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**Submission to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration Canada:
*Study on the use of the Labour Market Impact Assessment under the Temporary
Foreign Worker Program***

June 2, 2021

Introduction

Universities Canada is the voice of Canada's universities, representing public and private not-for-profit universities at home and abroad. Canada's universities – through teaching, research, and community engagement – transform lives, strengthen communities, and find solutions to some of the most pressing challenges facing our country and the world. Throughout the pandemic, universities have delivered on their educational mission, maintained and expanded the research enterprise, and demonstrated how they serve as anchor institutions in communities across the country.

The global competition for talent

In a world economy increasingly powered by ideas, Canada is in an enviable position in the global competition for talent. We are a country of open communities, we have an accessible, world-class, bilingual post-secondary education system. And we have taken steps, like the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and the International Mobility Program, to make coming to Canada attractive to highly skilled individuals. As we gear up for the recovery from COVID-19, our ability to attract the world's top talent will be critical to drive Canada's prosperity.

Canada's global peers have recognized the importance of a well-educated and diverse workforce and are taking significant steps to maintain a competitive edge in the global competition for talent. The Biden administration is putting forward a strategy to modernize the U.S. immigration system, including new measures and additional funding to streamline visa processing for high-skilled workers and STEM graduates. Meanwhile, the United Kingdom has launched an aggressive campaign to recruit the world's brightest minds to British universities, including the roll-out of multi-year work permits for international students.

Enhancing the Temporary Foreign Worker and the International Mobility programs

It is clear that the global competition for talent remains fierce. While our international brand remains strong, Canada will have to work even harder to secure the world's brightest minds. Government measures like the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and the International Mobility Program will be essential to talent attraction. Universities use these programs to attract the best and brightest faculty and researchers to Canada – improving the learning experiences for Canadian students while also strengthening Canada's innovation ecosystem.

Both the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and the International Mobility Program help universities secure international talent that is a crucial part of our research and innovation ecosystem, including:

- Faculty: Canada Research Chairs and Canada Excellence Research Chairs, Department Chairs, etc.
- Researchers: Postdoctoral fellows, research award recipients, visiting professors, etc.
- Senior administrators: Deans, Assistant Vice-Presidents, etc.
- Staff at on-campus business incubators, such as the DMZ incubator at Ryerson University.

To support the continued effectiveness of the program, universities participate in an annual survey conducted by Universities Canada on the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. The survey results are provided to ESDC with a national roll-up of data on foreign faculty hiring trends to inform policy development. According to a recent survey of our members, in 2019, the total number of foreign academics working with a TFW permit was 2,773, representing approximately 3.8 per cent of all faculty. The majority of these faculty (97%) indicated they intend to apply for permanent residency.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created new challenges to the processing system, including the closure of visa application centres, new border restrictions and limited processing capacity in some markets. Provincial immigration measures have also impacted how universities recruit foreign faculty and students. As a result, some faculty have been left with great uncertainty of when they may be able to relocate to Canada and have accepted employment at educational institutions in other countries as they can provide more certainty.

As Canada gears up for the post-COVID recovery, enhancing our visa processing capacity is the most cost-effective solution to ensure that Canada remains a destination of choice for global talent and help spur economic growth. The recent commitments in Budget 2021 to develop and deliver a new digital platform for improved visa processing capacity and overall applicant experience are an important step to addressing this challenge. These commitments could help streamline federal and provincial immigration processes and strengthen our ability to recruit the world's brightest minds. Universities Canada and our members look forward to working with our federal partners on the implementation of these commitments in the coming months.

To remain globally competitive, we also encourage the federal government to continue enhancing the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and the International Mobility Program and to help Canada's universities attract top talent by:

- providing universities and applicants with clear guidance on how to apply and renew work permits and how to transition to permanent residency under both programs;
- expanding the number of foreign faculty that would be exempt from a LMIA and eligible under the International Mobility Program;
- aligning the length of work permits granted under different streams with the length of academic appointments, which are generally 4 to 5 years;
- providing clear guidance on how to communicate to IRCC any changes in duties, responsibilities and salary changes under different streams; and
- ensure that federal authorities work with their provincial counterparts, particularly in Quebec, to ensure all institutions have equitable access to incoming talent by aligning temporary residency measures whenever possible.

Our shared efforts to support international students

Since the onset of the pandemic, Canada's universities have been working closely with both the federal government and their provincial counterparts on a central pillar of talent attraction: the safe return of over 200,000 international students studying at universities each year. We applaud members of this Committee for recognizing the value of international students to communities (estimated at \$22 billion annually) across the country and for championing the needs of international students throughout the pandemic.

Universities Canada firmly believes that international students strongly benefit our postsecondary education system. The diversity of opinion, perspective, and lived experience improves the learning environment for all engaged in the exchange of ideas. The tuition fees of international students ensure that institutions can offer a wider range of programs and degrees, which directly benefits domestic students by giving them more course options during their studies. Put simply, international students increase opportunities for Canadian students.

Universities Canada welcomes the federal government's significant commitment to dedicate the necessary capacity to process all study permit applications received before May 15th in time for the fall semester. This commitment will provide critical assurances to prospective students and help our institutions plan for the safe return of international students this fall. We also applaud the federal government for the new temporary pathway to permanent residency for recent international graduates in Canada and encourage the federal government to work with Quebec to support similar initiatives in the province. These measures recognize that international graduates of Canadian universities have played a critical role in supporting Canada's economy throughout the pandemic and are a key source of talent to drive Canada's economic recovery.

For more information

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