

International Organization for Migration: International Dialogue on Migration

Panel Discussion on “Rethinking skilled migration to address persistent labour shortages”

Speech for ADM Marian Campbell Jarvis

Wednesday, March 2, 10:15am to 11:30am (Ottawa Time)

Available time: approximately 5 minutes

You will be introduced by Ms. Amy Pope, IOM’s Deputy Director General for Management and Reform, and will be first to speak.

Introduction

- Thank you, Deputy Director General Pope for that introduction. It is an honour to share this time with the other panelists, and a pleasure to be speaking to this audience.
- *Before starting my remarks on this topic, I would like to acknowledge that, since I am joining you from Ottawa, I am on the traditional territory of the Algonquin people. For those joining from the traditional lands of other Indigenous peoples, we honour those Indigenous peoples as well.*
- Looking at the current global picture as we move towards the first International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) in May of this year, it is clear that COVID-19 has had a dramatic impact on migration worldwide. Travel restrictions and the closure of borders reduced the possibility for migrants to travel. This made clear to many of us just how important migration is for our economic development, and to fill our labour market needs.
- There is a great deal of positive information and data about the contributions of migrants, particularly the significant social and economic contributions that immigration brings.
- As a champion country of the Global Compact for Migration, I want to touch upon Canada’s work on labour migration pathways, and the economic benefits they provide to host communities and to migrants themselves.

Economic Benefits of Regular Migration Pathways

- To start, I turn to the question of why immigration is so important to Canada’s economy.
- Allow me share just how much migration is interwoven into the fabric of Canadian society.
 - One in 3 Canadian businesses is owned by an immigrant, and 1 in 4 health care workers is a newcomer.

- Immigrants make up 37% of pharmacists, 36% of physicians, 39% of dentists, 23% of registered nurses, and 35% of nurse aides.
- Immigration currently accounts for almost 100% of Canada's labour force growth. Roughly 75% of Canada's population growth comes from immigration, mostly in the economic category. By 2036, immigrants will represent up to 30% of Canada's population, compared with 20.7% in 2011.

Immigration Levels Plan

- To support Canada's post-pandemic recovery and chart a more prosperous future, the Government of Canada set an ambitious target of welcoming 401,000 new permanent residents in 2021.
- Our Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, the Honourable Sean Fraser, recently announced that Canada had exceeded its target welcoming more than 405,000 new permanent residents last year. This is the most newcomers in a year in Canadian history
- Last month, Minister Fraser announced Canada's Immigration Levels Plan for 2022 to 2024, setting further bold new immigration targets. This plan aims to continue welcoming immigrants at a rate of about 1% of Canada's population, to fill critical labour market gaps and support a strong economy into the future. We plan to welcome over 430,000 permanent residents in 2022, 447,000 in 2023, and 451,000 in 2024.

Temporary Resident to Permanent Resident Pathway

- Let me speak further on how Canada was able to admit over 405,000 new permanent residents in 2021, despite the pandemic and its impacts on borders and international travel.
- To facilitate this historical feat as we continue to struggle with the impact of the pandemic on all aspects of life, we made the most of the talent already within our borders in ways that supported Canadian businesses and the migrants themselves.
- The majority of these new permanent residents in 2021 were already in Canada on temporary status.
- In 2021, Canada opened an innovative pathway to permanent residence for over 90,000 temporary workers already employed in Canada and recent international graduates.
- The focus of this pathway is on temporary workers employed in our hospitals and long-term care homes and on the frontlines of other essential sectors, as well as recent international graduates who are driving the economy of tomorrow. This pathway provides permanent status to these temporary residents who possess the skills and experience we need to fight the pandemic and accelerate our economic recovery.

Regional Programs

- Canada is also continuously focused on supporting immigration strategies that will enable smaller communities to enhance their economic, social and demographic vitality.
- Canada is a large country geographically and has had challenges in sharing the benefits of immigration to rural areas. For that reason, Canada developed a series of innovative pathways to spur economic, social and cultural growth outside our large urban centers.
- One pathway is the *Atlantic Immigration Program*, which was launched as a pilot in 2017 and became permanent this year. The program is successful in attracting and retaining skilled immigrants and recent international graduates to meet the unique economic needs of the Atlantic region of Canada.
- Another is the *federal immigration pilot for rural and northern communities*, which was launched in 2019 to help smaller communities welcome migrants who will fill labour shortage in remote communities.
- Rural communities employ over 4 million Canadians and account for almost 30 percent of the national GDP and supply food, water, and energy for urban centres, sustaining the industries that contribute to Canada's prosperous economy.
- Piloting and permanently phasing in new innovative pathways have allowed Canada to further test policy and program changes designed to increase retention of newcomers in those regions and drive economic growth.

Complementary pathways for skilled refugees

- With many countries closing their doors to refugees, we continued to offer the world's most vulnerable protection in Canada, while concurrently seeking innovative measures to harness their skills, talents and desires to contribute to their new communities.
- We have expanded the concept of refugee mobility from a solely humanitarian focus to one which includes mobility based on refugees' skills, abilities and other attributes.
- As such, we have created the Economic Mobility Pathways Pilot (EMPP) to allow skilled refugees, who can fill specific labour market needs in Canada, access to existing economic immigration programs. This helps change the narrative on refugees by focusing on their skills, education and experience, rather than just their vulnerability. Through the EMPP, candidates can apply for permanent residence through existing economic immigration pathways.
- But we recognize that complementary pathways are new tools for refugee protection, and that while Canada has many lessons to share from our pilot, we can also learn from others experimenting in this area, like Australia and the UK.

- This is why Canada agreed to chair the Global Task Force on Refugee Labour Mobility, which will bring together all of the partners needed to implement labour complementary pathways – governments, civil society organizations, employers and international organizations – to collectively explore ways to scale up these initiatives.
- We are currently working with the IOM, UNHCR, the Government of Australia and other partners to launch the Global Task Force on Refugee Labour Mobility in April this year, and hope to attract participation from any and all interested stakeholders. If you would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact me.
- Based on this model, Canada, in concert with the international community, is exploring innovative means to explore labour complementary pathways for refugees as a means to increase access to protection in third countries – outside of traditional resettlement pathways. They also support the Global Compact for Migration in expanding safe and regular migration pathways.
- Canada looks to flip the stereotype of refugees: instead of focusing on vulnerability, we are harnessing the skills that many in need of protection already possess and more importantly, are eagerly awaiting to put those skills to work.

Conclusion

- I want to conclude my remarks by mentioning that Canada will continue welcoming newcomers who bring the skills our economy needs to grow and recover from the global pandemic recedes.
- Economic immigration helps Canada stay competitive and attract talent from around the world. Immigrants bring unique skill sets, innovative ideas and global experience, which help our economy. In turn, Canada provides an opportunity for migrants to apply their skills, talents and make meaningful social contributions..
- Thank you.