



IRCC Consultation:

**How can we continue
to grow our country using
the Immigration System?**



Colleges and Institutes Canada
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Colleges and Institutes Canada is the national and international voice of Canada's publicly supported colleges, institutes and polytechnics. We work with industry and social sectors to train 1.5 million learners of all ages and backgrounds at campuses serving over 3,000 urban, rural and remote communities in Canada. The Association operates in 29 countries via 13 offices around the world.

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Background

Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan, previously known as ACCC) is the national not-for-profit membership association representing Canada's public colleges, institutes, cégeps and polytechnics. CICan is committed to quality education and skills development opportunities for all Canadians as a means to maximize labour market participation, support Canada's prosperity and nurture global citizenship. Colleges and institutes serve over 3,000 communities in urban, rural and remote areas all across the country, serving 1.5 million Canadians every year. We are recognized around the world for partnerships with industry, providing tailored curriculum, partnered research and work-integrated learning opportunities for students. We work collaboratively with community partners to provide immigrants and refugees with the training and support services they need to successfully enter the labour market and integrate in Canada.

Colleges and institutes also welcome international students, providing a pathway to immigration and successful economic integration. International students

enrich the classroom for domestic students while training for a Canadian credential and/or upgrading their language skills, soft skills and enhancing their overall employability in the Canadian job market.

Internationally, CICan delivers overseas orientation for newcomers through the award-winning Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)-funded Canadian Immigrant Integration Program (CIIP). Our Planning for Canada initiative is jointly delivered with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and accelerates the successful integration of economic immigrants into Canadian society. We provide information, planning, and online support through partners in Canada in person at our offices in China, India, and the Philippines, and reaching around the world with an online global team.

Strengthening our Canadian Fabric

- How many newcomers should we welcome to Canada in 2017 and beyond?
- How can we best support newcomers to ensure they become successful members of our communities?
- Do we have the balance right among the immigration programs or streams? If not, what priorities should form the foundation of Canada's immigration planning?

The number of newcomers to welcome to Canada should be commensurate with the ability of communities to absorb them. What is important to determine the number is appropriate data to make informed decisions. Different communities have different capacities to welcome newcomers with the level of services required to ensure successful integration. Understanding the population needs, current and future, and level of services available in each community is critical. Shifting demographics and employment opportunities in key sectors must be strategic components of assessing the appropriate number of newcomers to welcome in each community.

Providing newcomers with the support they need to succeed and become contributing members of Canadian society is critical. We believe that pre-arrival services appropriate to the population and immigration category, such as our own Planning for Canada initiative, can tip the scale in favour of successful establishment, allowing immigrants to consult with trained professionals about their future rather than relying on informal networks which may not have the most up to date or relevant information about the labour market.

Our recommendation is that this type of pre-arrival service be mandatory for prospective immigrants. This may be most relevant for the economic classes at the moment. However, with the increased emphasis on Express Entry and the reality of Temporary Foreign Workers and international students transitioning to permanent residence and immigration, we would be supportive of this type of service being extended to these other temporary classes as well.

Over 39,000 prospective immigrants have participated in Planning for Canada (CIIP) services since 2007, seeking professional expertise to ensure their successful economic integration. Ongoing internal tracking reveals that 96% of survey respondents will take steps toward integration before leaving their countries of origin, including having credentials assessed, applying for jobs, seeking further education and training, having their language assessed, seeking settlement support, seeking licensure, and upgrading their language skills.

IRCC's own studies have demonstrated a high level of commitment to successful establishment from clients who have undertaken the training. The Government of Canada conducted its own longitudinal study of former participants from 2011 to 2015 through its Tracking of Overseas Orientation Session Graduates system. Individuals were surveyed at the 3-month, 1-year, and 3-year mark. The surveys focused on former participants' labour market, education, and settlement outcomes in Canada. The strength of these results informs our suggestion that this type of program be mandatory for economic class immigrants. Findings from the one-year survey with 1,326 respondents confirmed that:

- 75% of respondents were working in Canada: of these, 69% reported working in an area directly aligned or related to their work experience; 58% reported working in an area directly aligned or related to their education.
- 45% reported that they had applied to get their educational credentials assessed; of these, 40% said they had started the process overseas.

To ensure successful social integration, new immigrants should also be exposed to training in financial literacy, family dynamics/child welfare and employment standards training. Additionally, credential recognition and obtaining sanction from regulatory bodies may be critical to the success of newcomers.

Here, colleges and institutes across Canada can and do play an important role – they serve over 3000 rural, remote, urban communities in every corner of the country. Colleges and institutes provide second language assessment and training; skills upgrading; credential recognition/ bridging programs, essential skills, and entrepreneurship programs within the relevant communities. Often tailored programs exist to support newcomers, such as Centennial's Refugee Mentorship Program, that provide an extra helping hand in support of newcomers.

Campuses across the country have very diverse campuses with many newcomers and international students. This provides a safe and comfortable space from which to learn about Canada while getting acquiring the skills necessary to find employment in Canada.

Another important point is that international students are potential immigrants through the “ Study, Work and Live in Canada” national brand. Ensuring that integration services similar to pre-arrival programs can be offered to international students would be valuable to those who will ultimately settle here.

The demographics of different communities and their ability absorb newcomers critical to immigration planning. Similarly, meeting current labour market needs across the country is an important factor in planning for immigration streams and programs. Newcomers are well placed to complement Canadian communities’ existing demographics and skillsets.

International students are a consideration in immigration planning. They make excellent immigrants – they have Canadian credentials, and language and cultural familiarity. Strengthening links between studying and immigration are important for mature students as well as younger students - i.e. points should not be relevant if there has been study

in Canada, as in the new proposals for Express Entry which would potentially allow for bonus points outside of the Human Capital allocation. This would take into account mature students changing careers.

We need to ensure that the promotion of Canada as a study destination is strategically positioned and adequately funded, with a consistent message that is shared across geographies (i.e. not just a few source countries) but to diversify promotion and sources of students.

It also critical to protect refugees and promote family reunification, one of the cornerstones of Canadian values; the levels of those in this class may be adjusted based on real time issues and circumstances.

In each category, the provision of appropriate pre-arrival services to prepare newcomers for Canada, as discussed above, is an essential component of planning.

Unlocking Canada's Diverse Needs

- How can immigration play a role in supporting economic growth and innovation in Canada?
- Should there be more programs for businesses to permanently hire foreign workers if they can't find Canadians to fill the job?
- What is the right balance between attracting global talent for high-growth sectors, on the one hand, and ensuring affordable labour for businesses that have historically seen lower growth, on the other?
- How can immigration fill in the gaps in our demographics and economy?
- What Canadian values and traditions are important to share with newcomers to help them integrate into Canadian society?

There is huge potential for immigration to play a critical role in Canada's economic growth and innovation. Thoughtful policies based on solid data can ensure that Canada capitalizes on newcomers' abilities and potential to make a stronger and more innovative country, including the establishment of small businesses. Innovation thrives when new people with different experiences and knowledge come together. Recruiting international students with an explicit pathway to immigration both supports economic growth: the economic impact of international students on the local economy is significant at 9 billion annually- and innovation. At colleges and institutes, most students have the opportunity for both work-integrated learning and to participate in innovative applied research, partnered with local business and industry. This is excellent preparation for a successful Canadian career.

Colleges and institutes similarly provide entrepreneurship training. This, combined with the mentorship of entrepreneurs, both nascent and established, within the immigrant community has the potential to build confidence, and harness and transform individuals into successful new Canadians.

Training newcomers based on local economic realities and job market (colleges do this already in each community via Program Advisory Committees for initiating new programs, etc.) is then as important as recruiting trained newcomers ready to fill job gaps.

Tailored recruitment based on community demographics and employer needs is critical to fill Canada's social and economic gaps. Here again, international student

recruitment for key sectors and communities can play a hugely important role. Recruiting international students produces graduates that industry needs, trained locally according to current Canadian standards, while also creating jobs, enriching the classroom for domestic students and without any cost to the tax payer or government (paid for by the international student through tuition and other spending).

It is essential that IRCC assign points for Canadian education and Canadian work experience in the Express Entry permanent resident pathway to ensure we can use immigration to fill gaps in demographics and economy.

All Canadian values are important, but those most relevant to newcomers are multiculturalism, tolerance (religion, race, sexual orientation, etc.), community, gender equality, etc. Many newcomers will come from countries where this level of acceptance of difference is not customary. This can be a big cultural shift for many and support for this acclimatization is important. Pre-arrival services play a critical role here.

Similarly, student paths to integration are eased tremendously by language familiarity, credentials tailored to the Canadian economy, and the cultural support they get as students to help them assimilate and understand Canadian values.

Modernizing our immigration system

- Currently, immigration levels are planned yearly. Do you agree with the thinking that planning should be multi-year?
- What modernization techniques should Canada invest in for processing of applications?
- What should Canada do to ensure its immigration system is modern and efficient?
- Is there any rationale for providing options to those willing to pay higher fees for an expedited process?

Serving clients well is the cornerstone of a successful immigration system. Client experience is critical and efficiencies can be found that still consider the importance and client service and the contextual knowledge required to serve clients well.

High quality, consistent data is key, with user-friendly access and reporting systems. In today's world, access to appropriate online information is essential. In the case of CIGan's Canadian Immigrant Integration Program, the online information on pre-arrival services is currently confusing for clients, with multiple service providers and an IRCC website interface which could be much better organized. More clarity on which organizations will provide gateway information and then be able to refer onwards would be invaluable for eligible clients who need to quickly get up to speed in planning their next steps.

The people and processes behind the systems are also critical to success. The appropriate training of decision makers in overseas offices is necessary. It is important to acknowledge the real presence of fraud, but also to ensure that decisions are based on country knowledge through a

facilitation prism. The success of CIGan's innovative Student Partners Program in India, China, and now Vietnam helps to ensure program integrity while increasing access to international students. This program should be a model for success.

It is also important to leverage existing resources and capitalize on local knowledge already in place. For example, the opportunity exists to use colleges and institutes who have existing offshore operations to provide pre-arrival services and training for approved immigrants. Pathways to immigration assistance services for international students must be created to help them understand and apply for the various streams of immigration open to international students after graduation so that they do not need to rely on immigration consultants and lawyers at any point in the process.

Leadership in global migration and immigration

- Is it important for Canada to continue to show leadership in global migration? If so, how can we best do that?
- How can Canada attract the best global talent and international students?
- In what ways can Canada be a model to the world on refugees, migration and immigration?

It is absolutely important for Canada to continue to be a leader in this area. The recent Syrian refugee program demonstrated that the world can learn from Canada. Countries such as Italy and Croatia are now considering programs such as Government Assisted Refugees, underscoring Canada's leadership and the role of communities, including colleges, in welcoming refugees. Canada's leadership will be best served by modelling appropriate planning and implementing a strategy that is tailored to communities' ability to absorb newcomers. This includes:

- I. provision of excellent pre-arrival services
- II. post-arrival programs tailored to different types of newcomers (college programs have a significant role to play)
- III. consideration of labour market needs in various communities
- IV. ensuring that programs focusing on language learning are funded appropriately, given that fluency in French or English is a determinant of successful establishment
- V. consideration of demographic shifts and opportunities in communities all across the country
- VI. welcoming international students in key areas of economic growth or need and facilitating their immigration
- VII. recognition of prior learning
- VIII. providing varied pathways appropriate to different types of newcomers, eg education and support for International Students to understand the various streams of immigration available to them based on their unique situation and how to apply successfully

Attracting global talent to Canada is a hugely important component of a thriving immigration system. In order to do this, Canada must increase awareness of the Canadian education system's strengths and options. The unique flexibility and adaptability of our system is an internationally recognized strength and this must be promoted to prospective students and their families. In promoting

Canada as a study destination, emphasizing post-graduate options geared to employment, vs points for employability is important. This is not just an immigration issue: it affects international student choices as well.

Funding for Canadian Missions abroad (both for education promotion and visa processing training) must be increased in order to build the knowledge and products to attract students. Government of Canada scholarships to attract students would also be helpful; this is a very effective tool used by the US, Britain, Germany, France, and Holland, among others.

A closer link of immigration to economic priorities is critically important. The implementation of the Express Entry system has raised some concerns for international students at colleges and institutes. CICan members indicate as many as 80 to 90 percent of their international students plan to become permanent residents and eventually citizens. While these students still have access to permanent residency via the Canadian Experience Class, they are less confident that they will be successful since the implementation of Express Entry. One of the main concerns is that the points awarded for the education component of Express Entry favours university graduates as scores are awarded based on years of education rather than education linked to employability.

For global talent, credentials recognition and pre-arrival orientations provide will provide realistic insights into what will happen to them in Canada. In Planning for Canada (CIIP) sessions, for example, clients are briefed on the challenges of obtaining foreign credential recognition in Canada, with emphasis on regulated occupations.

Additionally, clients receive direct referrals to Focal Point Partners (FPPs) across Canada: colleges, immigrant-serving organizations and other relevant organizations in the province where they intend to settle. Before leaving their home country, clients connect with advisors and begin credential evaluation, settlement and job-search processes. Advisors offer guidance around Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR) as well as educational and bridging programs that can assist with filling skill gaps, upgrading, or shifting into a new field.

Streamlined services for study permits also helps to create a perception of openness and ease in the process as many students and families feel that the visa process is too daunting. CIGan initiatives such as the Student Partners Program in China and India, as well as the Canada Express Study Program in Vietnam are examples of a streamlined process with clear requirements and timely outcomes that have allowed for an exponential increase in study permits being issued in these countries.

Canada can be an international model for success by continuing to model a modern, inclusive and adaptive program that is responsive to current events.

Canada must also address issues relating to newcomer women and children -- there are gaps within these groups. Colleges and institutes across the country offer centres for immigrant integration that can play a role in the community to help advance an inclusive agenda to influence and activate both personal and economic growth.

Another area of importance is providing employer assistance, education and training. Most employers do not understand the benefits of hiring new immigrants or international students and the skills they can harness from these individuals. Many do not understand immigration programs or how to access them, either federally and provincially. Education and training strategies for employers/businesses to successfully integrate newcomers and international students for successful employment is necessary for success.