

# Intelligence MEMOS



From: Parisa Mahboubi  
To: The Honourable Marc Miller, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada  
Date: April 11 2024  
Re: **HOW TO IMPROVE OUR SKILLED MIGRANT PROGRAMS**

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Canada's immigration point system is designed to select skilled individuals who have the potential to contribute to our country's economic growth and meet its evolving labour needs. Since the mid-2010s, it has yielded improvements in the overall labour market [outcomes](#) for immigrants.

However, recent policy changes warrant immediate attention – especially as the role of skilled immigrants has become increasingly vital. Compared with similar countries, it's evident that there are several missed opportunities and systemic challenges hindering our [immigration](#) system from reaching its full potential and enhancing the well-being of all Canadians.

Canada and Australia, in particular, share similarities in their skilled immigration point systems. Both prioritize a two-step immigration process; place emphasis on factors such as English-language proficiency and workforce age; and require premigration credentials as well as English proficiency assessments.

However, Australia has demonstrated agility and innovation in its skilled migration reforms. For example, it implemented language assessment requirements a decade ahead of Canada and more rigorously. It also requires [occupational skills and experience assessments](#). Britain and New Zealand have also implemented reforms that position them ahead in the global competition for skilled labour.

Meanwhile, Canada lags and has taken a more lenient approach to catch up with Australia in certain aspects of skilled immigration – failing to fully capitalize on the talent pool available worldwide. For example, we have shifted our emphasis from the human capital selection model to fulfilling immediate labour market requirements in low-skilled occupations.

One of the most pressing issues in Canada's immigration system is the absence of a minimum points threshold for eligibility under the Express Entry program, which is aimed at streamlining the selection process for economic immigrants. This not only results in a flood of applications from individuals lacking adequate skills but could also potentially compromise the quality of our skilled immigrants.

Canada has previously significantly reduced the cut-off points to meet immigration target levels, indicating that we are willing to prioritize quantity over quality.

A minimum point threshold would help ensure this country only admits the most qualified candidates, streamlining the selection process and maximizing the economic benefits of immigration.

We must keep in mind the importance of preadmission earnings as a predictor of immigrants' success in our economy. Countries such as Britain, New Zealand and Australia (explicitly or implicitly) include this factor in their selection process, recognizing its significance in identifying individuals who are likely to thrive in the labour market.

By incorporating preadmission earnings into its criteria, Canada can better assess education and experience quality of candidates. Preimmigration earnings can reflect an individual's skills, ensuring that immigrants are equipped to contribute meaningfully postadmission. This might also encourage potential applicants to put more effort into finding employment opportunities in Canada that better match their qualifications prior to seeking permanent residency.

Language proficiency is also critical. Studies have shown that this factor is closely linked to immigrants' initial earnings and long-term economic outcomes. By raising language requirements for prospective immigrants, Canada can attract individuals who are better equipped to navigate the linguistic and cultural nuances of our society, fostering greater integration and enhancing overall economic performance.

Additionally, Canada's underperformance in attracting business immigrants with entrepreneurial skills – Australia and Britain do better – represents a significant missed opportunity. In Canada, [business immigrants](#) are also more likely than other immigrants to seek opportunities elsewhere and leave, exacerbating concerns about weak business investment.

That's why we need to increase the number of business immigrants, refine selection criteria to prioritize entrepreneurial skills and address retention issues in order to stimulate innovation, spur economic growth and create job opportunities for Canadians.

Finally, the federal government must also enhance its data utilization by regularly conducting statistical earnings regressions to determine the optimal criteria and weights that accurately predict immigrants' success.

As Ottawa has ambitious targets to welcome a record number of newcomers with a focus on economic immigration in the coming years, now is the time to address the shortcomings in Canada's policies. In doing so, this country can position itself as a global leader in attracting skilled immigrants while ensuring a brighter, more prosperous future for all its citizens.

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*A version of this Memo first [appeared](#) in The Globe and Mail.*