Introduction to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada:

THE LANDSCAPE
Introduction

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) selects and welcomes, as permanent and temporary residents, foreign nationals whose skills contribute to Canadian prosperity. It reunites family members and maintains Canada's humanitarian tradition by welcoming refugees and other people in need of protection. In collaboration with its partners, it conducts the screening of potential permanent and temporary residents to protect the health, safety and security of Canadians. IRCC is also responsible for the issuance and control of Canadian passports and other travel documents that facilitate the travel of Canadian citizens, permanent residents and protected persons. The Department builds a stronger Canada by helping all newcomers settle and integrate into Canadian society and the economy, and by encouraging, granting and providing proof of Canadian citizenship. Finally, IRCC works to advance global migration policies in a way that supports Canada's immigration and humanitarian objectives.

The impact of the Department's work is far-reaching, with important implications for various Cabinet portfolios, other levels of government, key stakeholders, communities, and for Canadians as a whole. For example, in 2018, 31.3 million travellers visited Canada, contributing $22 billion to the tourism sector and generating thousands of jobs in communities across the country. In that same year, Canadian educational institutions hosted close to 720,000 international students—which contributed $21 billion to Canada's economy and supported almost 170,000 jobs in Canada—and over 330,000 temporary workers helped to meet labour market demands across the country.

In 2018, in line with the Department's multi-year levels plan (currently set out for 2019-2021), Canada also welcomed over 320,000 new permanent residents, across three different immigration classes—economic (58%), family (27%), and refugee (14%)—in addition to other immigrants (1%). Many of these individuals were selected for permanent residence because a province or territory nominated them on account of their ability to help meet regional economic needs or because they possessed more general characteristics expected to help them achieve economic success in Canada; many others were sponsored by Canadians or permanent residents. Collectively, these individuals are vital to Canada's short- and longer-term prosperity and the country invests in settlement supports to help ensure their success.

At least partly a reflection of Canada's success in settling and integrating permanent residents, more than 200,000 people took the oath of citizenship and became citizens in 2018-2019. Over that same time period, IRCC issued approximately three million passports to Canadians. Two thirds of the population hold a valid Canadian passport, which is internationally recognized for its integrity, and provides Canadians with safe, secure, visa-free access to over 180 countries.
Overall, the Department’s work is integral to achieving a stronger Canada—a safe and secure country with a shared bond of citizenship and values; a country that continues to support our humanitarian tradition and draws the best from the world to help build a nation that is economically, socially and culturally prosperous.

**The Importance of Immigration**

In the face of an aging population and a low birth rate, Canada increasingly looks to immigration as a means to grow the labour force and sustain economic growth. In the mid-1990s, migratory increase eclipsed natural increase as the main source of Canada’s population growth, reversing a decades-long trend. Today, migratory increase accounts for nearly 80% of population growth. Statistics Canada has projected that immigrants will represent between 24.5% and 30.0% of Canada’s population by 2036, compared with 20.7% in 2011. When considering both immigrants and second-generation individuals, that proportion jumps to between 44.2% and 49.7% of the overall population in 2036, compared to 38.2% in 2011. The proportion of the population represented by immigrants is expected to continue varying widely by region.

As further explained in Tab 2 of Introduction to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, immigrants contribute to the strength of communities across the country, as well as to Canada as a whole. On the economic side, these individuals help meet temporary and longer-term labour market and skills demands that could otherwise stall economic growth in a sector or region. Immigrants also contribute to the economy through taxes, entrepreneurial endeavours, and established trade connections, helping to sustain the social safety net for Canadians and revitalize communities across the country.

At the individual level, the economic outcomes of immigrants are relatively strong. The wages of economic immigrants, who are selected primarily for the skills and experience they can bring to Canada’s labour market, surpass those of their Canadian-born counterparts soon after arrival. And although refugees and family class immigrants report lower participation and employment rates compared to economic immigrants, their economic contribution increases over time. Importantly, the children of immigrants consistently achieve high levels of education and employment, suggesting that Canada will continue to accrue the economic benefits of immigration even through future generations.

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**PROMOTING PATIENT CARE IN IQLUIT**

“I am originally from Baguio City, Philippines, and I moved to Nunavut in October of 2000... There’s a feeling of community. Even just walking through, you could see that people just stop on the street and just talk. You see these people living their lives, and at some point in the very minute speck of time, you were part of their lives. I never entered the nursing field planning to make an impact. But it’s very gratifying when people say, ‘Thanks again for all the help you gave’, whether it was last week or it was 10 years ago. It’s a happy moment.”

Rhose Harris-Galia, Nurse Case Manager, Qikiqtani General Hospital
Underpinning much of Canada's success in this area is the managed migration model and investment in settlement and integration services. Together, these approaches enable selection and control over the volume of foreign nationals who enter Canada on a temporary (Fundamental Briefs, Tabs 2A-C) or permanent (Fundamental Briefs, Tabs 3A-E) basis, and help ensure strong supports are in place to assist newcomers in adapting to life in Canada and to set them on a path to integration and full citizenship (Fundamental Briefs, Tabs 5A-B).

Canada invests significant resources in funding settlement and integration services—approximately $779 million in funding was made available (outside of Quebec) in 2019-2020 (Fundamental Briefs, Tab 5A). These services are delivered to immigrants by service provider organizations in communities across the country. They include language training, information and orientation, and other programming to help immigrants find employment, access services, and connect with their communities. Because settlement services are regionally based, service offerings respond to regional needs and vary across regions. Service provider organizations are concentrated in the urban areas, where higher numbers of immigrants settle. While this is, in some ways, a natural response to demand, work is required to ensure that all newcomers have the supports required to successfully integrate, no matter where they reside in Canada.

To help ensure the successful settlement and integration of Government-assisted refugees and other eligible clients, the Resettlement Assistance Program, an IRCC funding program that operates in all provinces outside of Quebec, provides clients with direct financial support and also funds service provider organizations to deliver immediate and essential services. These services include: reception at the airport; provision of temporary accommodation and assistance finding permanent housing; orientation to life in Canada; and registration and referrals to other government and community services.

To further complement settlement services, the Interim Federal Health Program provides temporary health-care coverage to refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable populations until they are eligible to receive provincial/territorial health insurance. The program helps protect the health of beneficiaries and Canadians, while also facilitating integration into the health-care system and society more generally.
Often occurring in later stages, citizenship acquisition represents an important part of the immigrant journey. It signals effective settlement and integration, while also contributing to a sense of a shared national identity within the context of a plural society (Fundamental Briefs, Tab 5B). Historically, a high proportion of eligible permanent residents have become Canadian citizens—85.8% according to Census 2016, which is among the highest across OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries.

Owing in part to the strengths of this system—and in contrast to shifting attitudes observed in other immigrant-receiving countries—Canadians continue to express relatively strong support for immigration. At the same time, it is important to remain alert to potential shifts in public sentiment. For example, in a March 2019 telephone survey, 24% of respondents indicated that there are “too many” immigrants coming to Canada; when considering the refugee category alone, the proportion of respondents that expressed that opinion increased to 36% (Introduction to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Tab 3).

The Federal-Provincial-Territorial Context

Because immigration is a responsibility shared between federal and provincial/territorial governments, engagement with provincial and territorial partners is critical to the effective delivery of the Department’s mandate (Fundamental Briefs, Tab 7). IRCC engages with provinces and territories multilaterally through the Forum of Ministers Responsible for Immigration, while bilateral engagement is guided by legally binding bilateral agreements.

Working collaboratively, federal, provincial, and territorial governments aim to leverage immigration as a means to grow the economy and address regional labour market demands. The federal government is responsible for federal economic immigration, family class immigration, refugees, protected persons, and assessing the admissibility of all cases. Provincial and territorial governments are responsible for nominations under the Provincial Nominee Program. In the case of Quebec, immigration-related matters are governed by the Canada-Quebec Accord, which specifies that Quebec is responsible for establishing economic immigration programs, as well as for the selection of immigrants under those programs and of resettled refugees.

GROWING A COMMUNITY THROUGH IMMIGRATION

“The provincial nominee program has been a tremendous asset to our community; it has provided an incredible pool of talented and skilled labour, and it has provided us unprecedented opportunity for economic growth. This year we will be the second fastest-growing community in Manitoba. With that comes a lot of recognition, and a lot of attention, and we’ve been able to capitalize a lot of that into infrastructure projects.”

Brandon Burley
Mayor, City of Morden
As set out in the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, 3(1)(c), a key objective of immigration in Canada is “the development of a strong and prosperous Canadian economy, in which the benefits of immigration are shared across all regions of Canada” (italics added). In this respect, provinces and territories share the federal government’s interest in increasing immigration outside of Canada’s major urban centres (i.e., Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver). Since 1998, the Provincial Nominee Program has complemented federal immigration programs by allowing provinces and territories to nominate for permanent residence those foreign nationals who demonstrate the potential to help meet local labour market demands and economic needs. While provinces with large urban areas, including Ontario and British Columbia, have consistently benefitted from federal immigration programs, the Provincial Nominee Program has allowed other regions to increase immigration and retention in their areas. For example, the number of economic immigrants settling outside of Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia increased from 10% in 1997, to 40% in 2017.

In addition to the distribution of the benefits of immigration, provinces and territories are focused on a broad range of issues, including economic immigration and processing times, asylum volumes and the pressure placed on social services, as well as funding for settlement services.

The Global Context

The Department’s work, including with its provincial and territorial partners, is set against a broader global context where the number of international migrants is at an all-time high; in 2019, 271.6 million people were on the move. The proportion of international migrants relative to the global population has also grown, from 2.8% in 2000 to 3.5% in 2019. The drivers of this migration include shifting economic opportunities and advances in communication and transportation technologies, as well as political instability, humanitarian crises, and climate change. These diverse drivers result in a flow of migrants who have correspondingly diverse characteristics and motivations.

A significant number of global migrants are fleeing conditions in their previous place of residence—at the end of 2018, there were over 25.9 million refugees worldwide. This represents the largest global refugee crisis since the Second World War. Both international and domestic stakeholders have high expectations for Canada’s role in helping to address the global displacement crisis.

**BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE CANADIAN ENGINEERS**

“I came to Canada in 1979 during the revolution in Iran… Since I was a child, my mother, who married young, she always said, ‘I really want you and your sister to continue your education, and be independent.’ I did my PhD and did as much as I could to carry on the mission that was given to me by my mother. Within a year I was offered a job at a company. Later on I became a partner, and then became the sole owner. For 3 years I was awarded one of the best managed companies.”

Gina Cody
Montréal
Although Canada's geographic location buffers somewhat against migratory shocks that present outside the managed migration model, the country is not immune to the impact of changing global migration flows. For example, in 2018, foreign nationals made 55,000 asylum claims in Canada—a record-high for the country, despite being a fraction of the number of claims made elsewhere (e.g., in 2018, 254,000 asylum claims were made in the United States, 162,000 were made in Germany, and 110,000 were made in France). Of these, in 2018, close to 20,000 individuals in the United States entered “irregularly” by crossing the border between official ports of entry, where the Canada-United States Third Country Agreement does not apply.

Canada cannot impose limits on how many people seek asylum after arriving in the country—whether through a Port of Entry or not—and it is generally the responsibility of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (Introduction to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Tab 1B) to review asylum cases and determine who is granted protected person status in Canada. While Canada has a strong humanitarian tradition and an international legal obligation to provide a fair hearing and protection for those with a well-founded fear of persecution (Fundamental Briefs, Tab 3E), increased volumes in this area are associated with considerable operational and resource pressures. There are also downstream cost implications for the provinces and municipalities where asylum claimants settle.

In addition to receiving a rising number of asylum claimants, Canada now resettles more refugees than any other country in the world, through a process that involves identifying refugees abroad and resettling them in Canada (Fundamental Briefs, Tab 3D). The United Nations Refugee Agency and the International Organization for Migration are key international partners for Canada’s resettlement program; they are increasingly under strain to secure the resources needed to deliver their mandates and the services they provide.

Because effectively managed global migration ultimately contributes to a safer and more prosperous Canada, international engagement is an important component of the Department’s mandate (Fundamental Briefs, Tab 7). IRCC
conducts multilateral international engagement through various fora to identify collective solutions to global challenges, and to promote a balanced, evidence-based narrative on migration. IRCC also engages multilaterally to enhance the security and integrity of migration systems, with the aim of protecting the safety and security of Canadians. In 2020, Canada will be the chair of the Migration Five, a forum through which senior officials from Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom discuss immigration and border management issues. In 2019-2020, Canada is also chairing the Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees, as well as the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement.

The Minister of IRCC plays a critical role on multiple fronts in the international context. The Minister leads Canada’s engagement with the International Organization for Migration and, together with the Minister of Global Affairs, co-leads Canada’s engagement at the United Nations on issues relating to international migration governance and refugee protection.

The Ministers of IRCC and Public Safety also represent Canada in the Five Country Ministerial group, which also includes representatives from the countries mentioned above (the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom). This group meets annually to discuss public safety and migration issues. Finally, given Canada’s leadership role in migration, the Minister of IRCC is often invited to key United Nations events, OECD meetings, and numerous bilateral engagements with other countries.
The Organizational Context

Several thousand public servants work at IRCC (Fundamental Briefs, Tab 1A). They are dedicated to building a stronger Canada through all lines of business, including temporary and permanent immigration, settlement and integration, citizenship, and passport delivery. These public servants work across Canada and the world. The Domestic Network and the Settlement Network, two operational branches of the Department, provide extensive reach within Canada to deliver services, support citizenship ceremonies, and to work with provincial, territorial, and regional partners. Other employees work in international offices, helping to serve IRCC clients, enhance decision-making, and foster positive bilateral relationships. In terms of its global footprint, IRCC is second in size only to Global Affairs Canada.

In addition to supporting the Minister of IRCC to implement mandate commitments and develop new policy and operational initiatives, IRCC employees provide support across a range of functions, including: Cabinet and parliamentary duties (e.g., briefing notes, Question Period notes, legislative support); communications (e.g., speeches, news releases, social media monitoring); international and intergovernmental engagements (e.g., ministerial trips and meetings); case and litigation management (e.g., regular updates and advice on pressing or high-profile cases, support for cases referred by Members of Parliament); and office support (e.g., pay, security, and accommodations for ministerial staff).

In recent years, the Department has made important advances in modernizing its work. For example, in 2015, IRCC launched Express Entry, the flagship application management system for the federal high-skilled immigration programs, as well as a portion of the Provincial Nominee Program. Express Entry has provided the Government of Canada with the means to control application intake and, through its Comprehensive Ranking System, invite foreign nationals who are most likely to succeed in Canada to apply for permanent residence. Express Entry was a significant improvement over the previous model that required the Department to process applications for permanent residence in the order received. Its streamlined design was instrumental in eliminating application backlogs and dramatically reducing processing times.

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While the Department has undertaken lean management exercises to optimize its existing tools, techniques, and capabilities with the aim of addressing challenges in IRCC offices around the world and in Canada, there is much more to be done to keep pace with client expectations and continue providing excellent client service in an increasingly digital world. This challenge is intensified in the context of growing volumes. For example, the Temporary Resident line of business has experienced a 79% increase in applications in recent years, from 1.9 million in 2013 to 3.4 million in 2018. As a result, temporary resident visa processing times have increased from 14 to 22 days—a 50% increase. As another example, 239,518 citizenship applications were received in 2017-2018, compared to 108,635 the year prior—an increase of 120%. Although that unprecedented citizenship application growth rate is expected to slow, overall volumes will remain high over the medium term. The current citizenship grant operating model, which is predicated on the manual processing of paper applications, has limited capacity to adapt or respond in a way that maintains service standards in the face of higher volumes.

Clients demand services that are fast, digital, and modern. Canadian employers and communities seek newcomers to bolster the economy and counter population decline. Improving IRCC’s services will not only require investments in new technology and people, but also innovative approaches to how the Department does business and interacts with its clients. In spring 2019, the Department established the Transformation and Digital Solutions Sector, which is leading IRCC through its transformation journey and spearheading ongoing, department-wide, collaborative effort to modernize and optimize how the Department works. As one of its first orders of business, the Transformation and Digital Solutions Sector, together with the Operations Sector, is tackling how IRCC could best respond to the rising volume of temporary resident visa applications described above. As the transformation agenda ramps up, IRCC will continue to maintain its focus on delivering programs and services in a way that maximizes benefit for Canadians, while monitoring the integrity of our programs.

IRCC is also pursuing IM/IT transformation. The Department's IT systems, including the Global Case Management System, need upgrading to optimize processes and move IRCC into the digital age through the implementation of lean management systems and agile IT development, innovative modern IT infrastructure, and electronically enabled service delivery.

Through strategic and significant investment in transformation, IRCC is positioning itself to keep pace with growing application volumes and other pressures, while at the same time ensuring excellent client service, program integrity, the health of the organization and its employees, as well as public confidence in Canada’s immigration system.