

Foreword

This review of Canada's labour migration policy is the tenth in a series conducted by the OECD Secretariat as a follow-up to the 2009 High Level Policy Forum on International Migration. The rationale for this initiative was the recent growth in labour migration observed in many countries and the likelihood that recourse to labour migration would increase in the context of demographic ageing. Prior to the global economic crisis of the late 2000s, many countries had made substantial changes to labour migration policies with a view to facilitating recruitment from abroad. With the introduction of these changes, more prominence was accorded to the question of their effectiveness, and more broadly to the objectives of labour migration policy in general. Although the economic crisis put a damper on labour migration movements, it did not stop them entirely, and interest in labour migration policy is unlikely to diminish in the near future.

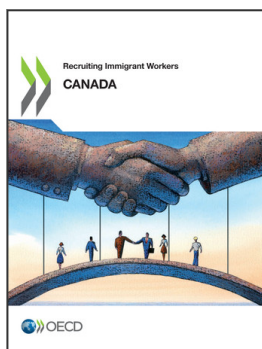
The central objective of labour migration policy is to help meet those labour market needs which cannot be satisfied through tapping domestic labour supply in a reasonable timeframe, without adversely affecting the domestic labour market and without hindering development prospects in vulnerable origin countries. Although the objective itself can be easily stated, specifying the criteria for assessing the success of policy in achieving it is a complex matter. It involves evaluating how well labour market needs have been identified and whether migration has had an impact on the labour market, both of which are analytically difficult.

This series of reviews addresses the question of whether labour migration policy is effective in meeting labour market needs without adverse effects, and whether the policy is efficient. To address these questions, this review aims to analyse two key areas: i) the labour migration system and its characteristics, in terms of policies in place and the labour migrants who arrive; and ii) the extent to which it is responding to the current and forecasted needs of the domestic labour market, as well as any impact on the latter.

Canada faces a similar discussion as other OECD countries regarding the capacity of its labour migration policy to meet current but also unknown future skill needs. It is in this context that Canada requested the OECD review its labour migration policy. Since 2015, Canada introduced a federal expression of interest system (Express Entry) for the selection of permanent high-skilled labour migrants, overhauled its temporary foreign worker programme, piloted new immigration programmes and enhanced the role played by provincial and territorial governments in labour migration management.

Canada is a nation built on immigration and immigration is also key to maintaining a high-skilled workforce in Canada. This review assesses the performance of the

new permanent labour migration system in international comparison, following its first years of operation. It also considers the role of temporary migration policy in the specific context of a country with a large permanent migration system. Finally, it looks at the possibilities of provinces and territories to select migrants, the characteristics of the latter, and the impact of this selection in a country where all permanent labour migrants enjoy nationwide mobility.



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