON K1R 7X7

Dear Mr. Beatty:

Thank you for your letter of January 23, 2009, in which you outline the policy positions of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce with respect to immigration in Canada. I have reviewed them carefully and am pleased to note that many of the Chamber's concerns are already being addressed through existing Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) initiatives.

**Reform of the Immigration Process:** I thank you for recognizing the improvements the Government of Canada has made to modernize the immigration system and speed up processing times. As you are aware, the changes introduced by Bill C-50 represented a significant step towards modernizing the immigration system by removing the obligation to process all applications CIC receives. Like you, we recognized that the backlog and resulting wait times were obstacles in attracting immigrants with the skills Canada needs. The Ministerial Instructions, which resulted from C-50 changes, were designed to better align immigration with Canada's labour market needs, while reducing wait times for new applicants and reducing the backlog.

After consultations with the provinces and territories and stakeholders such as employers and business groups, including the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, we identified 38 occupations experiencing labour shortages. Federal Skilled Worker (FSW) applicants who have work experience in one of these occupations will be fast-tracked for processing. Priority processing will also be given to temporary foreign workers and international students who have resided legally in Canada for at least one year as well as FSW applicants with offers of arranged employment.

**Changes to the Points System:** As you are likely aware, the points system underwent a fundamental reform in 2002, whereby skilled workers would be selected on generic human capital characteristics that would indicate their ability to move from job to job as the labour market adjusted. However, since then, we have seen some significant changes in the labour market context and recognize that the points system could be refined in some ways to reflect these changes.

**Labour Market Integration of New Immigrants:** As part of the Government of Canada's strategy to address immigrant labour market integration issues, the Foreign Credentials Referral Office (FCRO), launched in May 2007, provides information on foreign credential recognition and the labour market, path-finding and referral services to internationally trained individuals in Canada and overseas. FCRO services are provided through telephone and in-person delivery at 330 Service Canada Centres and through the FCRO web site. In addition, immigration applicants receive information about Web offerings through mailings from Canadian immigration missions.

On January 17, 2009, First Ministers committed to develop a common framework to recognize foreign qualifications by September 2009. At the federal level, the FCRO and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC)'s Foreign Credential Recognition Program (FCRP) are working with provincial and territorial governments and stakeholders to develop a common approach to foreign qualification assessment and recognition that will help internationally trained individuals integrate into the Canadian labour force. These efforts will be supported by a \$50 million allocation over two years that the Government announced in Budget 2009.

**Overseas Information Sessions:** As part of a strategy to inform potential immigrants at the beginning of the process, the Government launched an overseas pilot project (operating in India, China and the Philippines, with plans for expansion) through which skilled workers (Federal Skilled Workers and Provincial Nominees) can receive information on foreign credential recognition and the labour market through two-day in-person orientation sessions complemented by Web-based tools. The FCRO is currently working to make these pilots a permanent program, and will be inviting provinces and territories and stakeholder groups to participate in these overseas orientation sessions.

**Employer-Focused Strategy for Employment Integration:** The FCRO, in collaboration with The Alliance of Sector Councils and major organizations such as the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses, your own organization and others, developed an Employer's Roadmap — Hiring and Retaining Internationally Trained Workers for small-to-medium-sized enterprises.

The FCRO is moving foreign credential recognition issues forward by inviting provincial and territorial governments and stakeholders to share information and best practices in foreign credential recognition, and work collaboratively to identify and address gaps.

Historically, most newcomer-related interventions with employers have dealt with awareness and discrimination and have provided few supports to assist employers in finding and retaining employees. CIC is proposing a new vision: a continuum of flexible programming and supports to assist employers in hiring and retaining immigrants. Working in partnership with settlement agencies, employers would have access to a range of services and supports to assist them in hiring and retaining the skilled newcomer workers they need. This would include initiatives in the following areas: awareness building and strategies to recruit, orient and retain immigrants.

**Matching Immigrants with Regional Labour Needs:** CIC uses labour market information (LMI) from various sources to develop evidence-based policies. LMI also helps us determine whether or not our programs are meeting their objectives. The Labour Market Advisory Panel was formally launched by the Forum of Labour Market Ministers (FLMM) on July 24, 2008, with the mandate of providing advice to FLMM Ministers on how LMI can contribute to economic growth and efficiency over the next decade and better address the needs of businesses, as well as enlisting the support of business/labour and the broader public on the need for re-investments in labour market information. The Panel released a consultation paper, *Working Together to Build a Better Labour Market Information System for Canada*. After a series of consultations with business, federal/provincial/territorial government organizations (e.g. statistical agencies, Bank of Canada), and Canadian and international experts, the Panel will report back to FLMM on how to improve the LMI system in Canada by the end of 2009.

The Department is interested in having an improved and more consolidated LMI system in Canada for both developing better evidence-based policy, as well as better evaluation of the objectives of its programs. CIC is willing to participate in, and contribute to, initiatives that help improve LMI systems better linked to regional and local realities. CIC will be following the progress of the Advisory Panel, and my officials are prepared to be part of the ongoing discussions around improving LMI systems that could provide more accurate data at regional and local levels.

In conclusion, I recognize that Canada still has work to do in order to improve immigration processing and outcomes for new immigrants. My officials have previously initiated conversations with your policy staff on CIC programs and policies, and I look forward to more discussions on our initiatives. I appreciate the past input of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and see you as one of our key partners as we move forward with future changes to the immigration program.

Yours sincerely,



The Honourable Jason Kenney, PC, MP  
Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism

cc: Mr. Rick Dykstra, M.P.

PS- I apologize for my lateness in replying ;  
I would be happy to discuss something.  
J.