



The role of newcomers and international students in driving Canadian economic growth

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CICan's members add over **\$190B** to Canada's economy each year and contribute to inclusive economic growth by working with industry and community partners to offer more than **10,000** programs to learners in urban, rural, remote, and northern communities.

Colleges and Institutes Canada

1 Rideau Street, Suite 701
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
K1N 8S7
Tel. 613-746-2222

collegesinstitutes.ca

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Executive Summary

The role of newcomers and international students in driving Canadian economic growth

Against the background of post-Covid-19 recovery, Canada announced ambitious new immigration targets to meet labour market needs and support ongoing economic prosperity as the population ages and birthrate remains low.

A strong pipeline of global talent will be required in the years to come to respond to labour market shortages. This need for talent will, and has already begun to appear, across all sectors with labour shortages in industries as varied as medicine to transportation and food. More rapid integration into community is vital to ensure newcomers settle and integrate into Canadian workplaces and society.

However, new immigrants continue to face barriers that generate frustration and prevent employers from fully benefiting from the human capital immigrants bring, this includes a growing immigrant wage gap and difficulties getting foreign credentials recognized. In addition to existing barriers, the pandemic has had a greater impact on immigrants than Canadian born workers, as newcomers are disproportionately represented in fields most hard hit by shutdowns and saw slower returns to work.

Colleges and institutes across Canada play a critical role in supporting skilled immigrants, and facilitating their integration:

- They are critical providers of immigrant services, including second language training, employment related services and community connections.
- They offer specialized academic upgrading programs to international and newcomer students
- Colleges and institutes represent the fastest-growing level of study for international students in Canada, accounting for just under half of all study permit holders at the post-secondary level, a significant source of newcomers across Canada.

To understand the challenges facing Canada's immigration system, learn best practices from other countries, and appreciate the role of Canadian colleges in immigrant integration, Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) embarked on a project to answer the following:

1. What role do Canada's colleges and institutes play in the immigration landscape?
2. How can we leverage the full capacity of Canada's colleges and institutes to ensure successful immigrant integration and build a recovery-ready workforce, drive innovation and support sustainability?

To answer these questions and inform the study, CICan conducted an environmental scan of Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) funded settlement services at colleges, conducted a literature review and interviews, gathered colleges for a roundtable of members already delivering settlement services, and conducted structured interviews with members and key stakeholders in the settlement sector. These activities enabled us to deepen our understanding of Canada's immigration landscape and trends, including policy and emerging market trends, explored global best practices, and gained a better understanding of the gaps that exist and how colleges can fill them.

Our recommendations:

The government's plan to increase immigration levels needs to be accompanied by increased supports to ensure skilled immigrants successfully settle and integrate into the labour market.

Recommendation 1: Develop a national employment pipeline for skilled newcomers, with a specific emphasis on a national workplace-focused language training program that would include work integrated learning opportunities and wraparound support services to facilitate rapid and meaningful labour market integration.

Recommendation 2: Develop employer-recognized national microcredentials on in-demand Skills for Success - those skills for success that newcomers more often lack because of lack of Canadian work experience.

Recommendation 3: Boost Canada's talent pool through the development and implementation of permanent residency streams for international students graduating from colleges and equip colleges to improve labour market outcomes of international students by providing additional support throughout their transition to Canada.

The role of newcomers and international students in driving Canadian economic growth

1. Introduction

Canada faces significant demographic challenges with an aging population and a decreasing birth rate, that will have serious consequences on the economy. About 40 years ago there were 7 workers to each retiree; currently that number is 3, by 2036 it is estimated there will be two workers to each retiree.ⁱ The labour market is also changing – with a growing need for specialized mid-skilled workers.ⁱⁱ

Skilled immigration is key to addressing these impending economic impacts, as much of Canada's recent population growth is due to international migration, accounting for three quarters of growth since 2016 and reaching 85.7% in 2019.ⁱⁱⁱ Canada's economy is only as strong as its talent: diverse, resilient, and nimble employees will help our economy recover and grow, particularly in the face of the current post-COVID economic recovery. Despite Canada's pressing need for talent, skilled newcomers face barriers to rapid and successful integration into meaningful employment.

Canada needs to both protect the promise of immigration – the promise of a better life in Canada – AND redouble our efforts to successfully integrate skilled newcomers into the labour market. Skilled newcomers must more rapidly integrate into meaningful work, at their skill appropriate level.

A strong pipeline of global talent will be required in the years to come to respond to labour market shortages. This need for talent will, and has already begun to appear, across all sectors; a recent survey of employers by KPMG found 70% from sectors as varied as medicine to transportation to food fear labour and talent shortages as they are unable to find skilled workers.^{iv} More rapid integration into community is vital to ensure newcomers settle and integrate into Canadian workplaces and society. Colleges¹ are essential to facilitating this talent pipeline. Canada's colleges are agile and are able to anticipate and respond to the needs of the workplace, providing their students with relevant job skills that are in demand. As Canada emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic, public colleges, institutes, cégeps and polytechnics, governments and employers rely on immigration as a major driver of the economy's labour needs, while newcomers and international students play an integral role in regional economic development strategies. As the report from the Advisory Council on Economic Growth stated, "...skilled and talented people are the critical driver of inclusive economic growth. Diversity and the ability to integrate skilled immigrants are rare and highly valuable Canadian attributes. And the strain of an aging population will soon create a need for more people to balance our "population pyramid" and maintain a high quality of life".^v

This immigration imperative requires that Canada welcome more people and ensures that all those who call it home have the resources and support they need to realize their aspirations. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Canada saw a significant drop in immigration in 2020, welcoming 184,624 immigrants, down by almost half from 2019 and the lowest in any year since 1998.^{vi} To drive economic growth and recovery; achieving immigration targets and desired labour market outcomes will require a concerted effort from all stakeholders.

Skilled newcomers and international students are both key components of Canada's broader global talent and immigration strategy. Transitioning international learners to permanent residency represents an important opportunity to add needed skilled workers to the labour force, especially in smaller or mid-sized communities. International students are eager for pathways to permanent residency as demonstrated by the response to the April announcement that international students would be eligible for a new pathway to permanent residency for recent grads in essential occupations and health care. When applications opened in early May, it took only 24 hours for the anglophone 40,000 spots reserved for international students to fill up.^{vii, viii} Colleges and institutes represent the fastest-growing level of study of international students in Canada, accounting for just under half of all study permit holders at the post-secondary level.^{ix}

¹ References to "colleges" refer collectively to publicly-assisted colleges, institutes, cegeps and polytechnics.

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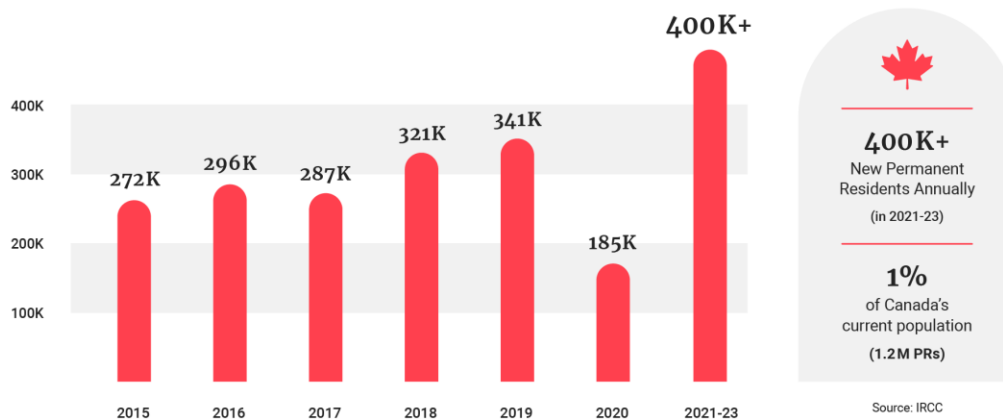
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2. Context in Canada

Against the background of an economy looking to rebound post-COVID-19, Canada announced ambitious new immigration targets, aiming to bring in over 400,000 new permanent residents each year from 2021-23.^x The historic targets would welcome 1.2 million permanent residents in the coming years, about 1% of the Canadian population, and indicate the necessity of immigration to Canada's COVID-19 recovery, as well as its continued growth and prosperity (*Figure 1*).^{xi} With an aging population and low birthrate, immigration plays a major role in meeting Canada's labour market needs, contributing to innovation and economic growth.

Figure 1: Permanent Residents, Past, Present and Planned



While making plans to welcome this cohort of new immigrants, the country itself grapples with the integration and retention of immigrants already here. A 2018 study by RBC found immigrants earn about 10% less than Canadian-born workers; thirty years ago, the wage gap was just 4%.^{xii} The report found that the immigrant wage gap costs Canada \$50 billion each year -- about 2.5% of the GDP.^{xiii} Closing this wage gap is even more critical in the post-COVID economic recovery.

With sub-optimal labour market outcomes for skilled immigrants Canada is seeing significant lost human capital while newcomers experience the frustration of underutilizing their education and skills. Additionally, the pandemic has had a greater impact on immigrants than Canadian born workers, as newcomers are disproportionately represented in fields most hard hit by shutdowns and saw slower returns to work.^{xiv, xv} Recent labour statistics show that new permanent residents have fared well as the economy reopens with public health restrictions easing around the country. However, immigrants who have been in Canada for longer than five years saw their employment rate down 1.9% compared to pre-pandemic figures.^{xvi} While employers struggle to find workers, the decline in immigration has been identified as a cause, with experts and business groups expecting the situation to worsen in the coming years.^{xvii}

Canada's success at attracting highly skilled immigrants needs to translate into better use of their education and skills. IRCC invests heavily, in settlement services intended to help newcomers adapt to their new home.^{xviii, 2} Despite this investment, skilled immigrants continue to have higher unemployment rates and lower wages than Canadian-born workers no matter what their occupation, age, gender, or region.^{xix} RBC speculated that the earnings wage gap is due to post-secondary institutions, regulatory bodies, and employers not recognizing immigrants' foreign credentials, knowledge, and skills, as well as devaluing or discounting work experience gained outside of Canada.^{xx} By not maximizing the skills and experiences immigrants bring with them to Canada, the overall economy functions below its potential.

The federal government uses pilot projects to address specific areas of need, with programs like the Rural and Northern immigration pilot, Atlantic immigration pilot and incoming Municipal Nominee Program designed to meet regional or local labour and demographic demands.^{xxi} The 2021 Federal Budget extended funding to the Racialized

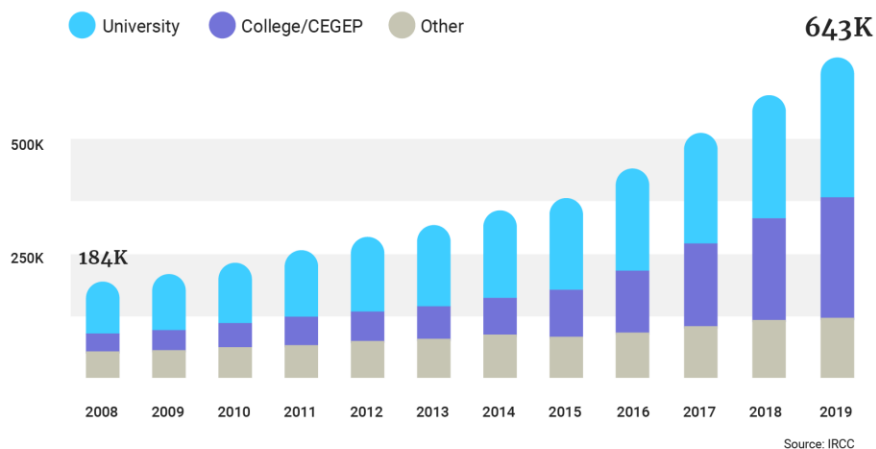
² These funds total \$877 million for 2021-2022 and go toward services to help newcomers settle and adapt to life in Canada, including information and referrals to other providers, language training, assistance in job hunting, and help integrating into Canadian society.

Newcomer Women Pilot initiative, to improve that group’s employment outcomes and career advancement.^{xxii} Protecting bilingualism and the strength of the French language is also a priority for Canada’s immigration policy with June 2021 changes to *The Official Languages Act* that requires immigration policy supports the vitality of Canada’s French language communities, outside Quebec, “to ensure the support of the demographic weight of these communities”.^{xxiii} As part of the policy to sustain Francophone minority communities, the federal government has committed to ensuring that 4.4% of all permanent residents outside Quebec are French-speaking by 2023.^{xxiv} The Francophone Integration Pathway consists of several initiatives that address current gaps and support the growth and development of Francophone minority communities (FMCs). The Municipal Nominee Program will benefit Francophone immigration to FMCs as many are concentrated in small and medium-sized cities and towns.

Like skilled newcomers, international students are key to Canada’s immigration goals. Creating pathways for students who want to remain in Canada will attract a cohort educated in Canada which eases their integration, as reflected in labour outcomes that outperform foreign-born immigrants.^{xxv}

2.1 International Students

Figure 2: Study Permit Holders by Education Level



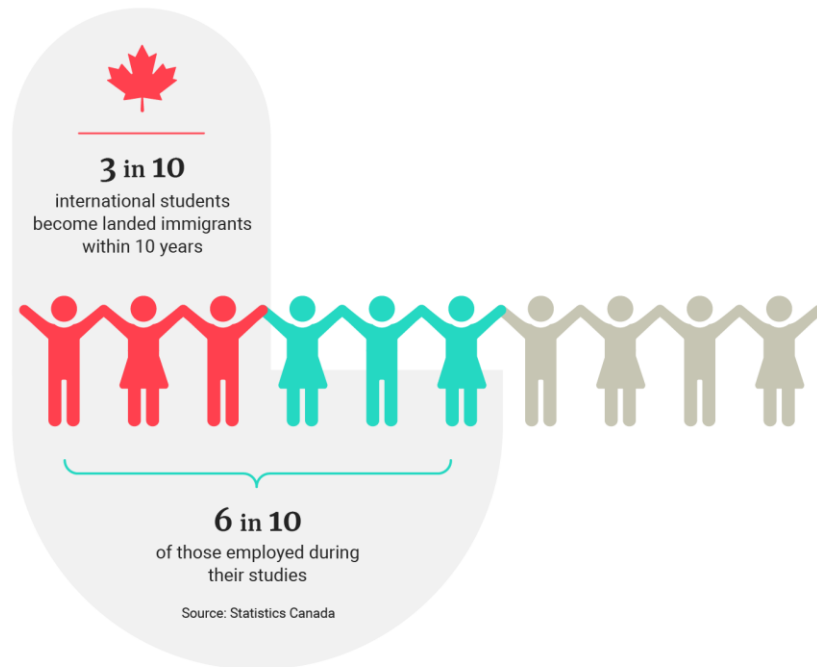
International students are increasingly choosing Canada as a study destination with the number of study permit holders increasing from 122,700 in 2000 to 642,500 in 2019 (*Figure 2*).^{xxvi} At the same time, international students are seen as a promising pool of skilled individuals to meet Canada’s labour market participation needs. The 2019-2024 International Education Strategy describes international students as “excellent candidates for permanent residency”. It goes on to say that “they are relatively young, proficient in at least one official language, have Canadian educational qualifications, and can help address this country’s current and pending labour market needs, particularly for highly skilled workers” (Government of Canada 2019, p. 5).^{xxvii}

International students are attractive for a variety of reasons. Educated in Canada, they are less likely to face issues having their credential recognized, while their skill sets are likely to be relevant to the Canadian workplace. Studying in Canada helps them acclimatize to the culture, learn English and/or French, and gain Canadian networks, all of which is key to integrating into the labour market. Many post-secondary options also allow international learners to gain Canadian work experience through work-integrated learning opportunities like co-op or internships.^{xxviii}

Canada welcomes international students who benefit from a world-class post-secondary education system. The education and supports they receive prepare them to succeed in the labour market. Almost 50% of study permit holders in Canada are studying at a college or institute, the fastest growing study level for international students.^{xxix} These learners bring global perspectives, further diversify our cultural fabric, and contribute to local communities. In 2018, international students contributed \$21.6B in tuition and auxiliary spending to Canada’s GDP, supporting almost 170,000 jobs.^{xxx}

A 2021 study by the government of Canada on international students who transition to permanent residency found that about 3 in 10 international students who came to Canada in 2000 or later became landed immigrants within 10 years of obtaining their first study permit (Figure 3). College students are increasingly amongst those looking to transition to permanent residency, doubling between the study's cohort groups of those who arrived in 2000-2004 to the 2010-2014 cohort.^{xxxi} Interestingly, the study found that 6 in 10 international students who were employed during their studies or after graduation became landed immigrants within 10 years of obtaining their first study permit (Figure 3). It also found that students who earned higher levels of wages from employment while studying were also likely to remain in Canada.^{xxxi}

Figure 3: International Students in Canada



3. Integrating Immigrants: Lessons from Abroad

To understand global best practices, CICA reviewed policies from Germany, the European Union, Sweden, Austria, and Australia to learn about what can be considered and adapted to Canada's system. These regions offer examples for Canada to address issues in the areas of short cycle training for employers, employer engagement, and credential and skill recognition.

Post-COVID, Canada needs to recover its economy as quickly as possible. Offering microcredentials is one strategy that can address up-skilling, re-skilling, and filling skill gaps in a timely manner and getting people back to work. In New Zealand, the framework used to develop microcredentials is linked to qualifications required by industry partners.^{xxxiii} In California, nine community colleges take part in the Los Angeles Healthcare Competency to Career Consortium where participants have received over 6,400 open badges recognizing competency-based programs in eleven health science career pathways for industry-specific and soft skills.^{xxxiv} In the UK, Ireland, Finland, and Australia, Open Badges are also gathering momentum.^{xxxv}

Germany sees labour market integration as a shared responsibility between employers and newcomers.^{xxxvi} Integration courses consisting of 600 hours of language training combined with 100 hours of orientation are offered once immigrants start work including specific courses for women, parents, and young adults up to age 27.^{xxxvii} Additionally, Germany invests in both paid and voluntary integration mentors who provide one-on-one assistance to newcomers. Other groups have joined forces with the German Federal Economics Ministry to establish a network of more than 2000 companies, including many small and medium enterprises, to help newcomers integrate into the labour force. There is a great willingness on the part of the German companies to invest time and money to overcome cultural differences because the labour market makes it necessary and because they see it as an important social contribution.

The European Union, through the Bologna Process^{xxxviii}, systematically applies rules for mutual recognition of professional qualifications amongst its member states.^{xxxix} Over the past twenty years, the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), an international collaboration of 49 countries, has built a common set of structural reforms and shared tools to facilitate student and faculty mobility by ensuring comparability in the standards and quality of higher education qualifications.^{xl} There is a system in place that automatically recognizes the professional qualifications for seven sectoral professions: nurses, midwives, doctors, dentists, pharmacists, architects, and veterinary surgeons.^{xli}

Similar to Canada, Germany's poor recognition of foreign credentials is known to create major obstacles. Germany has invested to rectify this problem, resulting in a growing number of qualifications being recognized, especially in the medical fields. Different pilot programs have been developed to assess skills, including *MySkills*, a technology-based test that identifies competencies within about 30 professional profiles. It is supported by images and videos that are available in six languages.^{xlii} Another program is the Careers via Competences Project that has created Competence Cards that identify technical skills, soft skills, and process skills and are used to "speed-up the recognition and utilization of immigrant qualifications and experience".^{xliii}

Some countries have done well in recognizing credentials of newcomers, whether by adapting domestic tools to newcomer needs or designing instruments specific to newcomers. In Austria, the new Recognition and Evaluation Act was enacted in July 2016. The foundation of the act is the establishment of a single point of contact recognition portal.^{xliv} Fast tracks in Sweden offers a strategy to speed up labour market integration of newcomers with professional skills in in-demand occupations. Based on tripartite cooperation between government, trade unions, and employers fast-tracks have been developed for 31 professions.^{xlv} To develop more effective validation methods for more sectors and occupations, Sweden implemented a National Delegation for Validation to follow, support, and encourage coordinated work. Extra funding was provided to identify the need for complementary training and more effective bridging courses. Online tools have been developed to better inform and service new arrivals and are used for web-based training, language courses, and a first skills assessment.^{xlvi}

Australia has moved to competency-based skills assessment for professions rather than just relying on foreign credential recognition.^{xlvii} This more flexible move facilitates immigrants' early employment outcomes, identifies and facilitates gap training, and reduces skills wastage.^{xlviii} Meanwhile, the Australian federal government established the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition that by 2015 developed country education profiles for 127 countries to benchmark against Australian standards. National pre-migration assessment bodies were established in major professional fields (such as medicine, nursing, accounting, and engineering) and two expert bodies were established to improve vocational assessment, the Trade Regulation Authority and VETAssess (with representation in over 20 immigrant source countries, and a capacity to provide pre-migration Australian-accredited "gap-training"). As a result,

skilled immigrants' employment outcomes improved substantially,³ with two thirds of the over 4,000 candidates who used the medical competency pathway in its first two years were wholly removed from the examination process, reducing bottlenecks and increasing immediate employment outcomes.^{xlix}

Canada can learn from other countries' best practices and adopt approaches such as microcredentials, greater employer engagement, and competency-based assessments to better integrate newcomers.

³ By 2011 just five years after the pathway's introduction, 57% percent of medical migrants had gained employment in their field within five years, compared to 41% twenty years earlier (Hawthorne 2014; Birrell and Hawthorne 1996). At the same time, the pathway increased Australia's attraction to migrants; for example, over 2,000 UK doctors migrated in the first two years of the pathway's introduction compared to around 50 annually previously.

4. Role of Canada's Public Colleges and Institutes in Newcomer Integration

Figure 4: CIGan Member Colleges and Institutes in Canada



Colleges and institutes act as community hubs across every part of Canada - 95% of Canadians live within 50 km of a college or institute campus or service centre (*Figure 4*).¹

Colleges are a key part of Canada's social and cultural infrastructure – across 650+ campus locations, colleges provide a full suite of services for students – in addition to a world-class education, Canada's public colleges and institutes offer employment support, recreation, work integrated learning, volunteering, mentoring, applied research opportunities, mental health, and many other services. For newcomers, our research revealed that colleges and institutes offer services in all provinces except Newfoundland – particularly focussed on language training, employment supports and community connections including mentorship. Colleges receive \$65M in direct Federal Government funding for settlement services [a higher amount than most provincial allocations]. This federal funding is leveraged and amplified with investments from provinces, municipalities, and other sources such as The Future Skills Centre.

Institutions in all provinces, except Newfoundland, and Nunavut currently receive settlement funding from IRCC. Quebec's contributions are distributed by the province. With their reach across Canada, particularly in minority-language communities, Francophone colleges play an important role in helping French-speaking immigrants settle and integrate. La Cité offers pre-arrival services for Francophone immigrants to provinces outside of Quebec, online and in-person in Morocco. The program's services include information orientation sessions, webinars, employment and settlement assistance, and access to virtual job fairs and networking opportunities. Collège Communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick (CCNB) in New Brunswick has received just under \$1 million for its program, *Standardization of online French Second Language training across Canada*. Francophone institutions feature prominently on the Comité consultatif national en établissement francophone (CCNÉF), which brings together key francophone settlement sector stakeholders and IRCC to make recommendations on a renewed national coordination and sector support approach, and policies and programs to enhance service offerings in French to newcomers. CIGan intends to convene Francophone colleges who play a role in supporting newcomers in Francophone minority communities to support in improving coordination and sharing best practices.

Many smaller and rural communities across the country are facing talent and skills shortages and recognize that immigrants are a big part of the solution to addressing these challenges. Colleges and institutes in rural communities have an even more significant role in supporting newcomer integration as they are key partners with municipalities and employers in regional economic development strategies, including for the attraction and retention of newcomers. There are college campuses in each of the eleven communities involved in the IRCC Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot and the Welcoming Communities initiative. CIGan welcomes the opportunity to work with IRCC to convene colleges located in the rural pilot communities to exchange on their experiences and best practices with a view to improving outcomes for newcomers.

4.1 Newcomer services at Colleges

Figure 5: Number of Programs by Description



Colleges and institutes have long played a vital role in supporting local and regional economies. They do this by working in partnership with local businesses, communities, and industries to ensure that students gain the skills they need to succeed in a rapidly evolving and increasingly international job market. They specialize in delivering experiential and work-integrated learning opportunities through innovative, applied and skills-based programming and offer a full range of credentials from one to four years in length. These programs include undergraduate certificates, diplomas, bachelor degree programs, post-graduate programs of specialization, and some Master’s degrees.

CICan members offer a number of services to newcomers, with many programs falling under institutions’ continuing education departments. Federal settlement funding to colleges is spread over a variety of training offerings with language training being the most common (*Figure 5*). Ontario is the only province to not reflect that trend with most settlement programs in the province focused on delivering employment related services (11 vs. 7 language programs at institutions), however that is likely due to the Colleges Ontario administered Occupation Specific Language Training program, which offers a coordinated approach to language training in the province across 12 colleges. One institution (Algonquin College) is a regional Local Immigration Partner (LIP) while two institutions (Bow Valley College and La Cité collégiale) have received funding to conduct applied research projects related to settlement.

A review of some college websites offers a snapshot of these offerings and services for newcomers. Some colleges have pages specific to newcomers, describing the programs they offer and different services available, like bridging programs or advising services. While others have grouped newcomers under the institution’s “international” page with content geared to international students.

Bow Valley College in Calgary developed a guide for employers on how to create an inclusive workplace for internationally trained individuals that could be shared nationally. They also offer an Intercultural Competencies for Leaders Certificate Program that could be implemented nationally. Algonquin College in Ottawa offers several professional development courses for staff such as Bridging Cultural Difference in Diverse Teams and Intercultural Development Inventory Group Assessment and Planning that could be easily transferable to employers.

Not surprisingly, much of the focus for newcomer offerings is on language programming, whether it be to acquire English as an additional language or workplace training (e.g., a bridging program) that embeds language acquisition in its offering. Within language programming itself, including Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) (Cours de langue pour les immigrants au Canada (CLIC)), funded by the federal government; English/French for academic purposes to learn English/French as an additional language, as well as language courses for specific careers or occupations. Mentorship through language programs is also offered at some colleges. Other services also include credential recognition, test preparation, career advice, and settlement information or orientation. Some institutions also lead and engage in research projects aimed at solving “sticky problems” like newcomer youth unemployment or pilot projects designed to meet newcomer needs.

As Canada starts to recover from the pandemic, CICan members have a pivotal role to play in supporting the restart and recovery of the Canadian economy. One of the best ways to succeed is to drive successful integration of skilled newcomers and international students into the labour force.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Support for Skilled Newcomer Labour Market Integration

To address the issues of immigrant integration into the Canadian labour market and bring national solutions, delivered at scale with a focus on strong employment outcomes for skilled newcomers – colleges can be a one-stop-shop for successful integration.

Recommendation 1: Develop a national employment pipeline for skilled newcomers, with a specific emphasis on a national workplace-focused language training program that would include work integrated learning opportunities and wraparound support services to facilitate rapid and meaningful labour market integration (anchored in the public college system). This program begins with employers at the table and would – in a cost-effective way – improve the quality and job relevance of language training across the country.

Currently Canada offers language training for the workplace under programs such as Enhanced Language Training and Occupation Specific Language Training to give newcomers the opportunity to learn English or French specific to their occupations. These courses are more advanced than regular language training and is intended for those with a strong level of English or French. IRCC's evaluation of its language programs found existing ELT programs need to improve. Some suggestions included developing better guidance to meet instructor needs while recognizing that content guidelines for ELT should be flexible to accommodate different program offerings, as well as client needs and desired objectives.ⁱⁱ

Employers often have difficulty evaluating foreign credentials and foreign work experience. Many employers do not fully understand how language benchmarks translate to the workplace. For many employers, it is simply lower risk to hire someone with Canadian credentials and work experience who speaks English and/or French.

As experts in content development and with a well-established method of developing programming to meet the needs of employers, colleges are well positioned to be key partners in ELT training. By working with members across Canada a national approach to ELT can be developed including manuals and policy guidance for support services as well as offer infrastructure to deliver the programming.

The program could be modeled on Colleges Ontario's highly successful Occupation Specific Language Training (OSLT), which offers newcomers language training geared towards a specific occupation or sector.ⁱⁱⁱ Participants learn the language and communication skills to understand workplace culture, interact with their co-workers, communicate over email or by telephone, and interview and network effectively.

Recommendation 2: Develop employer-recognized national microcredentials on in-demand Skills for Success - those workplace related skills most in-demand by employers but with gaps for newcomers who lack Canadian work experience.

During the pandemic, jobs have been lost and may never return. Many unemployed and under-employed immigrant workers will have to re-skill to transition to new careers or up-skill to maintain their jobs. The country cannot afford to wait years for them to attend traditional 1-4 year college programs. Microcredentials can be especially successful for unemployed or underemployed immigrants and for very recent arrivals whose foreign credentials may not be recognized. The moment is now to design a national-focused, systematic approach to microcredentials that is stakeholder-driven.

Educational attainment and labour market experience are valuable assets immigrants bring to the Canadian economy. Our immigrant selection system awards points to skilled workers with higher education qualifications and years of work experience. Employers must decide whether workers are sufficiently competent for the job. Many employers find it difficult to assess skills and knowledge based on foreign credentials and work experiences. They tend to discount and devalue foreign qualifications and foreign experience.

Canada's new [Skills for Success framework](#) identifies the skills needed to succeed in the labour market and grown one's career. The nine skills are the competencies that help one participate and thrive in learning, work and life, including collaboration, communication, and creativity and innovation.

By designing a national microcredential based on this Skills for Success framework, geared towards newcomers, newcomers could quickly gain specific workplace and employability skills, appreciate Canadian work culture and gain credentials from a trusted public institution to ease their entry into the labour market. CIGan's recent survey of

members found 56% of responding colleges are offering microcredentials either online, in-person or both, and 33% are planning to or interested in doing so, ensuring colleges across Canada have the capacity to deliver microcredentials nationally and at scale.^{liii} [CICan's National Framework for Microcredentials](#) highlights that microcredentials should represent competencies identified by employers/industry sectors to meet employer needs and be based on the assessed proficiency of a competency. Any development of national microcredentials related to key Skills for Success must be developed with employers first, including sector or business associations.

5.2 Attracting and Retaining International Students

Policy changes and new programs and activities are needed to continue to attract international students, improve retention in Canada and leverage their decisions to remain as a driver of economic development.

Recommendation 3: Boost Canada's talent pool through the development and implementation of permanent residency streams for international students graduating from colleges and equip colleges to improve labour market outcomes of international students by providing additional support throughout their transition to Canada.

Competition for talent has accelerated due to the pandemic as countries look to economic recovery. Competitor markets have moved quickly to modify their immigration policies and modernize their immigration processes. The UK has introduced a new points system with a pathway to permanent residency, and Australia has also shown incremental movement towards the re-instatement of pathways to migration over time.^{liv} The demand for the temporary pathway to permanent residency for 40,000 recent graduates demonstrates the interest that these graduates have in remaining in Canada. This is an opportunity to retain those who have gained Canadian education and experience. There is a need for this stream to be permanent, with refinements to best meet the needs of the Canadian Labour Market.

Achieving Canada's 2021 Immigration targets will require new innovative and streamlined pathways to permanent residency for international students' post-graduation by implementing retention driven programs like the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot, Mobilité Francophone, and the Atlantic Immigration Pilot, which has now become a program due to its success. Colleges and institutes play a key role in ensuring that graduates have the right mix of skills that will allow them to integrate into the labour market and benefit from these programs. Models based on these pilots could be expanded across the country mapping not only to specific regions, but also industry. Eligibility for these programs should be directly mapped to the value of skills and labour market needs over duration or level of study.

Considering the value of international graduates to regional economic recovery and growth, it is imperative IRCC works to establish policy alignment among immigration, labour market needs, international recruitment, and supports for students.

Many stakeholders, including institutions, and provincial/territorial governments all have a part to play in developing and providing the right supports with the aim of retaining international students. To address systemic barriers to cooperation and program overlap, creative solutions and incentives are necessary to increase collaboration between international student services and settlement services, offering the opportunity to build bridges between newcomers and international students. Colleges and institutes across Canada have the existing capacity and understanding of both international students and settlement services to be a key partner in this expansion.

Further steps to supporting international students' integration could be made by removing the requirement for a separate work permit for co-op placements, allowing international students to access placements at a faster pace. Tax revenues from international students could support an expansion in funding and facilitate stronger government and private sector engagement with post-secondary institutions. Funded programs could provide incentives for employers to provide increased WIL opportunities to international students and resources to deepen industry engagement to further identify and address obstacles that may prevent employers from hiring more international students. Settlement and integration can be supported through learning institutions from recruitment to graduation, with the outcome of new graduates requiring only a fraction of the services available to newcomers arriving through other streams.

6. Conclusion

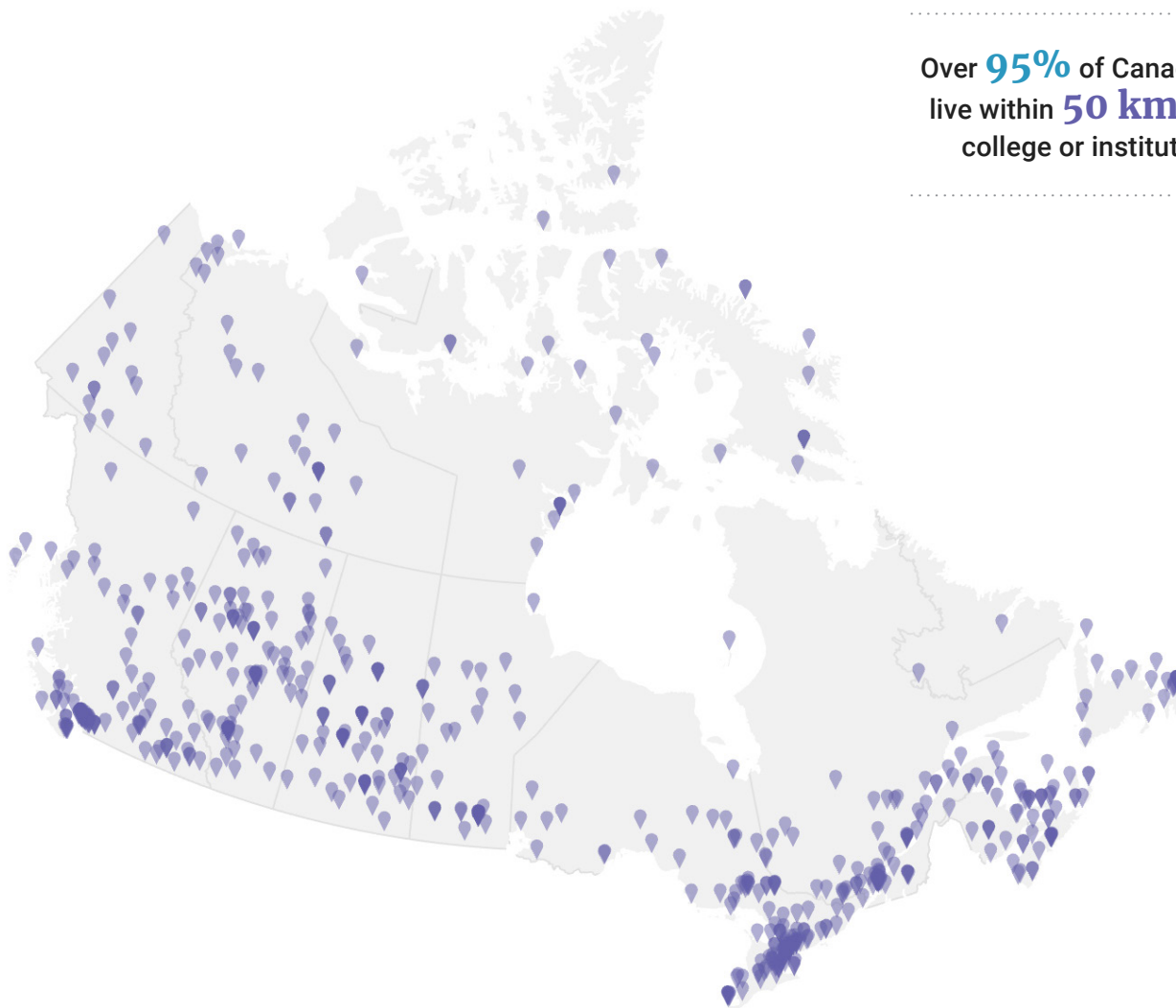
Immigration will play a critical role in Canada's economic recovery and growth post-COVID. Building on our long history supporting newcomers and our strong ties to the labour and business sectors, CIGan members are already well positioned to play a central role in supporting the Canadian economy's need for additional skilled global talent. CIGan members offer a broad range of programs and services to ensure newcomers reach their full potential, adapt to their new lives, integrate into the labour market, and contribute to the Canadian economy. Our Recommendations are designed to ensure acceleration of better labour market outcomes for skilled newcomers and international students. CIGan continues to convene members and explore innovative ways that public colleges can support newcomer integration. Canada cannot realize the full benefits of immigration without successfully integrating immigrants or addressing the labour market challenges they face. The pandemic has heightened many of the challenges, and the effects may be long-lasting. Our long-term success depends on supporting the existing immigrant population and those looking to call Canada home.

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