



Envisioning Canada's Immigration Future: Insights from WES National Roundtables

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Founded in 1974, WES is a non-profit social enterprise that supports the educational, economic, and social inclusion of immigrants, refugees, and international students. 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.



Why This Conversation Matters

- Immigration in Canada is at a crossroads. Even as it comes under increased scrutiny, it remains essential to economic growth.
- Policy shifts, affordability pressures, and public discourse have sparked questions about direction and coherence.
- In 2025, WES convened a series of national roundtable discussions to listen, connect perspectives, and identify shared priorities for reform.

Focus of the Roundtable Series

WES convened 60+ experts across Canada for a conversation about overarching principles that should guide a renewed vision of the country's immigration system. The discussion focused on three key areas:



Selecting immigrants based on a **high human capital** approach versus a **labour market needs** approach.



Using immigration to address gaps in **high-wage occupations** versus **low-wage occupations**.



The role of **temporary** versus **permanent** immigration.

Immigration Strategy



Areas of Alignment

- Canada needs a coherent strategy with clear objectives to steer decisions across the whole immigration system.
- Policymakers must consider what immigration policy can and cannot accomplish.
- Immigration is not only about the economy.
- Immigration policy must be rooted in core Canadian values such as fairness, equity, and well-being.



Areas of Debate

- Can we reduce complexity while addressing diverse regional needs?

Permanent Residency versus Temporary Migration



Areas of Alignment

- A renewed immigration system should prioritize permanent residence.
- A renewed immigration system must curb the abuses of temporary migration.



Areas of Debate

- What is the ongoing role of temporary migration?

Immigration and the Economy



Areas of Alignment

- Immigration policy should help to strengthen and grow Canada's economy.
- Canada needs to remove barriers that impede immigrant success.



Areas of Debate

- Does Canada need an immigration system focused on a high human capital approach or a labour market needs approach?
- Is the immigration system agile enough to address real-time labour market shortages?
- Should Canada consider a hybrid approach to immigrant selection?

Towards a Renewed Vision for Immigration in Canada

- Immigration **is** a nation-building strategy
- We must **refocus** on permanent residence
- We must **unlock** immigrant talent

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