



The role of postsecondary institutions and employers in two-step economic immigration

Recommendation

The federal government should undertake consultations with provinces, the postsecondary sector and employers to define the role of all partners in facilitating the settlement and integration of those international students and temporary workers who may apply for transition to permanent residence.

Recommendation Details

Applicants to the Canadian Experience Class and many Provincial Nominees are selected first as temporary residents by postsecondary institutions and employers. The criteria for selection used by postsecondary institutions and employers, and the supports provided by them (if any), do not necessarily take into account the fact that those selected may become permanent residents and later citizens.

There are currently no standards or expectations by governments of what settlement and integration supports should be provided by postsecondary institutions or employers to these temporary entrants, and neither international students nor temporary foreign workers are eligible for federally funded settlement services until they are approved in principle for permanent residence.

This has led to inconsistencies in access to services and supports across the country, and delayed integration processes.

The federal and provincial governments should consult with the postsecondary sector and employers to determine the most effective way to ensure that temporary residents who may wish to transition to permanent residence have access to the supports that they need to integrate as fully and as quickly as possible.

At a minimum, international students and temporary workers should be eligible for federally-funded settlement services.

The federal government should also work with provinces to develop common standards for access to provincially funded services such as health care for these client groups.

Background

In 2008 the federal government created the Canadian Experience Class. This new class of economic immigrants allows qualifying international students and highly skilled temporary workers to apply for permanent residence from within Canada. Applicants must meet language requirements and intend to live outside Quebec. A similar program exists within the Province of Quebec and as part of many Provincial Nominee Programs.

These programs are exciting opportunities to give permanent residence to young people who have been educated in Canada, and to workers with Canadian work experience. It is hoped that as a result of this experience in Canada, these permanent residents will have the networks and social capital to help them integrate well in both the short and long term, and will face fewer barriers getting their credentials recognized. In addition, the program has the potential to increase the profile of Canadian universities and colleges on the world stage and to enhance the revenue-generating capacity of these public institutions.

However, there are barriers to access to the services and supports which can contribute to the successful integration of these temporary residents:

1. International students and temporary workers (and their accompanying family members) do not qualify for federally funded settlement services until they are approved in principle for permanent residence.
2. Only employers employing certain temporary workers are required to provide housing, transportation, and full health coverage to their employees, but none are required to provide additional settlement supports.
3. Despite the differential tuition fees that international students pay to postsecondary institutions, there are no requirements that these additional funds be used towards the provision of services for them.
4. There is variation across the country as to whether and how provinces support postsecondary institutions for the international students they receive.
5. Access to provincial services (e.g., health care) varies from province to province for international students and temporary foreign workers.

Discussion

Please visit www.maytree.com/adjustingthebalance or email policy@maytree.com to provide comments.

1. Should employers and postsecondary education institutions be expected to provide settlement and integration supports to the temporary residents they have selected?
2. Should there be consistent approaches across the country regarding eligibility for federal and provincial services for temporary entrants?

About the Discussion Paper Series

In July 2009, Naomi Alboim and Maytree released the paper, *Adjusting the Balance: Fixing Canada's Economic Immigration Policies*. It suggested that federal policy shifts had altered the landscape for economic immigration and that these shifts represented troubling trends that were unlikely to serve Canada well in the long term. For the paper, visit maytree.com/policy-papers/adjusting-the-balance-fixing-canadas-economic-immigration-policies.html.

Since the report was published, the shifts identified have continued. Provincial nominee programs continue to grow rapidly, temporary workers continue to arrive in record numbers, and international students are still perceived as ideal immigrants despite research that suggest skilled workers perform better in the long run. In addition, the federal government has continued to place occupational requirements on the Federal Skilled Worker Program which limit the government's ability to recruit skilled workers with the human capital necessary to adapt to changing labour market needs.

This discussion paper is part of a series that provides updates and commentary on recent immigration policy developments, evaluating recent changes which relate to the recommendations presented in *Adjusting the Balance*. For the entire discussion paper series, visit www.maytree.com/adjustingthebalance.