



Pre-Budget Consultations 2026 Federal Budget

Written Submission from World Education Services

August 2025

About WES

World Education Services (WES) is a non-profit social enterprise that supports the educational, economic, and social inclusion of immigrants, refugees, and international students. For over 50 years, WES has set the standard for international academic credential evaluation, supporting millions of people as they seek to achieve their academic and professional goals. Through decades of experience as a leader in global education, WES has developed a wide range of tools to pursue social impact at scale. From evaluating academic credentials to shaping policy, designing programs, and providing philanthropic funding, we partner with a diverse set of organizations, leaders, and networks to uplift individuals and drive systems change. Together with its partners, WES enables people to learn, work, and thrive in new places. Since 2013, WES has been a designated provider of Educational Credential Assessments (ECAs) for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).



WES welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the 2026 Federal Pre-Budget Consultations with strategic recommendations aimed at advancing inclusive growth, workforce development, and immigrant inclusion.

Summary of Recommendations

1. Operationalize a Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society approach to immigration planning and implementation by strengthening coordination mechanisms and advancing strategic coherence. This includes funding initiatives grounded in articulated principles and measurable outcomes across immigration, labour, infrastructure, and education planning - all anchored in the One Canadian Economy vision.
2. Invest in unlocking the potential of internationally educated professionals by addressing systemic barriers to licensure and skills-commensurate employment.
3. Support immigration-inclusive infrastructure and regional development to build resilient, future-ready communities across Canada.
4. Fund a transparent, data-driven framework to support transitions from Temporary to Permanent Residency (TR to PR), ensuring alignment with long-term labour force planning and public confidence.

Recommendation 1: Operationalize a Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society approach to immigration planning and implementation by strengthening coordination mechanisms and advancing strategic coherence. This includes funding initiatives grounded in articulated principles and measurable outcomes across immigration, labour, infrastructure, and education planning - all anchored in the One Canadian Economy vision.

Canada is facing a convergence of economic pressures: rising living costs and public debt, trade uncertainty, demographic decline, global instability, and mounting demand for housing, infrastructure, and skilled labour.

These conditions are deeply interrelated, and they expose the limits of fragmented policy responses. To navigate this moment, Canada needs more than short-term fixes: it needs a forward-looking plan that connects economic, social, and demographic planning into a coherent national growth strategy.

Immigration must be at the centre of that strategy. Newcomers are not just filling short-term labour gaps; they are critical to population renewal, innovation, and long-term productivity. Yet despite this, immigration continues to be treated as peripheral to economic planning, rather than recognized as core infrastructure for national resilience.

This disconnect undermines Canada's ability to respond to the challenges ahead. Labour market planning depends on adequate housing and transit; child care and healthcare systems need



qualified professionals; and infrastructure development hinges on a stable, skilled workforce. Each of these pillars, in turn, must be sustained by smart, inclusive immigration planning.

Encouragingly, the federal government has signaled a commitment to this vision through the One Canadian Economy framework, reinforced by the passage of Bill C-5. Prime Minister Carney's legislation rightly advances a Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society approach to inclusive and sustainable growth.

Canada has a timely opportunity to build on this momentum – breaking down policy silos, strengthening public investment effectiveness, and aligning immigration with long-term labour market and demographic needs.

To move forward, we must treat immigration planning as foundational to all national priorities. This requires fully operationalizing a Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society approach — one that aligns planning across ministries and sectors, and engages civil society, industry, and communities in shared problem-solving.

WES recommends that the federal government:

- Fund a cross-ministerial task force housed within the Privy Council Office, bringing together IRCC, ESDC, Health Canada, Housing and Infrastructure Canada, and Global Affairs, to ensure cohesive and sustainable immigration, labour, housing, healthcare and economic planning under the One Canadian Economy vision;
- Establish a coordinated federal-provincial-territorial planning framework that aligns population growth, skills needs, infrastructure priorities, and regional development, with provinces, municipalities, and Indigenous governments as equal partners;
- Create a national advisory council on immigration and economic coordination, with representation from labour, business, and civil society sectors, to provide ongoing, cross-sector input into federal planning;
- Invest in shared data infrastructure and performance indicators to track outcomes across ministries and jurisdictions, enabling more effective forecasting and evaluation of immigration's contribution to economic and social objectives.

Recommendation 2: Invest in unlocking the potential of internationally educated professionals by addressing systemic barriers to licensure and skills-commensurate employment.

Canada is also experiencing a demographic crunch. By 2030, [five million Canadians will reach retirement age](#), placing unprecedented strain on the country's social and economic infrastructure.

At the same time, [key sectors such as construction and healthcare are struggling to attract and retain qualified workers](#), jeopardizing our ability to deliver housing, care, and public services at



scale. With domestic labour supply shrinking, [labour force growth now comes almost entirely from immigration](#).

Many of these newcomers bring valuable skills and experience. Yet Canada has not yet fully retooled its labour and credential systems to recognize their contributions. As a result, thousands of internationally educated professionals (IEPs), despite living and working in Canada, remain chronically [underemployed](#).

RBC has estimated that the [underutilization of immigrant talent results in up to \\$50 billion in lost GDP annually](#). If Canada is serious about becoming the most resilient and competitive economy in the G7, it must fully mobilize the skills and experience of immigrants already within its borders.

This is not only a matter of equity: it is an economic imperative.

In skilled trades, the urgency is clear. [Over 700,000 tradespeople are expected to retire by 2028](#), just as Canada attempts to scale up housing construction and critical infrastructure. In the meantime, many newcomers arrive with experience in these trades but face limited pathways to employment and permanent residency.

In the healthcare sector, the picture is equally stark. [Nearly 42% of internationally educated health professionals \(IEHPs\)](#) in Canada are unemployed or working in non-health roles, according to Statistics Canada. This includes physicians, nurses, midwives, physiotherapists, and medical technologists among others; all occupations urgently needed across the country.

These challenges require coordinated policy responses that align immigration, skills recognition, and workforce development. Federal programs, such as the Foreign Credential Recognition Program (FCRS), must be enhanced and its efforts focused on addressing the systemic barriers that continue to prevent internationally educated professionals from securing timely access to licensure and employment in their field.

WES recommends that the federal government:

- Invest in interprovincial harmonization of licensing standards, by supporting regulatory collaboration, benchmarking, and alignment efforts across jurisdictions, with a focus on addressing systemic barriers;
- Expand funding under the Foreign Credential Recognition Program and the Canadian Apprenticeship Strategy and focus on investments that enable systemic reform in high-demand sectors, including targeted supports to reduce licensure delays, and improve equitable access for immigrant professionals;
- Fund the development and scaling of competency-based, practice-ready assessment models, including simulation-based testing, supervised practice, and accelerated pathways to licensure;



- Invest in bridge training, mentorship, and employer engagement initiatives, to support the labour market integration of internationally educated professionals;
- Provide targeted funding for service delivery organizations and regulatory bodies to develop tools that offer clear, personalized licensure guidance and direct connections to relevant supports;
- Develop and resource a national data strategy to track outcomes related to credential recognition, licensure timelines, and immigrant labour market performance.

Recommendation 3: Support immigration-inclusive infrastructure and regional development to build resilient, future-ready communities across Canada.

Immigration is vital to the future of rural, remote, and mid-sized communities, where population decline and workforce shortages threaten the viability of core services, industries, and infrastructure.

Addressing these demographic and workforce pressures requires more than population growth — it demands intentional integration of immigrants into regional development strategies.

Newcomers are not only users of infrastructure — they are also its builders. In regions across Canada, they are designing the housing, maintaining the transit systems, staffing the hospitals, and securing the digital systems that underpin national resilience.

Despite the critical role newcomers already play in sustaining infrastructure and [essential services](#), Canada's current approach to infrastructure and regional development largely overlooks the demographic reality on which it depends.

This disconnect contributes to service gaps, housing shortages, and challenges integrating newcomers at the local level.

According to [IRCC research](#), 89% of the increase in housing prices between 2006 and 2021 was driven by factors unrelated to immigration — including interest rates, construction costs, land use policy, and investment activity. Immigration accounted for just 11% of the increase. Yet public narratives continue to portray newcomers as a strain on infrastructure.

This perception risks obscuring a deeper truth: that Canada cannot build housing, climate resilience, or long-term productivity without a sustained and inclusive immigration strategy.

To bridge this gap, Canada must integrate immigration into how it plans, funds, and delivers infrastructure and regional development. This includes revising funding mechanisms, providing tools to local governments, and recognizing newcomers as a core part of community building.



These changes would directly support several of the [Prime Minister's mandate priorities](#), including investment in public infrastructure, improving housing affordability, and strengthening Canada's productivity and economic security.

WES recommends that the federal government:

- Develop immigration-sensitive infrastructure forecasting models within Finance Canada and Infrastructure Canada, as part of a broader Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society approach to aligning demographic trends with long-term investment planning;
- Condition major federal infrastructure investments on the inclusion of regional immigration and workforce strategies, especially in housing, transit, healthcare, energy, and climate adaptation projects;
- Create targeted incentives for municipalities that proactively integrate immigrants into local planning frameworks, including zoning, transportation, housing, and service delivery;
- Recognize and invest in the role of immigrants in critical infrastructure sectors, including energy, public transit, construction, and cybersecurity.

Recommendation 4: Fund a transparent, data-driven framework to support transitions from Temporary to Permanent Residency (TR to PR), ensuring alignment with long-term labour force planning and public confidence.

Amid economic uncertainty and demographic decline, Canada must reduce reliance on temporary migration and re-centre permanent residency as the standard for integration and belonging.

The government's recent efforts to reduce the scale of temporary admissions are a positive step toward rebalancing the system. But the reality remains: as of 2025, [over 2.9 million people are in Canada on temporary permits](#). Many of these individuals are already contributing to Canadian communities — studying, working, and putting down roots. They represent Canada's future workforce.

Despite this, the current system offers no clear or consistent pathways to permanence — precisely at a time when immigration is more vital to Canada's future than ever.

To remain competitive with countries like Australia, the UK, and New Zealand, Canada must modernize its transition policies and align them with labour market planning.

One promising example is the Economic Mobility Pathways Pilot (EMPP), which demonstrates how humanitarian and economic objectives can be mutually reinforcing. By enabling skilled refugees to immigrate through economic streams, EMPP offers a model for how Canada can link global responsibility with workforce development.



Building on this approach, Canada should invest in housing, legal supports, and policy design that facilitates fair and timely transitions from Temporary to Permanent Residency.

Canada's future workforce is here. What is needed now is a permanent residency system that is fair, stable, and predictable — grounded in long-term planning, not *ad hoc* decisions.

WES recommends that the federal government:

- Develop and publicly release a national TR-to-PR transition framework, with clear, transparent, and criteria-based pathways aligned with long term labour force planning;
- Align permanent residency pathways with regional and sectoral planning, including targeted streams in trades, healthcare, and STEM and ensure access to licensure for qualified professionals;
- Expand funding for housing supports under the National Housing Strategy, including a federal rent assistance program with eligibility for international students and other temporary residents on the path to permanence;
- Invest in access to settlement, legal services, mentorship, and information tools to support temporary residents navigating the immigration system;
- Make the Economic Mobility Pathways Pilot (EMPP) a permanent stream within Canada's economic immigration programs.