

Minister
of Immigration,
Refugees and Citizenship



Ministre
de l'Immigration,
des Réfugiés et de la Citoyenneté

Ottawa, Canada K1A 1L1

Pamela Robertson
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2024-01340633

Dear Pamela Robertson:

Thank you for your correspondence of November 1, 2024, regarding the upcoming changes to the Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP) program. I regret the delay in replying to you.

Canada values the significant social, cultural, and economic benefits that international students bring to the country. For those benefits to continue, and to ensure that international students who arrive in Canada are set up for success, we must tackle issues that have made some students vulnerable and have challenged the integrity of the International Student Program. This includes making sure we can manage the number of international students coming to Canada in a sustainable manner, while deterring any bad actors who pose a threat to the system.

Over the last year, I have announced several measures that are meant to address these issues so that international students are better protected overall. This includes introducing an enhanced letter of acceptance verification process for post secondary designated learning institutions, implementing an intake cap on most study permit applications, and raising the cost-of-living financial requirement for study permit applicants.

On September 18, 2024, I also announced a series of measures to support the Government of Canada's commitment to reduce the volume of temporary residents to 5% of Canada's population by the end of 2026. These changes included new eligibility requirements for the PGWP program, which will also better align it with labour market needs. They will also better calibrate the program with permanent residence requirements, supporting the successful integration of former international students into the labour market and improving opportunities for transition to permanent residence.

As of November 1, 2024, all new PGWP applicants will be required to demonstrate a minimum level of language proficiency: Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) 7 level for university graduates and CLB 5 level for college graduates. Additionally, as of November 1, new study permit applicants intending to pursue college or certain

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shorter university programs (e.g., certificates, diplomas) must graduate from a field of study linked to occupations in long-term shortage to be eligible for a PGWP.

These reforms were informed by a series of consultations, which included the provinces and territories, national education associations, and other key stakeholders, throughout the spring and summer of 2024. The latest changes are intended to better calibrate the PGWP program with permanent residence requirements, supporting the successful integration of former international students into the labour market and improving opportunities for transition to permanent residence. The changes also expressly recognize the value of colleges and their graduates in these areas.

The list of nearly 1000 eligible fields of study recognizes the many important roles that college graduates fill in the labour market. This list also matches the occupational priorities for federal pathways to permanent residence as part of category-based selection in Express Entry. As of December 17, 2024, several additional fields of study related to nursing, early childhood education, and developmental service workers were added.

I also note your concern that the revised program eligibility may have an impact on local and regional economies. Since the program provides graduates with an open work permit, they do not have any restrictions on where, and for whom, they can work. As such, the program will continue to help address regional labour shortages, as do other immigration programs such as the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP), which is designed to provide provinces and territories with the flexibility to introduce streams that target their specific labour market needs. Several provinces already have PNP streams focused on transitioning international students in particular fields to permanent residence.

For other significant but shorter-term needs, many temporary pathways remain available, including other International Mobility Program streams and the TFWP. Additionally, I sent out letters to the provinces and territories requesting that they identify any regional labour market needs that can only be met through the PGWP. I would recommend reaching out to the Ontario government to provide any information you have about labour market needs in the province.

While I recognize that some of the reforms related to the International Student Program (ISP) may impact enrollments at some institutions, these actions are necessary to ensure that international students are set up for success during their stay in Canada, and that Canadian communities are able to maintain their capacity to provide housing and services. Furthermore, the Government of Canada is committed to protecting the integrity of the ISP and the immigration system as a whole. With that said, while federal leadership is vital, leadership and action from across the sector

is needed to help attract the best and brightest, protect Canada's brand abroad, and make sure that we are recruiting the talent we need to meet Canada's current and future labour market needs.

I believe these changes to the PGWP program in combination with other reforms, will improve program integrity and ensure longevity and sustainability for the international student program. While these reforms will require a period of adaptation for institutions, prospective students and governments, they will ultimately protect Canada's reputation as a global leader in education.

International student graduates play a critical role in addressing labour needs if they are well supported and provided with the right opportunities to live, work, and stay in Canada. As such, IRCC is continuing to assess the PGWP program and is consulting with provinces, territories, and key national education stakeholders on the recalibration of the program so that it serves to better meet labour needs and act as a conduit to permanent residence.

Thank you for taking the time to write and express your concerns.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

The Honourable Marc Miller, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship