

24 January 2025

The Honourable Marc Miller, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Miller,

As leaders from diverse sectors across Manitoba, we are deeply concerned about the recent federal immigration policy changes and their potential impact on our province's economic growth. While these changes may be intended to ease pressures in larger urban centres, they risk creating significant challenges for provinces like Manitoba that rely on immigration to address pressing labour shortages and sustain economic development.

In its June 4 paper: Canada's Growth Challenge: Why the economy is stuck in neutral, RBC Economics cites "better utilization of immigrant skills" as one of the five levers to boost competitiveness, growth, and productivity, stating "All population and workforce growth is going to come from immigration, and we need a better system to match education and skills with jobs."

Manitoba's population growth will wither without immigration. In 2021, immigrants comprised more than 22 per cent of Manitoba's working-age population – a demographic that grew by more than 41,000 through immigration during the five years of 2016 to 2021. If you drill down to Winnipeg specifically, the decade spanning 2011 to 2021 saw a rise in immigrant workers of 45 per cent, which in turn grew the workforce population by 11 per cent.

In Manitoba, post-secondary education, industry, and the provincial government have identified the education and skills matches for jobs within key sectors of our economy for international students. To see many of these programs withheld from post-graduate work permit eligibility ignores the unique needs of Manitoba's economy and hinders post-secondary education's ability to meet them through training of international students.

The decision to reduce immigration targets, particularly through cuts in the number of new permanent residents, will slow population growth in Manitoba – growth that was already projected to slow prior to the introduction of these immigration reforms. Winnipeg forecasted just one per cent in population gain for 2025, down from more robust rates in recent years. This slowdown will exacerbate existing labour market gaps, particularly in key sectors like healthcare, skilled trades, and hospitality, which are critical to our province's recovery and long-term prosperity.

The impact of these immigration restrictions, along with the most recent decision to reduce the number of provincial nominees available to Manitoba by more than half, will be felt across industries that depend on a growing and diverse labour force to drive economic expansion. A smaller influx of newcomers means fewer workers to fill essential roles, hindering businesses' ability to grow and create jobs. Furthermore, reduced immigration will limit the talent pool that is crucial for innovation, reducing Manitoba's competitiveness on the national and global stage.



We urge the federal government to consider an approach to immigration that better recognizes the unique needs of provinces like Manitoba. While the policy changes may aim to ease pressures in other regions, they fail to account for the vital role that immigration plays in supporting Manitoba's economy. It is essential that immigration policies are tailored to the distinct needs of each province, ensuring that regions with specific labour shortages are equipped with the resources to address them.

In addition, we call for greater investment in workforce development initiatives and the reinstatement of the LMDA cuts made earlier this year as these support local businesses and industries within region-specific key sectors, such as those previously mentioned here in Manitoba: healthcare, technology, and skilled trades. Targeted investments in these areas will help mitigate the impact of reduced immigration and position Manitoba for sustainable growth.

The global competition for talent is fierce, and Canada must remain a top destination for skilled workers. By aligning immigration policies with the economic realities of provinces like Manitoba, we can ensure that our workforce is equipped to meet the challenges of today and the opportunities of tomorrow. We are eager to collaborate with the federal government to develop policies that foster economic resilience and growth for all Canadians, regardless of where they live.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to working together to secure a prosperous future for Manitoba and its communities.

Sincerely,

Mr. Fred Meier, Co-Chair, Manitoba Post-Secondary Presidents Council,
President & Chief Executive Officer, Red River College Polytechnic

Dr. Michael Benarroch, Co-Chair, Manitoba Post-Secondary Presidents Council,
President and Vice-Chancellor, University of Manitoba

Bram Strain, President & Chief Executive Officer, Business Council of Manitoba

Chuck Davidson, President & Chief Executive Officer, Manitoba Chambers of Commerce

Loren Remillard, President & Chief Executive Officer, Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce

CC: The Honourable Wab Kinew, Premier of Manitoba

The Honourable, Renée Cable, Minister responsible for Advanced Education and Training

The Honourable, Malaya Marcelino, Minister responsible for Labour and Immigration

The Honourable Terry Duguid, Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada

The Honourable Dan Vandal, Member of Parliament, Saint-Boniface – Saint Vital

Mr. Ben Carr, Member of Parliament, Winnipeg South Centre

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux, Member of Parliament, Winnipeg North

