



January 16, 2023

Enhancing Express Entry through category-based selection to better meet Canada's evolving economic needs

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) on its public consultations for enhancing express entry through category-based selection to better meet Canada's evolving economic needs.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce is the country's largest business association with a network of over 400 chambers of commerce and boards of trade representing nearly 200,000 businesses of all sizes, in all sectors and regions of our country.

To help grow our economy, the government needs to take action on our worsening labour and talent shortages. For many sectors, what was a tight labour market pre-pandemic has turned into a full-blown labour crisis, inhibiting their ability to recover and acquire the talent they need to grow. As the world's economies emerge from the pandemic, the global competition for talent will only accelerate. Canada must attract new skilled immigrants to address our current labour shortages. As a world-leader on immigration policy, the country is well-positioned to build on its past successes—but we must use the full range of policy levers at our disposal to achieve this outcome. The Canadian Chamber commends the government for working to address this problem through its ambitious plan to increase Canada's immigration levels to 500,000 people annually. We also wish to underscore that Express Entry is an important tool to ensure these commitments are impactful, in the immediate term, for our business community.

An important issue often neglected in Canada is the importance of demand-side labour market information and workforce planning. This is key on a number of levels, including immigration targets. For example, there is considerable policy attention directed at greening the economy and green jobs. But there is very little labour market analysis shared on these goals: what are these jobs? How many are needed now, or over the coming years? Where in Canada are they needed? What are the skills and competencies required to match talent to these nascent, green jobs? The same applies for all sectors, including agriculture, mining, the blue economy, cybersecurity, construction, electrification, the care economy, and more. As such, the Canadian Chamber feels IRCC should work with Statistics Canada to collect and publish comprehensive forward-looking data on labour market needs. This information will inform post-secondary education (including upskilling and reskilling), immigration policy, as well as sector-level planning.

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This need for better data notwithstanding, numbers cannot be the sole basis for Canada's immigration plan. IRCC must also facilitate a geographic analysis for labour market needs, which can be embedded within the continued devolution of the immigration selection process. The Canadian Chamber wishes to encourage the work that was started with Provincial Nominee Programs, the Atlantic Immigration Program, and the recent expansion under the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilots (as well as the promised Municipal Nominee Program). This approach needs to become an integral and permanent element of our immigration policy, rather than rolling pilot programs. IRCC should continue to move, increasingly, to local levels of decision-making in immigration selection processes. Canada needs local solutions, built by communities, for communities that address community workforce needs.

Canada also needs to focus on those who are already here in Canada with temporary residency. The Canadian Chamber supports pathways to permanent residency and Express Entry for temporary foreign workers and international graduates of our publicly funded post-secondary institutions. By creating these pathways to permanent residency, Canada will grow an important talent pipeline over the short, medium, and long term.

A skilled and flexible workforce is key to continued prosperity for Canadians and growth in the Canadian economy. As the number of native-born Canadians plateaus and the average age rises, immigrants play an increasingly vital role in filling our labour needs, sustaining Canada's economic strength and quality of life. More and more new Canadians are joining the workforce but, in many cases, their skills and education are not recognized. While educational standards and qualifications may differ between jurisdictions, it is also incumbent on the Government of Canada to facilitate an efficient foreign credential recognition process that allows skilled immigrants to integrate quickly into our workforce and use the full range of their skills and knowledge to fulfil their potential to help to meet our labour needs. A primary focus should be accorded to industry sectors where it is estimated that a shortage is imminent, such as health (registered nurses), transportation (truck drivers), business and finance (high demand in multiple jurisdictions).

Thank you again for the opportunity to contribute to this critical topic. Should you have any questions or wish to further discuss some of the recommendations outlined in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact us directly.

Sincerely,

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Canadian Chamber of Commerce