



Strengthening Canada's Future

# Implementing IRCC's Immigration Strategy: Next Steps Toward a More Resilient Future

**75%** of Canada's population  
growth is due to immigration

Almost **100%** of Canada's labour  
force growth is due to immigration

Beyond encouraging immigration, Canada  
must support long-term retention

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's (IRCC) immigration strategy, "**An Immigration System for Canada's Future: A plan to get us there,**" is timely and ambitious. The strategy indicates that IRCC is committed to responding to barriers that contribute to unnecessary complexity in navigating immigration and settlement systems, including delays in processing times and inequitable employment outcomes. The strategy also acknowledges the impact of housing, health care, and other factors on immigration processes and immigrant outcomes.

This immigration strategy puts in place a roadmap. Following that roadmap and ensuring its effective implementation will be complex. The keys to success are **strong, centralized leadership, clear processes for consultation with the wide range of stakeholders on whom success depends,** and **meaningful intergovernmental collaboration at all levels.**

World Education Services believes that an intentional approach to governance, collaboration, accountability, and transparency will help to establish clear responsibilities and effective coordination across a range of stakeholders.

## Our recommendations include:

1. Establishing clear governance led by the Privy Council in the Office of the Prime Minister to manage a pan-Canadian approach to implement the strategy. This approach should include strong executive leadership provided by relevant ministers and deputy ministers (from, for example, IRCC, Employment and Social Development Canada, Health Canada, the Treasury Board of Canada), as well as partnership with provincial governments and stakeholders.
2. Developing a framework for:
  - setting targets and timelines for implementation
  - identifying clear roles and responsibilities
  - assessing and prioritizing input from governmental non-actors, including post-secondary institutions, licensing bodies, employers, settlement agencies, and those with lived experience
  - ensuring accountability and enforcement
  - delivering transparent public reporting
3. Working with all provinces to improve coordination and build on best practices.
4. Engaging provincial regulators and promoting frameworks that would ensure more transparent and consistent registration requirements in regulated occupations.

IRCC's strategic plan, "An Immigration System for Canada's Future," is a strong first step toward securing our country's future economic resilience and global competitiveness. Now we need a clear implementation roadmap to help ensure a transparent, collaborative, pan-Canadian approach so that newcomers remain in the country and put their vital skills and experience to use.

1.

### **A pan-Canadian approach with effective, centralized coordination is critical to success.**

Strong central governance is essential to the implementation of IRCC's immigration strategy. IRCC has outlined a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach for its strategy. Success depends on gathering and effectively engaging a wide range of stakeholders from all provinces, regions, and sectors of Canadian life. To accomplish this, IRCC should:

- Establish a division in the Privy Council Office to coordinate among key ministries on the immigration strategy. This should include key representatives from global affairs, employment, and immigration portfolios as well as those knowledgeable about addressing xenophobia, discrimination, and inequity as it relates to immigration.
- Convene a Ministers' Task Force (supported by a Deputy Ministers' Committee) in the Privy Council Office to align objectives, coordinate strategies, and ensure effective communication between key ministries and the provinces.
- Engage civil society, including non-government stakeholders, post-secondary institutions, licensing bodies, employers, settlement agencies, and those with lived experience, to provide feedback.

2.

### **Also critical are timelines and targets, clear assignment of responsibilities, accountability and enforcement mechanisms, and commitment to transparent reporting on processes.**

To ensure the success of its plan, IRCC must be methodical and intentional in these areas:

- **Establishment of targets and timelines.** Targets should be set for specific actions (such as improving international student outcomes, reducing immigrant underemployment, and improving service standards) and should be linked to timelines for implementation and evaluating outcomes.
- **Identification of clear roles and responsibilities.** Defining the specific roles and responsibilities for all levels of government, as well as partners, is crucial for coordination and effective implementation.
- **Development of a framework for stakeholder input.** Effectively utilizing stakeholder input from ongoing consultation processes requires a framework that clearly lays out the criteria used to assess and prioritize the input.
- **Implementation of mechanisms to ensure accountability and enforcement.** An effective implementation plan must integrate ways to ensure accountability for stakeholders, including enforcement of specific actions.
- **Formal reporting that is transparent, informative, and consistently delivered.** It is imperative that regular, transparent information-sharing continues and that formal reporting processes are established.

3.

### **Coordinated mechanisms for intra- and inter-governmental collaboration and engagement are key.**

**A key focus area for centralized action and accountability is the Provincial Nominee Program.** The 2024-2026 Immigration Levels Plan **indicates** a significant increase in the proportion of Provincial Nominee Program immigration targets relative to other streams of economic immigration. Currently, each province determines its immigration targets in relation to labour market demands as immigration agreements are negotiated. IRCC in collaboration with Employment and Social Development Canada can incentivize **increased coordination between provinces to promote regional alignment and labour market responsiveness and support long-term settlement and integration across Canada.**

4.

### **The federal government should seek to establish more consistent registration requirements in regulated occupations between provinces.**

Nearly **half** of all immigrants who arrive in Canada through the Federal Skilled Worker Program and Provincial Nominee Program work in regulated occupations.<sup>1</sup> Provincial occupational regulatory bodies must ensure fair access to regulated professions and trades for newcomers to Canada. This can be accomplished with **more consistent regulatory standards.**

- Canada must aim to make certain that immigrants and refugees in regulated occupations can efficiently have their training assessed and can re-enter their chosen professions.
- Development of (a) consistent standards for licensing and (b) mutual recognition of qualifications across jurisdictions is crucial. **Federal government engagement with provincial Fairness Commissioners and superintendents will help to encourage collaboration and critical information-sharing between provinces.**