

Supporting Temporary Residents

Background

Temporary residents are individuals who are in Canada on a visa such as a work permit, study permit, or visitor's visa. When their permit or visa expires, they must either renew it or leave the country.

Nova Scotia receives more than twice as many temporary residents as permanent residents each year.

Employers depend on temporary workers, and universities welcome many international students as part of their university community, which contributes to a rich learning environment and financial stability for the university. Both federal and provincial governments recognize that these temporary residents are ideal potential permanent residents, and many of these immigrants clearly state their intention to transition to permanent status.

While there are numerous immigration streams under which temporary residents can apply, there are very few support services available to them before they get permanent status. In some cases, they cannot apply for these streams because they do not meet the requirements for English language skills, education, or work experience, even if they have worked or studied in Nova Scotia.

COVID Context

Through the COVID experience, the precarious situation of temporary residents has become more evident. Many temporary residents in Canada are essential workers – employed in key sectors such as caregiving, agriculture, and food processing. They are people who have had to continue their work in person, often in situations of high risk because they work in crowded conditions, in health care settings, and/or in public-facing jobs. Their own limited access to health care has added to their vulnerability.

In response to this situation, the federal government created four new, one-time streams to facilitate the transition of temporary residents to permanent status. However, this is a limited solution for a limited number of people. While it relieves the stresses on those accepted, it does not address the systemic roots of the challenges.

The recent report of the Royal Society of Canada, [Supporting Canada's COVID-19 Resilience and Recovery through Robust Immigration Policy and Programs](#), includes several considerations to address the plight of temporary residents. Similarly, the Public Policy Forum's report [Immigration and the Success of Canada's Post-Pandemic Economy](#) highlights and addresses many of these issues. These reports offer a range of innovative responses to the plight of the various sub-categories of temporary residents and provide a basis for further discussion and policy development.

Post-COVID Context

The COVID context has brought to the fore many of the barriers and gaps faced by temporary residents, but those issues continue. Regardless of the COVID situation, our growing reliance on a “two-step immigration process” makes it more important that the needs of these immigrants are addressed. (To learn more about this process, see the Government of Canada’s research report, “[Two-step Immigration Selection: A Review of Benefits and Potential Challenges](#).”)

Why it is Important to Support Temporary Residents

It is important that the NS government consider creating a series of short pilot projects that would provide intensive, upfront, targeted support services for temporary residents and their families who wish to apply for permanent status.

We believe that such services would facilitate the transition from temporary to permanent residency, as well as lead to smoother settlement processes and improved retention rates among temporary residents who become permanent residents.

Like all immigrants, temporary residents face challenges in settlement and integration. Although they have spent time in Canada, they often still struggle with cultural differences, especially concerning the job-search process and communication and integration in the workplace. In addition, they may face urgent family situations for which they cannot access support.

From January 2018 to May 2021, ISANS served over 850 temporary residents (international students and graduates, as well as their dependents and temporary workers) in our Employment Services. Many of the temporary workers we serve are educated and skilled in English, but working at entry-level jobs.

Based on our experience and work with this specific group, **ISANS has identified 5 key areas of support that can benefit temporary residents**, for which we could develop pilot projects:

- Orientation to Nova Scotia
- Job-search skills, including interview skills and Canadian work culture
- Communication and English for work (pre-employment – general) or profession-specific language
- English in the workplace (post-employment – specific to individuals’ workplace experiences)
- Crisis/family support