

## RECOMMENDATION

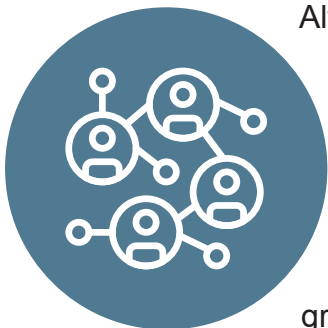
Canada should take advantage of the growing number of Canadian-educated, ready-to-work international students who want to continue contributing to our country by, fast-tracking the permanent residency (PR) applications of international student graduates from Canadian universities, by modifying the eligibility guidelines under the Canadian Experience Class (CEC) Express Entry program. Specifically, graduates with relevant work-integrated or experiential learning practice should have credit towards eligible work experience.

In the last few years, Canada has become one of the best places for post-secondary education in the world for international students. Students studying at Canadian universities not only engage in a high-quality, world-class education, many are also eligible to work part-time to gain valuable work experience while helping to pay for their expenses. Canada has also benefited greatly from the growth of international student numbers, as these students inject over \$15 billion into the economy each year, supporting 170,000 Canadian jobs.<sup>1</sup> The creation of the Canadian Experience Class (CEC) Express Entry program meant that international students could apply for Permanent Residency earlier, with a year's worth of work experience in Canada after graduation. However, the program fails to recognize the skills and experience gained during a student's degree. International students face a major barrier to employment after graduation, due to their uncertain immigration status. Canadian universities place a large emphasis on providing opportunities for students to get real work experience that prepares students for jobs in their field. In turn, more than half of university students engage in practical experiential and work-integrated learning opportunities, including co-op, research posts, and WorkLearn placements.<sup>2</sup> Strengthening pathways for immigration makes perfect sense as international students are some of the best candidates for immigration, "due to their high levels of language proficiency, good quality education that is automatically recognized by Canadian employers, and their experience working and living in Canada — which speeds up the integration process".<sup>3</sup> Canada should fast track their PR status to make sure that they stay and invest their knowledge here, rather than lose it to the USA or elsewhere. This will best leverage the graduates' experience here into economic benefits across the country.



Concurrently, Canada is facing new economic challenges as birth rates decline whilst the population ages.<sup>4</sup> As unemployment remains low with millions of jobs available, the federal government must be

vigilant in finding a solution. A critical aspect of meeting Canada’s labour challenges is removing barriers to entry into the Canadian labour market for graduates - a central element of which is clearing a path to permanent residency. 51% of international students apply for permanent residency. These are students who want to stay and work in Canada and clearly Canada needs them.<sup>5</sup> Job projections from federal government show that between 2013 and 2022, there will be 5.8 million job openings. More than 65% of those will require postsecondary training. Employers, however, avoid hiring highly skilled, post-secondary educated, international students because of unpredictability around their long-term immigration status.



Although the Canadian government announced it would award international students up to 30 additional points for a Canadian post-secondary degree or diploma, the changes do not significantly clear the path towards Permanent Residence (PR) for international students under a system in which one can obtain 1200 points. As Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Ahmed Hussen states, “growing immigration levels, particularly in the Economic Class, will help us sustain our labour force, support economic growth and spur innovation”.<sup>6</sup> Expediting permanent residency for university

graduates who have engaged in relevant work experiences during their degree provides a substantial population of “highly trained university graduates to meet upcoming labour market shortages,” argues University of Calgary President and Vice-Chancellor Dr. Elizabeth Cannon. For Canada to promote economic growth, it is necessary to retain international students with this kind of work experience in the Canadian job market. At the same time, this is also an opportunity for Canada to reward those who have come to study here and invested heavily in the post-secondary system and the economy at large.

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<sup>1</sup>El-Assal, Kareem, Huge surge in international students coming to Canada to study, Canadian Immigrant, 2018, <https://canadianimmigrant.ca/careers-and-education/international-students/studyincanada/huge-surge-in-international-students-coming-to-canada-to-study>

<sup>2</sup>Universities Canada, Study on experiential learning and pathways to employment for Canadian youth Supporting university students to succeed, 2018, <https://www.univcan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/study-on-experiential-learning-pathways-to-employment-for-cdn-youth-submission-march-2018.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>El-Assal, Canadian Immigrant.

<sup>4</sup>Smith, Stephen & Eman Katem, Canada extends immigration targets into 2021 with prominent roles for Express Entry, PNPs, Canada Immigration Newsletter, 2018, <https://www.cicnews.com/2018/11/canada-extends-immigration-targets-into-2021-with-prominent-roles-for-express-entry-pnps-1111368.html#gs.1QIYOyk>

<sup>5</sup>El-Assal, Canadian Immigrant.

<sup>6</sup>Smith & Katem, Canada Immigration Newsletter.