

November 1, 2017

Hon. Ahmed D. Hussen  
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada  
365 Laurier Avenue West  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A1L1

Dear Minister Hussen,

As the federal government releases the 2018 Immigration Levels Plan for Canada, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) would like to take this opportunity to present a case for increasing the share of economic immigrants to Ontario and increasing the allocation for Ontario under its provincial nominee program, the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP).

The OCC's diverse network of over 60,000 members has concerns regarding access to human capital and the negative impact that the skills mismatch is having on members' ability to develop a productive workforce and grow their businesses in Ontario.

Recognizing that much of the province's future net labour growth will come from immigration, the OCC would like to ensure that Ontario businesses are well positioned to attract and retain skilled international talent. Increasing the share of economic immigrants to Ontario is one way to accomplish this goal, as the primary function of Canada's economic immigration system is to recruit individuals with the skills and qualifications required to address labour market needs.

Economic class immigrants are needed to address growing demographic concerns across Canada and Ontario, including the erosion of the tax base from an aging population and low labour productivity, as well as the skills mismatch. Of the 62 percent of Ontario businesses that attempted to recruit staff in the last six months of 2016, 82 percent experienced at least one challenge in doing so. The top challenge cited – by 60 percent of businesses – was finding someone with the proper qualifications.

**Despite the grave need for more economic immigrants in Ontario, statistics show that the number of economic immigrants to the province is in steady decline.** In 2016, Ontario received 29 percent or 45,110 of Canada's 155,745 economic class immigrants, while making up 38.3 percent of the population. Out of all the provinces in Canada, Ontario received the smallest proportion of its immigration intake from the economic class.

At the same time, in 2016, Ontario received almost half of Canada's refugees and humanitarian class immigrants. Research also shows that Ontario took in the second-most non-economic class immigrants (family and refugee and humanitarian classes) per dollar of GDP among the provinces. This means that Ontario, compared to all other provinces except for Manitoba, has less ability to pay for the additional public costs of non-economic immigrants. While this helps Canada meet its humanitarian and reunification goals, it also results in Ontario bearing a higher proportion of the costs when supporting non-economic class immigrants.

An important component of increasing the share of economic immigrants to Ontario and thus maintaining businesses competitiveness and providing employers with necessary talent, is the increase of the OINP allocations.

In 2016, Ontario selected only 3.6 percent of all its immigrants through the OINP, while the rest of Canada selected 39 percent. Quebec, one of Ontario's peer jurisdictions, has an immigration program that allows the province to select 57.3 percent of its immigrants for economic reasons - almost seventeen times greater than Ontario.

Currently, the OINP is limited to a small annual allocation of 6,000, which represents only 5.5 percent of immigrants coming to Ontario. This means that the federal government is responsible for the selection of 95 percent of Ontario's immigrants.

The expansion of the OINP allocation would increase Ontario's ability to respond to its unique labour market needs and maximize the economic benefits of immigrants. The allocations for OINP should be renegotiated to bring them in line with those of other provinces. Considering that Ontario receives a disproportionate number of non-economic immigrants, changing the allocations through the OINP would help Ontario meet its economic immigration goals.

The fact that Ontario has proportionately lower economic immigrants than other provinces greatly reduces the prosperity of the most populace province in Canada. Economic immigration is a key factor in enabling employers in Ontario to obtain appropriate skilled talent and thus support economic competitiveness, including boosting innovation, entrepreneurship, investment attraction and international trade. The OCC asks that the federal government increase the share of economic immigrants to Ontario in a way that is proportionate and fair to the needs and size of the province.

We look forward to your response and welcome the opportunity to discuss the issues outlined in further detail.

Sincerely,



Richard Koroscil  
Interim President & CEO  
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

CC:  
Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada  
Hon. Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario

Steve Orsini, Secretary of the Cabinet  
Hon. Laura Albanese, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration  
Hon. Brad Duguid, Minister of Economic Development and Growth  
Hon. Patty Hajdu, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour  
Michael Wernick, Clerk of the Privy Council  
Marta Morgan, Deputy Minister, Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada  
Alexander Bezzina, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration  
Ali Salam, Chief of Staff, Minister Hussen  
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