



**Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration  
Settlement Services Study  
Submission by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce  
April 17, 2019**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce is the vital connection between business and the federal government. It helps shape public policy and decision-making to the benefit of businesses, communities and families across Canada with a network of over 450 chambers of commerce and boards of trade, representing 200,000 businesses of all sizes in all sectors of the economy and in all regions.

Businesses in Canada are strong proponents of an effective and efficient immigration system. To address our labour market needs, Canada needs to maintain its position as a preferred destination for in-demand workers and international students while supporting the successful transition of all new Canadians into urban, rural and northern communities. Importantly, the recommendations provided below have broad applicability across the country, and they have the support of the breadth and depth of the Chamber network.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

*A. Immigration Selection: Devolving decision making and expanding eligible NOC categories*

Providing effective settlement services first involves ensuring that those who arrive in Canada are set up for success from the outset. This is largely managed through Canada's immigration selection processes, alongside recruitment and retention endeavours.

A1. Decentralizing immigration selection processes started with Provincial Nominees Programs, and has been extended with the Atlantic Immigration Pilot (AIP) Program, along with the more recent Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP) Program. The Canadian Chamber supports a continuation of moving to local levels of decision making in immigration selection processes: we need local solutions built by communities for communities that address community workforce needs.

**The Canadian Chamber recommends working with the Chamber network and building on existing programs such as the AIP and RNIP programs to assist recruitment and retention to rural, northern and smaller communities.**

A2. The Canadian Chamber welcomed the RNIP program announcement earlier this year, as it had done with the AIP program when it was launched. Moving forward with such pilots, the Canadian Chamber not only recommends an expansion of the catchment qualifying areas, **we support the inclusion of modest resourcing to lead organizations in order to cover the human resources and administrative costs involved in tracking, reporting, convening and evaluating efforts.**

A3. In tandem with expanding such pilot programs, **the Canadian Chamber of Commerce supports expanding the recognition of certain low skilled occupations (in NOC C and D categories) within the Express Entry system to address regional labour shortages. Taking this a step further, the Canadian Chamber recommends expanding the categories within the Global Skills Strategy that are exempt from a labour market impact assessment, and/or developing parallel programs to support sector.** Employers are very happy with the Global Skills Strategy program and it has set a positive precedent for what can be achieved.

*B. Providing Immigration Services: The need to (re-)open IRCC offices in smaller, rural and remote areas*

The Canadian Chamber values the wide range of settlement services being provided across the country. Yet these are not the only service required in smaller, rural and remote areas: there is an essential need to (re-)establish regional and local government immigration services for newcomers and temporary permit holders.

B1. Over the past decades, numerous IRCC/CIC offices across Canada have been closed. This has significantly affected the ability of rural and northern communities to attract, retain and service newcomers, international student and temporary workers. The March 2019 announcement of the re-opening of an office in Charlottetown to support those across the province is a welcome first step.

**The Canadian Chamber strongly encourages the Government of Canada to conduct a cost benefit analysis of (re-)opening offices in more rural and northern communities.** This analysis should include examining different options such as transferring experienced staff to rural and northern communities, placing IRCC staff in existing government buildings and including small and mid-sized communities into these considerations.

*C. Receiving Immigration Services: Pathways to Permanent Residency for Temporary Residents*

C1. While the permanent residency program has seen a number of changes in recent years, with several incremental improvements, it is still some ways from serving the needs of

businesses and local communities. We need to develop new, and smooth existing, pathways to permanent residency for international students and temporary foreign workers. As part of this, the **Canadian Chamber also recommends allowing targeted temporary permit holders access to settlement services that facilitate labour market integration that currently only permanent residents can access.**

C2. As jurisdictions across Canada search for ways to attract and retain more international students, a significant impediment to these efforts are policies that make it difficult, if not impossible, for international students to obtain work-integrated learning experiences. As these students seek permanent residency, there are practical long-term implications of being left out of government-funded WIL programming, such as challenges connecting with host communities, making post-graduation career contacts and gaining the work experience that employers are increasingly requiring of graduates. **To support the labour market integration of international students, the Canadian Chamber recommends:**

- a) **Permit students to participate without restriction in co-op and internship opportunities, without needing to obtain a separate work permit;**
- b) **Include international students in the eligibility for the Student Work Integrated Learning Program, the Canada Summer Jobs Program and programming announced in Budget 2019 for outbound mobility; and**
- c) **Count all time international students spend in Canada towards citizenship eligibility.**

C3. The Canadian Chamber has a series of recommendations to modernize the Temporary Foreign Worker Program.<sup>1</sup> Related to this study, we recommend that Government of Canada review pathways from the Temporary Foreign Worker Program towards permanent residency. Temporary Foreign Workers are a valuable source of potential future Canadians, and facilitating their transition towards permanent residency and citizenship is a key step to growing Canada's economy and the nation as a whole.

Specially, **the Canadian Chamber recommends that the Government of Canada introduce a 5-year permanent residency category for low-skilled positions with labour shortages to permit international workers who reside in communities with populations of less than one million and have at least two years of related work experience to qualify for permanent residence.**

#### *D. What immigration services are being provided: Occupation Specific Language Training*

D1. Within the spectrum of settlement services provided across the country, the Canadian Chamber emphasizes the importance our members put on occupational specific language training (OSLT) as critical to labour market integration. OSLT is important for risk management and safety, effective labour integration, labour retention and upward mobility. Equally important to what is delivered is how it is delivered. Consideration of work site learning, blended learning and innovative delivery methods are needed. **The Canadian Chamber**

---

<sup>1</sup> For details, please see the Canadian Chamber's 2018 Policy Resolutions (<http://www.chamber.ca/advocacy/policy-resolutions>). The resolution "Improving the Temporary Foreign Worker Program" can be found on page 39.

**encourages the Government of Canada to work with industry and business organizations to increase the use of OSLT, including new and innovative ways to deliver language training directly in the workplace.**

As a viable option, the Canadian Chamber would like to highlight la Chambre de commerce du Montréal métropolitain's (CCMM) provincially funded language matching program that provided on-the-job lessons offered throughout the Montreal area.<sup>2</sup> CCMM's model involves Montreal-area university and cegep students providing 2 hours language support to local business owners weekly. For participants who have completed a three-month session, 80% have increased their French language ability by at least one level. The program has recently been expanded and will serve 200 business owners this year. This is an example of how personalized and innovative approaches, offered by the business community for the business community, can provide highly successful settlement services.

## **CONCLUSION:**

In closing, the Canadian Chamber would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to submit this brief, and underscore the importance of including the business sector in the design, implementation and evaluation of settlement services. The Canadian Chamber and its members are here as willing partners in consultation and collaboration.

For more information, please contact:

Leah Nord

Director, Skills and Immigration Policy

Canadian Chamber of Commerce

1700 – 275 rue Slater Street, Ottawa ON K1P 5H9

T: 613.238.4000 (2236) | M: 613.697.9080 | F: 613.238.7643

---

<sup>2</sup> For recent media coverage of this program see: (i) Ingrid Peritz, "Working knowledge: Quebec expands on-the-job French lessons for newcomers," The Globe and Mail, February 17, 2019 (<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-working-knowledge-quebec-expands-on-the-job-french-lessons-for/>); (ii) Martin Jolicoeur, "Les jumelages linguistiques pour commerçants s'étendent aux banlieues" Les affaires, le 1er mars 2019 ([https://www.lesaffaires.com/strategie-d-entreprise/pme/les-jumelages-linguistiques-pour-commerçants-s-etend-aux-banlieues/608593?utm\\_source=Twitter&utm\\_medium=Social&utm\\_content=08-03-2018](https://www.lesaffaires.com/strategie-d-entreprise/pme/les-jumelages-linguistiques-pour-commerçants-s-etend-aux-banlieues/608593?utm_source=Twitter&utm_medium=Social&utm_content=08-03-2018)); and (iii) Lisa-Marie Gervais, "Apprendre le français en milieu de travail," Le Devoir, le 24 décembre 2018 (<https://www.ledevoir.com/societe/education/544240/apprendre-le-francais-en-milieu-de-travail>).