



**Written Submission for the Pre-Budget  
Consultations in Advance of the Upcoming  
Federal Budget**

**By: World Education Services (WES)**

## List of Recommendations

### **I. Build an-immigrant inclusive economy as we recover from COVID-19 pandemic**

1. Support inclusive recruitment and hiring strategies that incorporate immigrant talent sources
2. Catalyze innovative and scalable solutions that enable better recognition of skills, education, and experience gained outside Canada
3. Support movements and initiatives focusing on vulnerable groups to include in our rebuilding stage without further exacerbating inequality

### **II. Ensure that Canada remains competitive by recruiting highly skilled immigrants**

4. Maintain the planned immigration levels trajectory for Canada's economic wellbeing

### **III. Address the on-going underutilization of immigrant health professionals**

5. Set up a national table of healthcare stakeholders including employers, regulators, educators, internationally educated health professionals to address the ongoing underutilization of immigrant health professionals in our healthcare system

### **IV. Demonstrate Canada's commitment to international collaboration on enhancing global recognition and mobility**

6. Uphold international and humanitarian commitments by offering protection to refugees and persons in need of protection as per the Global Compact on Safe and Orderly Migration(GCM) and Global Compact on Refugees(GCR)
7. Provide fair and timely assessment of academic credentials, skills and experience of newcomers, even displaced individuals who cannot prove their credentials through documentary evidence in compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and UNESCO's Convention on Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education

### **V. Ensure that immigrants benefit all provinces and municipalities across Canada**

8. Support smaller and rural communities to attract and retain immigrants

## **VI. Build a seamless immigration and settlement model**

9. Ensure that labour market information, including foreign credential recognition and alternative career options is available to newcomers easily and at the appropriate times in their immigration journey

## Body of Submission

### I. Build an-immigrant inclusive economy as we recover from COVID-19 pandemic

Canada looks to immigration to drive our economy and to secure its future stability and growth. With a low birth rate and more than eight million baby boomers exiting the workforce, Canada will have no choice but to rely heavily on immigration to fill this gap. It's expected that immigration will account for all of Canada's net labour force growth in the coming years.

Unlike previous recessions, the COVID-19 pandemic is hitting service sector industries the hardest and the fastest. These sectors have a significant portion of immigrant workers, are less likely to be unionized, which makes these workers more precarious and disproportionately affected. For instance, women, mostly immigrants and visible minorities, represented 63 percent of jobs lost in March, and in some industries such as health care and social assistance, women accounted for almost 100 percent of jobs lost<sup>1</sup>.

The pandemic has already amplified the existing problem of underemployment of immigrants, an issue that is evident and well documented. In 2019, WES released research report "**Who is Succeeding the Canadian Labour Market? Predictors of Career Success for Skilled Immigrants.**" This research was based on survey findings from more than 6400 skilled immigrants who were admitted to Canada as permanent residents through one of the skilled immigration programs in the Express Entry system. Key findings include:

- 80.3 percent were employed, however, less than half (47.2 percent) were working in the same sector as they were pre-migration
- There were significant changes in pre and post-migration sectors for those working in management, education, health, and professional sectors in their home country. Following migration to Canada, more new immigrants worked in food services, manufacturing, construction, and other sectors.
- Survey respondents who reported that they worked in a regulated profession experienced lower rates of employment than respondents who worked in non-regulated professions.

As we recover from pandemic, we need to address the underemployment of highly skilled immigrants who have strong academic credentials, skills, and experience. Now is the time to support initiatives that build a more immigrant-inclusive economy in a way that creates new opportunities for immigrants to fully contribute their skills, education, and experience.

1. ***Build inclusive recruitment and hiring strategies that incorporate immigrant talent sources.*** One million immigrants have arrived in Canada over the last three years—ready to contribute their skills and experience. We need to ensure that these immigrants are not economically “scarred” by the current COVID downturn. Let’s build inclusive recruitment and hiring strategies that incorporate immigrant talent sources. Canada’s economic growth depends on immigration; without it, future growth potential will be constrained.
2. ***Catalyze innovative and scalable solutions that enable better recognition of skills, education, and experience gained outside Canada:*** To build a more diverse workforce, employers need the tools to better understand skills, experience, and education gained outside of Canada. We need to look beyond the traditional model of who we know, and credentials and experience we’re familiar with. Competency-informed hiring tools are key to this shift.
3. ***Support movements and initiatives focusing on vulnerable groups to include in our rebuilding stage without further exacerbating inequality.*** We need to ensure that amidst this pandemic, we’re not leaving immigrants and refugees behind in the immediate assistance, as well as during the recovery phase. Many immigrants are in high-risk roles during the pandemic—as health care and essential workers—and we need to ensure their safety and livelihood long-term. Immigrants contribute to Canada, and our policies and programs should reflect the same inclusive and caring nature. The pandemic is a reminder that we are all part of a global community. A resilient Canada is one that takes care of everyone.

## **II. Ensure that Canada remains competitive by recruiting highly skilled immigrants**

The pandemic has only heightened the need for immigrants as we enter the recovery stage. Canada already relies on immigration to offset the fiscal challenges posed by an aging population and will continue to rely on it to help offset the \$230 billion spent on COVID-related financial aid.

Despite the pandemic, Canada remains an attractive destination. In April and June 2020, WES conducted pulse surveys of those who applied to WES for an academic credential evaluation for immigration purposes, to understand the impact of COVID-19 on the interest and intentions of prospective immigrants to immigrate to Canada. April survey results, released in the report, “**Are Intentions to Immigrate to Canada Changing in the Face of COVID 19?**”, indicated the pandemic had no impact on interest in immigrating to Canada for 57 percent of respondents; 38 percent said they were *more* interested in immigrating. When the survey was again administered in June, the ratio who were more interested in immigrating had increased to 45 percent. In both surveys, only 5-6 percent were less interested. It is, therefore, important to recognize that Canada is still an attractive destination for many prospective immigrants despite the impact of the pandemic on the global and local economy.

WES believes that keeping the planned immigration trajectory is important for Canada’s economic wellbeing. Welcoming highly skilled immigrants through economic class will be beneficial to rebuild and restore the economy.

### **III. Address the on-going underutilization of immigrant health professionals**

There is ample evidence of the underutilization of immigrant health professionals. Overall, immigrants comprise 25.5% of health care and social assistance sector in Canada<sup>ii</sup>. Yet, according to a recent **StatCan** study, almost half (47%) of immigrants with health education from abroad are unemployed, underemployed, or in jobs requiring only a high school education and not utilizing their health skills earned.<sup>iii</sup>

Many internationally educated health professionals are advocating for the opportunity to contribute their skills to the COVID-19 response. There is an opportunity in this moment to explore ways that immigrant health professionals can contribute in the long-term care sector, where the crisis is most acute, while at the same time allowing them to work towards full professional licensure.

During the pandemic, long standing human resource issues in the Long Term Care (LTC) sector have been significantly exacerbated, leading to severe staffing shortages and contributing to outbreaks and negative outcomes. At the same time, the degree to which the workforce in LTC is comprised of recent immigrants, and racialized immigrant women in particular, has been highlighted in a number of recent studies. The issue of the significant

underutilization of the skills of Canada's Internationally Educated Health Professionals (IEHPs) is once again in the spotlight.

One key recommendation is to set up a national table of healthcare stakeholders including employers, regulators, educators, internationally educated health professionals to address the ongoing underutilization of immigrant health professionals in our healthcare system.

#### **IV. Demonstrate Canada's commitment to international collaboration on enhancing global recognition and mobility**

As a signatory to several international agreements, including the **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)** and the **Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)**, Canada must demonstrate its commitment to global recognition and mobility. Canada needs to continue playing a significant role in upholding its international and humanitarian commitments by offering protection to refugees and persons in need of protection.

Canada ratified the **Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC)** which became effective in August 2018. The LRC is a legally binding document that necessitates fair recognition of individuals who settle in Canada, even displaced individuals who cannot prove their credentials through documentary evidence. Professional regulators are obliged to ensure that systems are in place to conduct fair and timely assessments.

Moreover, on 25 November 2019, UNESCO's Member States adopted the first **United Nations Convention on Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education**. The new convention establishes universal principles for recognition of studies and degrees, and will improve mobility for the more than 220 million students enrolled in higher education worldwide. Canada needs to ratify this Convention and promote the right of individuals to have their higher education qualifications evaluated through fair, transparent and non-discriminatory mechanisms.

#### **V. Ensure that immigrants benefit all provinces and municipalities across Canada**

Settlement and immigration patterns reveal that the majority of immigrants and their families settle in large cities, such as Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. However, local municipalities and smaller communities face major challenges to fill local labour shortages.

Programs such as the *Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot*, *Atlantic Immigration Pilot*, and the recently introduced *Municipal Nominee Program* complement federal immigration programs and attract immigrants to rural and smaller communities across Canada. They will contribute to the overall growth of the economy and reduce disparity in immigration. For instance, the Municipal Nominee Program (MNP) addresses the following gaps that other programs do not.

- **Greater leverage in attracting immigrants:** Smaller communities, which may not be an immigrant's first choice, will be afforded the opportunity to make themselves more attractive to immigrants. The MNP incentivizes immigrants to think beyond the big cities and positions smaller and rural communities as a destination.

**Towards gainful employment:** The MNP helps to ensure that immigrants' skills are well recognized and that they will be gainfully employed, giving them the means to support themselves. Without this direct link to employment, it is far less likely that immigrants will move out of major cities that provide more and varied job prospects.

## **VI. Build a seamless immigration and settlement model**

One of the major challenges in Canada's immigration and settlement model is overlap in services, which is confusing and frustrating for newcomers who want to get labour market information easily and quickly. Web-based information on available programs and services is overwhelming and difficult to navigate. Moreover, services are often delivered in isolation leading to the duplication of efforts.

WES suggests that there should be a seamless model which is easier to navigate so that newcomers can make the right decisions at the right time. Information regarding foreign credential recognition and alternative career options should be provided in a holistic manner. Such an approach would facilitate a more effective use of skilled immigrants' talents and ensure successful integration of newcomers in the economy.

It will also be important to establish a national committee of diverse stakeholders (including employers, licensing bodies, settlement agencies, post-secondary institutions) to consult and advise on how best to address the significant underutilization of the talents newcomers bring to Canada, with a view to promoting a labour force that is highly skilled and inclusive.



August 13, 2020

---

<sup>i</sup> Behind the Numbers: *Women bearing the brunt of economic losses: One in five has been laid off or had hours cut*, April 10,2020

<sup>ii</sup> *Labour Force Survey 2017*

<sup>iii</sup> Statistics Canada: *Adults with a health education but not working in health occupations*, April 2020