



November 16, 2020

The Honourable John Horgan, M.L.A.
Premier of British Columbia.

PO Box 9031
Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC
V8W 9E1

RE: A Renewed Call for a BC Ministry of Immigration, Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism

Dear Premier Horgan,

We are writing to express urgency for the provincial engagement strategy recommendation released in AMSSA's 2018 report *Immigration for BC's Future: A Call for Action to Strengthen Newcomer Integration* for an independent Ministry of Immigration, Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism (<https://www.amssa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Immigration-For-BCs-Future-Web-Version.pdf>) Immigration, multiculturalism, and anti-racism intersect with practically every existing provincial ministry. These are issues that are woven into the very fabric of our country and into all of the institutions that run our province. Like every province and territory, B.C. has unique attractions, challenges, and histories that require a specific provincial response.

Marco Mendicino, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, tabled the 2021–2023 Immigration Levels Plan on October 30, 2020, which aims to welcome 1.2 million Permanent Residents to Canada during the next three years. There is an urgent need for a provincial Ministry of Immigration, Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism to ensure the successful integration of all newcomers, whether they arrive as Permanent Residents or as temporary residents with the possible intention of seeking permanent residency. Immigration contributes to the nation building of Canada and will be a key factor in Canada's COVID-19 economic recovery plan. Having a dedicated provincial Ministry of Immigration, Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism will provide the province with the ability to ensure that immigration is an integral part of the province's priorities, including COVID-19 economic recovery and anti-racism work. The recently tabled immigration landing numbers allow for a higher number of newcomers entering via the Provincial Nominee

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Program (PNP) stream where the selection process is determined by the province and having a stand alone Ministry of Immigration, Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism will help ensure that this selection process is responsive to BC's needs.

Who We Are

The settlement and integration sector provides essential services to all newcomers. This includes permanent residents (refugees, immigrants, and naturalized citizens) and temporary residents (e.g. migrant workers, refugee claimants and international students). Examples of the services provided in the sector are settlement and re-settlement services, language instruction, employment programming, trauma counselling and housing supports. The Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies (AMSSA) is the provincial umbrella organization for the sector with 80 members throughout B.C. As the settlement and integration umbrella agency, AMSSA supports the sector through professional development, research and policy analysis, programming and knowledge mobilization, as well as through various committees, partnerships and working groups. One such committee is the Immigrant Integration Coordination Committee (IICC), a province-wide advisory group of AMSSA members and BC-IRCC Settlement Service representatives. The IICC acts as a collective body of experienced sector representatives to provide strategic input, facilitate effective consultations as well as develop and improve professional standards in service delivery that impact the settlement and integration sector.

Current BC Government Structure:

- Immigration currently spans four units (Welcome BC, Three Provincial Nominee Programs, Immigration Policy and Integration Branch, International Students), in two ministries - The Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Competitiveness and the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training;
- Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism is housed separately within Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture;
- The current structure makes it hard to coordinate immigration related matters and speak with one voice both with the federal government and within BC.
- Under a previous NDP government, BC had a Ministry of Multiculturalism and Immigration that was able to have more focused and engaged discussions on immigration related matters with the federal government and civil society.

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Call For Action

A Ministry of Immigration, Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism would recognize the growing importance of immigration while increasing our collective efforts in recognizing the importance of multiculturalism and diversity as a strength while combating racism. We would venture to speculate that provinces best equipped to understand and shape immigration will benefit from regionalization pilots and the new municipal immigration sponsorship program. This includes, of course, the ability to advocate for their share of increased future Provincial Nominee Program targets.

In the timeframe from January 2018 to August 2020 when viewed on a monthly average, approximately 40% of temporary residents made the transition while in B.C. to permanent residency (as opposed to coming in with permanent residency, as is the case with refugees and immigrants). With COVID-19 border restrictions, and other barriers, Canada may need innovation and creativity to meet the recently announced target levels across the next three years. One possibility would be to granting permanent residency to those temporary residents who are already safely in Canada, such as international students and temporary foreign workers.

Having more provincial attention to immigration would be a promising step towards creating easier pathways for permanent residency for international students, temporary foreign workers, and other temporary residents. There are a few streams of temporary status in BC, including the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP), the International Mobility Program, the Study Permit, and the Post-Graduate Work Permit. Many temporary residents who hold these permits are vulnerable, have few protections, and are racialized. Bringing in temporary workers for permanent jobs is counterproductive for labour force growth; immigration and permanent residency are integral to provincial economic growth and COVID-19 economic recovery. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted many inequities in our country, especially amongst newcomers and it also highlighted our reliance on labour we consider essential. Temporary foreign workers are essential workers, doing work that helps keep Canada and British Columbia running for less pay and with less protections than the average Canadian worker. The TFW program especially is almost exclusively made up of racialized people. Both the federal and provincial governments have expressed support for anti-racist movements. Currently, the portfolios of immigration and multiculturalism are split between the Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Competitiveness and the Ministry of Tourism, Arts & Culture, which does not allow for an intersectional approach. Racial justice is deeply intertwined with labour rights, gender equality, LGBTQ+ rights, and migrant justice. At this critical time, we urge the province to fight for the most

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vulnerable newcomers and prioritize this fight for justice by establishing a Minister for Immigration, Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism.

Along with a designated Ministry of Immigration, Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism, BC needs to develop a 5-year provincial Immigration Plan with a vision; projections and forecasting of future immigration needs and impacts on communities/regions throughout the province. We need to move from a reactive mode focused on PR and TR arrivals to a more concerted, proactive mode on future planning needs. This Immigration Plan would include such elements as projected immigrant settlement patterns based on previous trends to assist municipal governments, businesses, health care, education, housing needs, transit expansion, etc to better plan for future needs. Within the proposed new Ministry, there would need to be some kind of partnership between the new Ministry and StatsBC to monitor immigration and migration patterns, trends, and outcomes. An 'intelligence unit' within the new Ministry focused solely on immigration would be needed including planning for the uneven impact associated with accelerated baby boom retirements. Lastly, we suggest that the new Ministry review the BC Auditor General report and recommendations on BC's Provincial Nominee program. While the report is largely positive, there are several useful recommendations that should be enacted.

The settlement and integration sector in B.C. has established networks, skills, and ability to meet the need. Having more conversation around immigration on a provincial level would not only ensure that we can transition even more people into permanent residency, but also that B.C. would be better equipped to select immigrants and permanent residents who fit the province's specific needs and who can be an integral part of British Columbia's growth and recovery.

Thank you for your consideration,

Katie Crocker
Chief Executive Officer

APPENDIX A:

Immigration to BC – an Integral Part of Post Covid Economic Recovery: Why a designated BC Ministry of Immigration, Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism makes sense at this time.

Backgrounder

Estimates of the components of demographic growth, annual

Components of population growth	British Columbia (map)			
	2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020
	Persons			
Births ^{2, 3}	44,989	44,308	43,434	42,996
Deaths ^{4, 5}	38,357	38,128	38,471	38,927
Immigrants ⁶	35,397	41,916	43,135	44,899
Emigrants ^{7, 8}	11,892	10,994	11,150	8,582
Returning emigrants ^{8, 9}	6,400	6,062	6,149	5,228
Net temporary emigrants ^{8, 10}	5,296	5,358	5,433	3,707
Net interprovincial migration ¹¹	18,834	13,989	13,325	15,708

Source:

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710000801&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.11&cubeTimeFrame.startYear=2016+%2F+2017&cubeTimeFrame.endYear=2019+%2F+2020&referencePeriods=20160101%2C20190101>

In 2019, Immigration surpassed births as the leading component of population change in BC. This will not be the case in 2020, given closed borders and a low rate of immigration to Canada, but it will resume soon – particularly in light of the new immigration levels plan approved by the Canadian government.

It is important to note that over the past 25 years, there has been a sustained emphasis on spreading immigrant settlement more evenly across Canada, which has led Ottawa to engage in a growing number of ‘regionalization’ programs. In the new levels plan, for example, for 2021, Canada has set a target of 232,500 economic-class immigrants; of these, 123,000 will be either be directly selected by Quebec and other provinces, or will be admitted through regionalization programs, such as the new Northern Pilot program. A substantial majority of those selected by Ottawa (i.e., of the remaining 112,500) will settle in Ontario (see chart, below). Note that the 2019 Mandate Letter that accompanied the appointment of IRCC Minister Mendicino also called for a new municipal immigrant sponsorship program, though that has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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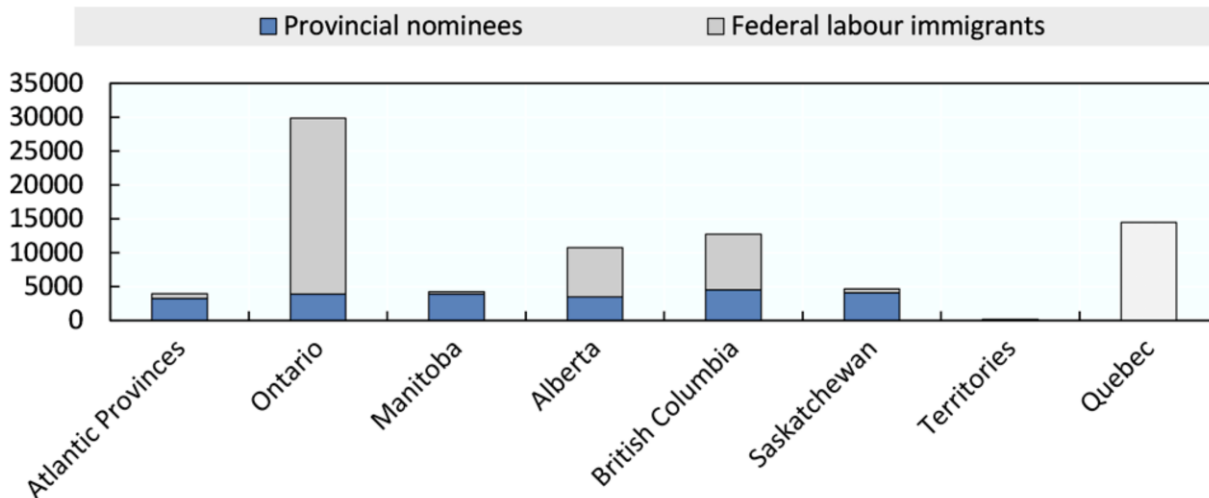
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APPENDIX B:

Figure 1.10. Labour immigrants by province and migration programme, 2017



Source: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/4abab00d-n/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/4abab00d-en>

According to IRCC reports (which differ somewhat from the numbers associated with Statistics Canada in the above table)

APPENDIX C:

2019 Highlights – BC's share against total Permanent Resident (PR) and Temporary Resident (TR) arrivals to Canada

- Permanent resident (PR) landings- BC took in 14.7% (50,230 PR's); 59.8% (30,060) were under the Economic stream;
- Study permit holders – BC's take 21.4% (85,985 international students)
- Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW's) – BC take 25% (24,390)
- Expressed Entry (Federal Skilled Workers, Trade, Provincial Nominees) – BC's take 20.3% (14,530)

Source: <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset?organization=cic>

Covid Impact on Immigration to BC: (January-August 2020) against 2019 arrivals:

- 20,065 PR landings – estimated 50% drop

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- 37,990 Study Permit Holders – estimated 44% drop
- 8,560 Express Entry class – estimated 12% drop
- 14,015 TFW's – estimated 14% drop (ex – 35% estimated drop in carpenters and cooks, 61% estimated drop in home child care workers)
- 40% of PR landings in 2020 were previously temporary residents
- Other related impacts on immigrant and refugee newcomers and BC:
 - Rise in reported racist attacks
 - 14.1% vs 22% unemployment rates between Canadian born and recent immigrants (higher among Arab, Black and SE Asians)
 - Economic inequality and higher impact proportionately on newcomers – higher rates of COVID-19 + cases;
 - Higher exposure risks due to economic insecurity/newcomers holding more than one job, especially immigrant women of colour;
 - Greater public awareness of the essential service roles that newcomers play eg in seniors homes;
 - Information dissemination challenges due to some newcomer's inability to speak English or French;
 - Digital literacy and access/familiarity of technology among seniors and some refugee populations; and,
 - Access delays to Covid emergency benefits because some newcomers who landed in 2019 hadn't yet filed their income tax due to lockdown, lack of help and unfamiliarity of federal-provincial systems – complex navigation challenges.

Data Source: <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset?organization=cic>

Post Covid - Projected Future Arrival Patterns/Trends:

- Moving forward, the future characteristics of BC's population, and labour force, will increasingly be set by immigration;
- Based on the recently announced 3 year (2021-23) Canadian Government Immigration Plan, BC's share is projected to be over 180,000 PR's (over 107,000 under the Economic stream); These projections signal the largest potential number of PR landings on an annual basis in BC history over the next 3 years. Source: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/notices/supplementary-immigration-levels-2021-2023.html>
- Study Permit Holders – (International students) – 85,000+ annually
- TFW's – 25,000+ annually
- Express Entry class – 15,000+ annually
- % of PR's who were previously temporary residents – 30+% annually
- As a result of growing demographic shifts, we can expect a higher percentage of visible minority populations and recent newcomer arrivals as a percentage of BC's total overall population.

Future needs/challenges/contributions to BC's post Covid economic recovery:

- The retirement of the baby boom generation (9 million Canadians and the 'middle' of the cohort turns 65 next year, and the last one turns 65 in 2031) will have very uneven impacts across communities and will therefore have dramatic consequences for some of them.

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- An inability to address growing labour market shortages in all sectors and industries due to a lack of workforce – significant shortcomings projected;
- Integration issues among future immigrant arrivals will become critical • Labour market access • Entrepreneurship • Credentialization (need greater efforts on recognizing internationally acquired skills and/or clearer pathways to recertification);
- PR and TR's impact on rental housing market, food security industry, local economies, large infrastructure projects that tend to rely on TFW's;
- International students contribution to local economy, post-secondary institutions and some school boards;
- Review of Data collection mechanisms within Government to ensure that race, gender and legal status is captured for strategic investments and identification of service gaps/supports needed;
- Greater focus on supporting the building of more welcoming and inclusive communities including greater emphasis on anti-racism initiatives; and,
- A concerted push for greater regionalization of immigration throughout BC eg Northern Immigration Pilot, municipal immigration sponsorship program.

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