

2025 Canadian Federal Election: Our Memorandum to All Contesting Parties

Established over 30 years ago and operating three campuses in Ontario, Canada, ComputeK College has provided practical diploma and certificate programs in business, healthcare, and technology for thousands of newcomers and internationally trained professionals to become employed in the healthcare, business, and technology sectors. As an organisation built by immigrants who have benefitted from the resources and possibilities offered to us by Canada, we are uniquely positioned to understand and respond to the cultural and economic barriers that can prove to be significant hurdles for newcomers entering the workforce. We have successfully served newcomers, women and people of colour seeking to enter the job market through our four major priorities: offering practical learning from industry-proven instructors with employer insight; supporting economic contribution by easing skilled and motivated workers into the workforce; building innovative partnerships with employers; and working to help transform our local communities. Studies show that newcomers are more than twice as likely to start and own their own businesses in Canada,¹ and we have endeavoured to empower newcomers in their pursuit of employment. We have focused on mitigating barriers for these newcomers, graduating close to 1,500 students every year, and consistently engaging with both current students and alumni in advocating for the needs of their families and communities. As a trusted training provider immersed in these communities, we have risen to their expressed need for civic education and, since 2022, have actively supported [newcomer civic engagement](#) outcomes as part of our wraparound services. It is in that capacity that we raise the issues that are the priorities of our extended newcomer communities, consisting of both Canadian citizens and citizens in the making.

Immigration

Canada's openness to immigration has historically proven to be a competitive advantage, providing us with a source of economic strength and diversity that has driven innovation. While we are not experiencing a widespread labour shortage, sectors like health, education, construction and manufacturing continue to experience shortages. The overall unemployment rate increased to 6.4% in June 2024, with 1.4 million unemployed people, continuing its upward trend since April 2023, according to Statistics Canada.² One of the solutions for this shortage is immigration and Canada is expected to welcome 1.45 million immigrants over the next few years, with Statistics Canada projecting that the proportion of immigrants in our population

¹ BDC's Index of New Entrepreneurial Activity, 2018

² <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/daily-quotidien/240705/dq240705a-eng.pdf?st=L8ZOjD5B>

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could reach up to 30 per cent by 2036. Despite record-breaking immigration to Canada, employers in healthcare as well as other key sectors are still struggling to find workers, and a cap on immigration will prevent us from attracting newcomers skilled in in demand sectors. The Government of Canada aimed to address this crisis through its increased 2024-26 *Immigration Levels Plan* which projected the admission of nearly 1.5 million immigrants by 2026.³ The current Federal government is particularly focused on attracting skilled workers who will contribute to Canada's economy even as Canada continues its long-standing commitment to recognising the importance of family reunification and helping the world's most vulnerable populations through refugee resettlement.

As the Government of Canada's Immigration Levels Plan for 2023-2025 reveal, more than 20 per cent of newcomers is expected to be skilled workers and finance professionals. This gives Ontario, as the province that welcomes the largest number of immigrants, a unique opportunity to tap into the rich knowledge, strong experience, and deep networks that global finance professionals can bring to financial and innovation hubs across the country. Since 2022, ComputeK has actively helped deliver financial literacy programming not only for newcomer consumers but also professional development series for newcomer advisors and finance professional through annual [financial inclusion summits](#). We have the potential to convert skilled newcomers' preimmigration professional prowess into innovation and lucrative trading relationships that would make us less dependent on the US for our global trade.⁴ With unprecedented and unpredictable US tariffs ahead, business and policy leaders need to embrace immigrant talent to face these challenges. As we assess Canada's capacity to receive newcomers, it is also important to address the factors which contribute to the underuse of immigrant talent, including poor onboarding, training, and mentoring; DEI gaps; difficulty translating experience and skills; and administration and regulatory compliance.⁵ Skilled immigrants can only be effectively leveraged for Canada's economic growth if they are empowered through an affordable cost of living, accessible healthcare, innovative work-integrated training programs, coaching, mentorship and workplace cultural sensitivity support that would set them up for success.

Affordability

There is a cost-of-living crisis in Canada with around 50% of Canadians living paycheck to paycheck, thanks to the mass layoffs, supply-chain hiccups, and other everyday disruptions of the pandemic, which have culminated in a skyrocketing inflation. A Statistics Canada survey

³ <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/notices/supplementary-immigration-levels-2024-2026.html>

⁴ https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/canadas-secret-weapon-to-combat-trump-is-hiding-in-plain-sight/article_03bb77ca-d81c-11ef-969d-3b2c5e2b884d.html#tncms-source=login

⁵ <https://forcitizenship.ca/article/talent-over-tariffs/>



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conducted just a few months ago found that 45 per cent of respondents complained of difficulties in meeting their day-to-day expenses. Younger people attempting to start their own families or separate households have been hardest hit, with rental and housing costs skyrocketing to twice what they were three years ago, and the prospect of home ownership increasingly out of reach. For example, in Ontario, one of the two provinces with the highest housing costs in the country, the cost of the average home is close to \$200K higher than that of the national average. Eliminating the GST for first-time homebuyers would go some way towards addressing this crisis, however other quotidian expenses remain high. The average Ontario family, whose pay has not kept pace with rising inflation, has seen their purchasing power diminish, as the food component of the Consumer Price Index increased by 24 per cent, leaving them facing an almost 40% increase in grocery bills. Economic growth slowed to a crawl in 2023 and has continued to lag in 2024 resulting in labour market challenges as job growth slows and the unemployment rate rises. We recognize that the future is not so bleak, as the Bank of Canada aims to bring inflation back to its official 2 per cent target, lowering its short-term policy interest rate, from 5 per cent in May 2024 to 4.38 per cent today. With inflation rates stabilising and interest rates starting to reduce, we can anticipate consumer-relief, yet rising unemployment has offset some of these positives and financial stability remains out of reach. The 3.5% wage increase expected for many Ontario workers will provide a measure of relief but not enough to offset the total cost of living increase of 2.5-2.7%, especially for those who work in sectors that experience lower wage growth.

Skills Training and Job Creation

Skilled workers have several immigration pathways available to them. However, these economic migration selection systems face a number of challenges including verification of credentials and real skills of immigrants; the reluctance of many employers to use the Job Bank; imbalances in the dispersal of immigrants, with many staying in the cities in which they train even when they are unable to find work in their chosen field; the complexity of the system that makes it hard to navigate from outside of Canada and in some cases the lack of soft skills and cultural competency training to mobilize their technical training in the North American workplace. While these challenges may seem daunting enough, the presence of illegal and unregistered operators who exploit vulnerable foreign students and temporary foreign workers have had negative social and socioeconomic ripple effects in Canada that will take years to repair. The abuses and frauds perpetrated in these programs has led the Federal government to reign in the number of foreign students entering the country, as well the Temporary Foreign Workers Program as a whole. These measures may mitigate some of the abuses of the system but cannot tackle the long-term issue of labour shortages in Canada, especially in skilled professions.

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We hope to address the shortages in the vital healthcare sector by scaling ComputeK's technical and vocational educational experience and training expertise to international markets to recruit, train, and facilitate the direct hiring of trainees by Canadian employers through the EMPP or related programs ~~to~~. We would train and/or upskill potential healthcare workers in Canada's targeted source countries, ensuring that they enter the Canadian job market ready for employment with our employment partners. Drawing from trusted networks in these source countries and our own sensitivities and expertise in navigating a range of communities through our diverse teams, the project promises predictable and safer recruitment of a competitive workforce through the Foreign Credential Recognition Program.

In the face of rising unemployment, we recognise that labour market-relevant training is vital to ensuring Canada's workforce has the skills needed, as the workforce ages and technology changes. Net incentives like the Union Training and Innovation Program and increased transparencies that protect Canadian assets will draw and retain skilled workers in sectors experiences continued shortages. Removing barriers to interprovincial trade, increased labour mobility, as well as tax incentives for skilled workers would further address sector needs; however, that does not complete the picture. A research report ComputeK College commissioned identified several employment barriers for newcomers seeking employment, which included: challenges accessing employment, difficulty finding information about job opportunities, lack of Canadian work experience, absence of credential recognition in Canada for their pre-existing qualifications, and limited networks through which to access jobs. Employers also described difficulties in attracting candidates with both Canadian experience and the appropriate qualifications. Skills training, and by this we mean a combination of hard and soft skills combined with market-focused wraparound services, has demonstrably increased the employability of these newcomers. Yet, over the last 30 years, Canada has seen a decline in the percentage of its public spending on training, dropping from a high of 0.35% in 1991 to 0.06% in 2018.⁶ This does not bode well for the employment targets the country must meet to ensure its long-term economic stability and reduce its dependency on the US.

As one-time newcomers immersed in diverse communities, we possess an intimate knowledge of the challenges and opportunities facing newcomers, as we have confronted them and risen to those challenges ourselves. Yet, today, many newcomers who arrived here, like us, pursuing the Canadian Dream, find themselves facing challenges that compel them to migrate elsewhere. We believe that with the right solutions in place, Canada can continue to leverage the most promising and competitive newcomers who will contribute to stabilizing our labour force and our economy, leading to prosperity for all.

⁶ OECD, 2020.