



INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS WHO SEEK PERMANENT RESIDENCE

SERVICE PROVIDERS' PERSPECTIVE OF AVAILABLE
SUPPORTS IN GUELPH-WELLINGTON

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COMMUNITY ENGAGED
SCHOLARSHIP INSTITUTE



Funded by:



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Financé par :

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Each year an increasing number of students from around the world come to Canada to study at institutions of higher education. Research suggests that international students possess a number of key qualities that make them strong candidates for potential employers (Belkhodja & Esses, 2013; Government of Canada, 2017). Although Canada would benefit if more international students remained in Canada post-graduation, some experts have stated that international students who wish to obtain permanent residence (PR henceforth) face challenges with the application process, which may deter them from applying (Armos, 2018; Neatby & Yogesh, 2017).

The present report attempts to identify supports that are available to international students in the city of Guelph and the country of Wellington who wish to apply for PR. Through an examination of the literature and key interviews with staff of post-secondary institutions and settlement service organizations in the region, the report attempts to answer the following questions:

- What services and supports do international students need when applying for permanent residence?
- What services and supports are available for those students?
- What are some challenges that service providers face in supporting international students?
- What services are available to international students elsewhere in the province or country?
- What are some recommendations to improve the services provided to international students in Guelph-Wellington?

Results from the structured interviews with service providers aligned with what was identified in a preliminary scan of academic and grey literature. Overall, staff believe that there is a gap between the supports that international students require and the services that service providers are able to offer. For settlement service organizations, their main challenge is that it is outside their mandate to support temporary residents such as international students. In the case of post-secondary institutions, there seem to be a grey area surrounding international student advisors' role in supporting international students with PR-related inquiries. These institutions mentioned that there is a high demand for support with PR applications, but cited a lack of resources, funding, and adequately trained advisors to meet this demand.

The most frequently-mentioned support that service providers (post-secondary institutions and settlement service organizations) are able to provide for international students are a variety of information sessions about the different classes of PR, general

and specific application process details, and details about finding employment and settling in Canada.

As part of our literature review, we examined some ways that governments and post-secondary institutions within Ontario and other parts of Canada provided support for international students with the PR application process. From our search, we found that post-secondary institutions with a mission statement or plan to serve international students also had comprehensive websites (outlining next steps, links to important documents and pages, resources and contacts who could help) about applying for PR. Some provincial governments also provide support through programming and funding to enable settlement service organizations to serve international students and facilitate the PR application process.

Based on the results of the literature review and interviews, we recommend that governments, post-secondary institutions, settlement service organizations, and local immigration partnerships help to build a more cohesive support network for international students in Guelph-Wellington. Of note, we recommend that governments enables settlement service organizations to serve international students with PR-related inquiries and that post-secondary institutions consider hiring international student advisors who are certified Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultants (RCIC) to enable them to advise these students. We also recommend that all of these stakeholders continue to collaborate and provide a variety of workshops and seminars related to the applying for PR.

KEY TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AIP: The Atlantic Immigration Pilot is a program that was launched on February 20, 2018 within Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island to retain more international students and address the labour market shortages in these provinces. It allows employers to endorse international students as candidates for permanent residence.

ICCRC: The Immigration Consultants of Canada Regulatory Council is the national regulatory body for immigration professionals (excluding immigration lawyers).

IRCC: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada is a department of the Government of Canada which facilitates the arrival of newcomers to Canada by providing settlement-related programming and support with citizenship and travel documents.

IRPA: The International and Refugee Protection Act is an Act by the Government of Canada regarding immigration and the protection of refugees in the country.

ISA: International Student Advisors who are employed by universities and colleges to support international students.

Post-Secondary Institutions: Institutes of higher education including but not limited to universities, colleges, conservatories and institutes of technology

PR: Permanent residence is a status that is granted to someone who is not a Canadian citizen, allowing them to live and work in Canada without a time limit.

RCIC: A Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant is someone who is regulated by the ICCRC and able to provide services and advice on matters pertaining to immigration applications

RISIA: A Regulated International Student Immigration Advisor works in educational institutions and can only provide advice in areas pertaining to study permits, temporary resident visas, and how study permits relate to other Canadian immigration programs (RISIA Registration Regulation, 2017). They are unable to advise about any matters related to permanent residency.

Settlement Service Organizations: Agencies which support newcomers in Canada by providing services including but not limited to document translation, help filling out forms and applications, English classes, help finding jobs and information about community services.

Service Providers: For the purpose of this report, we use this term to refer collectively to post-secondary institutions and settlement service organizations.

INTRODUCTION

International Students in Canada

Every year, an increasing number of international students come from around the world to study in Canada. In 2014, the Canadian government announced as part of its International Education Strategy that it would aim to attract 450,000 international students and researchers by 2022 (“Canada’s New International”, 2014). This benchmark was surpassed in 2017, when the number of international students reached 492,545, and, by the end of 2018, there were as many as 572,415 foreign students who held Canadian study permits (“Canada’s Foreign Student Enrolment”, 2019). While many of these students are expected to return home or move to other countries after graduation, some research suggests that roughly 68% of international students intend to seek employment and apply for permanent residence (PR henceforth) within Canada (Esses, Sutter, Ortiz, Luo, Cui, & 2018). While some international students move to Canada to attend primary and secondary schools, more than 60% of international students arrive to Canada to study at the post-secondary level (Larocque, 2018). Within the context of this report, we will focus our discussion specifically on international students who are studying in post-secondary universities and colleges.

Along with the exponentially increasing international student population, many argue that international students would make ideal immigrants in Canada for a number of reasons. In addition to having a more developed understanding of Canadian society, international students tend to have higher language proficiency in English and/or French, and a more developed social network within Canada compared to newly-arrived immigrants. International students who graduate from Canadian universities also face fewer challenges than those who are educated in other countries in terms of having degrees and qualifications that are recognized within Canada. Some international students even manage to gain some work or coop experience within Canada before graduating. A report by IRCC recognized all of these strengths of international students by stating: “International students contribute to the cultural, social and economic landscape of Canada. They add an estimated \$15 billion a year to Canada’s economy, and many are viewed as ideal candidates for permanent residency given their language proficiency, Canadian education credentials and Canadian work experience” (Government of Canada, 2017). In the most recently-released federal budget, the Government of Canada proposed to invest \$147.9 million over the next five years, and \$8 million per year after this as part of their international education strategy (Government of Canada, 2019).

Applying for Permanent Residence

To study in Canada, international students must hold a valid study permit. Study permits are a type of temporary resident status, which do not grant students access to some of the services that are available to permanent residents and Canadian citizens. After graduation and depending on an individual's personal circumstances (including their level of education and whether or not they have a job offer in Canada), international students are able to apply for a number of PR streams which vary from province to province. In the province of Ontario, most international students tend to apply under one of three programs: the Canadian Experience Class, the Provincial Nominee Program or the Federal Skilled Workers Program ("What is the Ontario", 2019). Each program has a different set of criteria, and some are only open for short periods at a time, which means that international students must be aware of the different kinds of programs and know when and how to apply for the appropriate stream. Rules and requirements for programs change from time to time, so someone who begins the application process must be aware of the changes and ensure that they are still eligible (Neatby & Yogesh, 2017).

Once a person has decided on the PR stream that they wish to apply to, they must obtain and complete the application forms and prepare their supporting documents and fees for submission. Processing times may vary, but most permanent residence applications tend to take between six to 12 months to be processed¹.

A report by Statistics Canada suggests that, over the period of 1990-2013, roughly 20-27% of international students become permanent residents within ten years of receiving their first study permit (Lu & Hou, 2015). Although there are numerous reasons why intention to apply for PR may not transfer into applying and becoming a permanent resident, it is worth noting the discrepancy between the roughly 68% of students who intend to apply for PR (Esses et al., 2018) and the 20-27% who actually become permanent residents.

Who Can Help with the Application Process?

Given the complicated process of finding and applying for the correct PR stream, many international students seek advice online and from services around them. In previous decades, this demand for consulting services unfortunately increased the number of fraudulent third-party services that exploited international students by providing them

¹ This approximation, which was accurate at the time of writing this report, was obtained by using the calculator to check processing times from the Government of Canada website, recognizing that individual circumstances could influence these times. For an updated approximation, please consult the website here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/check-processing-times.html>

with faulty information (Government of Canada, 2014). To reduce these kinds of occurrences, on March 23, 2011, the Canadian government passed *Bill C-35, An Act to Amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA)*. Under this bill, only lawyers and professionals who are licensed by the Immigration Consultants of Canada Regulatory Council (ICCRC) are allowed to provide immigration-related advice and guidance (Library of Parliament, 2011). In 2013, an additional amendment was added to the IRPA, which authorised certified Registered International Student Immigrant Advisors (RISIA) to provide support for international students. Like the Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultants (RCIC), RISIA are able to provide advice for international students pertaining to their study permits, temporary resident visas, and how study permits relate to other Canadian immigration programs (RISIA Registration Regulation, 2017). However, RISIA are unable to assist with filling out PR application forms or give specific advice about which PR streams to apply for.

Who do International Students turn to?

Given their temporary resident status and the limitations regarding who can provide advice for PR applications, there are only a few service providers who international students can turn to for support. Typically, international students seek support within the Canadian institutions where they are studying. Within most post-secondary institutions, their first point of contact would be international student offices and international student advisors (ISA). Some students may also seek support from local settlement service organizations or other private consultants. Due to the nature of international students' position as temporary residents, some experts suggest that there is a gap within the services that post-secondary institutions and settlement service organizations can offer based on each sector's mandate and focus (Armos, 2018; Covell, Neiterman, Atanackovic, Owusu, & Bourgeault, 2015). Although it should be noted that post-secondary institutions and settlement service organizations have different mandates and engage with international students to varying extents, for the purpose of this report, we will refer to both organizations collectively as "service providers" and make distinctions when discussing key differences. To assess the depth of this gap and its impact on international students, the Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership partnered with the Community Engaged Scholarship Institute at the University of Guelph to conduct this exploratory study.

PRESENT RESEARCH

Research Objective

The present report attempts to identify the supports that are available to international students in the city of Guelph and the county of Wellington (Guelph-Wellington henceforth) who wish to apply for permanent residence.

This research seeks to answer the following questions:

- What services and supports do international students need when applying for PR?
- What services and supports are available for those students?
- What are some challenges that service providers face in supporting international students?
- What services are available to international students elsewhere in the province or country?
- What are some recommendations to improve the services provided to international students?

Methodology

This research was conducted through two main components: a brief literature review and key informant interviews. In order to gain a fuller understanding of the needs of international students in Canada and the process of applying for permanent residence, we conducted a scan of both academic and grey literature from across the country. In particular, this literature review focused on discussions about international students and the PR application process, as well as other programs and supports that students elsewhere might receive from the government, universities or local service providers. The purpose of the literature review was not to gain a comprehensive overview services and resources available across Canada, but rather to look at some examples listed in the literature of how other service providers are able to support international students.

The key informant interviews consisted of six interviews with representatives from post-secondary institutions and settlement service organizations². Five of the interviews were done with staff members from service providers within the Guelph-Wellington area, while one interview was conducted with a staff member from a post-secondary institution in British Columbia. Specifically, the six contributors to this project were:

- University of Guelph

² Given the small sample size of service providers, our findings may have limited generalizability. However, as mentioned in our research objective, our goal is to identify supports in Guelph-Wellington and any potential gaps, not to produce generalizable findings. The five services identified are also the main service providers in the area.

- University of Victoria
- Conestoga College
- County of Wellington Settlement Services
- Immigrant Services Guelph-Wellington
- County of Wellington Economic Development

All interviews were semi-structured and conducted over the phone. In order to address the research questions listed above, we prepared questions that focused on three main themes:

- Requests and inquiries from international students
- Support provided by the organizations
- Gaps between services requested by international students and those provided by service providers

It should be noted that our research examines services and supports that post-secondary institutions and settlement service organizations *perceive* international students to require. The report does not include analysis of the needs and expectations expressed by international students themselves. The Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership and the Community Engaged Scholarship Institute are currently in the planning stages for the second phase of this research which will be conducted in the months to come. In the second phase, researchers will investigate the challenges and barriers from the perspective of international students who are applying for PR.

TRANSITION NEEDS AND SUPPORTS IN GUELPH-WELLINGTON

What Services and Supports do International Students Need?

Post-secondary international students in Guelph-Wellington study at either the University of Guelph or Conestoga College. From our informant interviews, staff from these institutions reported receiving many more PR-related inquiries from international students compared to the settlement service organizations. Most of these students seek help from International Student Advisors (ISA) at their college or university. In terms of the types of questions that students ask, it was reported that many students inquire about how studying at their post-secondary institution would impact their PR applications. Some example questions given were: “If I drop to part-time student status, how does that affect my PR application?” and “Can I get practical experience while studying as a student to strengthen my application?”. Students also ask questions about the PR application process (e.g. “How do I get my documents certified?”, “What type of PR can I apply for?”, “When can I apply for PR?”, “How long will the application take?”) and seek help with completing their application.

Staff members from settlement service organizations in Guelph-Wellington saw fewer international students compared to post-secondary institutions, however they still reported receiving a number of inquiries within any given school year. One staff member suggested that not many international students seek support from their organization because “they know we don’t have funding to support them”. That said, two staff members also mentioned that they have been receiving an increasing number of inquiries from international students within the past few years.

Questions that were asked at settlement service organizations were more specific and had greater variation compared to the inquiries at post-secondary institutions. In addition to general PR-related questions mentioned above, some example questions given were: “What is it like to live and work in Guelph-Wellington?” and “What employers should I aim to work for to get my PR?” A staff member mentioned receiving questions about the technicalities of work and study permits and whether those could be extended while waiting for PR.

In general, it seems that international students have both general and situation-specific questions that they ask of service providers. While the service providers listed different ways that their organizations attempted to meet the needs of the international students, they also recognized that they were limited in the support that they were able to provide to answer individual PR-related questions.

What Services and Supports are Available?

Five out of the six service providers mentioned hosting informational workshops and seminars about various topics related to PR to support international students. Among

those workshops, the most common (offered by three service providers) discussed popular pathways for international students seeking PR—often hosted by a RCIC or, in one case, a representative from IRCC. Two service providers also hosted workshops about the process of applying for PR. One service provider described hosting more job market-oriented workshops such as one about National Occupational Classification codes³, or one about employer expectations and how international students can market themselves. In most cases, service providers reported holding the workshops and seminars once or twice per year, although they also mentioned that the schedule varies from year to year. They also mentioned that most of the events were highly attended by international students.

Within post-secondary institutions, international student advisors deal with a wide range of inquiries and consultations for matters including but not limited to academic work, student visa and work permits, accommodation, health and mental health matters, and future and career planning, thus only a portion of student inquiries are directly related to PR. Despite this, one staff member noted that inquiries relating to PR account for a significant portion of ISA visits. They suggested that approximately one-third of student visits include questions pertaining to PR and staying in Canada, signifying a high demand for PR-related support. Another staff member reported an even greater percentage at their institution—they estimated that 80-95% of advisor visits in the past school year included questions related to PR. This high demand would suggest that the institution must have adequate staff and resources to meet the demand. Both institutions mentioned employing RCIC or RISIA-certified ISA to address student inquiries, however they also mentioned that, even with those advisors, for reasons that will be discussed in the next section, they are unable to offer individual support to students with specific PR application-related questions.

One settlement service provider emphasized that international students, as temporary residents, are not within their mandate, hence they do not officially provide any types of support to them. Like several other service providers, the staff member reported that they try to handle international student inquiries as best they can by redirecting the students to resources that they believe can provide more support. All of the service providers cited the webpages of the IRCC as a primary source of information. Several staff reported that they make referrals to other organizations based on the specific needs of the individual that they were dealing with. One staff mentioned that they could not give international students any list of recommended organizations or agencies because they could not endorse particular groups. However, three other staff were able to recommend a few service providers that they tend to refer students to.

Notably, the one service provider who did suggest specific organizations to students was only able to make recommendations to resources outside of Guelph-Wellington

³ Occupations are assigned National Occupational Classification Code according to skill type and level. Since many PR applications require work experience at a minimum level of NOC code, it is helpful for international students to understand these codes and the types of jobs that would be able to support them with their PR applications.

(e.g. the Cambridge and Kitchener-Waterloo YMCA and the Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Center), suggesting that these services do not exist in Guelph or Wellington County. Outside of this, most service providers mentioned that they had conversations with students about how to do their own research online and find lawyers or independent immigration consultant firms, rather than provide students with a list of suggestions. Lastly, one staff member mentioned that they try to avoid redirecting students to other service providers, because they know that the service providers would be unable to provide the help that the students are seeking. In this case, the individual mentioned having a conversation to try to help the students plan the next steps to their application and how to handle each step on their own.

What are Challenges for Service Providers with Providing Support?

The service providers interviewed mentioned a number of interrelated challenges which prevented them from providing support with international students' PR applications. The biggest challenge that staff from settlement service organizations mentioned was that serving international students is **not within their mandate**. Settlement service organizations in Ontario are funded strictly to serve accepted refugees and newcomers in Canada, and hence they **do not receive funding to serve temporary residents**. Two staff members mentioned that, when they do receive inquiries from international students, they try their best to guide the students to other organizations or online resources that can help, however there is no guarantee that the other organizations are able to help them, nor that they will be able to find their answers online.

Staff from post-secondary institutions described a slightly different set of challenges compared to the settlement service organizations. The first challenge is that, depending on the institution, ISA may or **may not have RCIC certifications** to be able to address PR-related inquiries. One staff mentioned that they only recently hired an advisor that is a certified RISIA to meet the needs of the students. However, the focus of the RISIA is not to give advice and support with the PR application process (that is beyond the scope of RISIA), but to more adequately provide support regarding student visas and discuss the types of work permits that students would be eligible for after graduation. One staff at another institution mentioned that, even with RCIC-designated advisors, they are unable to provide advice to individuals because they would be overwhelmed by the **demand** for PR advising, hence they tend to recommend to students that they attend the general information workshops that they offer instead.

Additionally, responses from our interviews suggest that post-secondary institutions may be **unclear about the types of support that they should be providing** to international students. One service provider referenced the recently-released Budget 2019 by the federal government, in which the government is proposing investing \$147.9 million over five years to their international education strategy. However, they noted that the two main focuses of this strategy involve empowering Canadian citizens to study abroad and promoting Canadian institutions to "top-tier foreign students" overseas rather than supporting international students who are already studying in

Canada (Government of Canada, 2019, p.14). Both post-secondary institutions in Guelph-Wellington mentioned the high demand for support with the PR application process, but also felt that they were unable to adequately meet those demands with the resources that they currently have available to international students. Considering that international students are ineligible to apply for most PR streams until after graduating, it may not be part of post-secondary institutions' mandate to provide services relating to PR, but it is also not part of the government's international education strategy. Taken together, these facts suggest a grey area, whereby the government and post-secondary institutions may be unclear about **where their role in supporting international students ends**.

Finally, another challenge pertains to **who should be providing support** to international students that wish to apply for PR. Currently, it seems that is not a focus of the governments, post-secondary institutions or settlement service providers in Guelph-Wellington to provide this support. While recognizing that it is not in the mandate of post-secondary institutions or settlement service organizations to encourage international students to immigrate to Canada, the results from our key interviews suggest that there is no support network nor resources in place for those who seek to apply for PR. Several reports and publications described the complicated situation by which international students are recognized as strong candidates to become permanent residents, but service providers cannot attempt to sway their decision about whether or not to remain in Canada post-graduation ("Value beyond dollars", 2018).

It should be noted that the challenges described by service providers thus far focused specifically on dealing with inquiries about types of PR and the application process. Within the interviews with service provider staff, many of them mentioned receiving inquiries about PR in relation to work, family, health care coverage, funding and financial challenges, and structural barriers, which also influence an international student's decision and ability to stay in Canada. While a discussion of these topics is beyond the scope of the current report, some of the literature also challenges the conventional belief that international students are better-equipped to live in Canada when compared to other immigrants and thus require less support (Covell et al., 2015; Neatby & Yogesh, 2017; Scott, Safdar, Trilokekar, & El Masri, 2015).

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN ONTARIO AND CANADA

Based on some suggestions made within the key interviews and programs listed existing literature, the following section explores some of the initiatives that post-secondary institutions in Ontario and other parts of Canada have implemented to support international students. Additionally, it discusses some of the initiatives that other provincial governments have taken to support students who wish to apply for PR. This snapshot of different initiatives is by no means a comprehensive review of the most innovative approaches across the country. Instead, the approaches described should be seen as examples of how service providers in Guelph-Wellington might consider modelling future support.

Province of British Columbia

In terms of services to support international students, the Government of British Columbia has taken steps to ensure that international students can get the support that they need. In 2015, the BC Ministry of Jobs, Trade and Technology provided funding so that post-secondary international students could access support services offered by settlement service organizations (Armos, 2018). As a result, British Columbia seems to have the most extensive resources available online through their provincially-funded website, welcomebc.ca. From this website, international students can find detailed information about the different PR streams including links to required documents, processing times, how to qualify and strengthen an application, and how and where to find representatives to assist with the application process. The website also contains a number of newcomer guides which are offered in 15 different languages and cover a range of different topics. Under the section for temporary residents, the website includes a list of contact information for “Provincially-Funded Service Providers for Temporary Foreign Residents”. This list (which was updated in January 2019) is noted to be valid until March 31, 2021, hence international students and other temporary residents would be able to call or visit service providers in their area.

Another key association in British Columbia is the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of British Columbia (AMSSA). Funded mainly by the Province of BC and the IRCC, AMSSA provides support to service providers and community stakeholder agencies through providing resources on their website, publishing migration-related fact sheets, and facilitating a network which connects service providers in the province. One example is a fact sheet that they produced in May 2019 titled “Overview of Immigration Pathways for International Students”. This fact sheet, designed for frontline staff to reference or distribute, provides a standard outline of immigration pathways for international students with links to official provincial and federal websites (Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies, 2019).

University of Victoria

As part of their mandate, in 2016 the University of Victoria launched their International Plan in which they acknowledge the strengths of building a strong international community within the university as well as making connections to those outside of it (University of Victoria, 2016). One of the five categories in this plan includes a focus on enhancing the international student experience. Within this focus, the main objectives are: to “implement an effective international student experience framework that aligns with the diverse needs of the international student population” and to “expand and appropriately resource the International Student Centre to make it a central destination for outside-of-the-classroom programming, supports, advising, and services for international students” (University of Victoria, 2016, p. 12-13). As a result, the university provides a number of services including workshops, advisors, a centralized hub for international student services, an open space for international students to access and connect, and a number of community initiatives to encourage international students to meet new friends and be a part of their local community (Cirillo, 2018). Additionally, the section for inbound international students on the University of Victoria website includes detailed sections regarding immigration and working in Canada post-graduation and recommends that students see an international advisor for further details. In terms of addressing specific PR-related inquiries, a staff member at the university mentioned that the RCIC and RISIA-certified advisors answer inquiries that are within their scope of practice, and mainly refer students out to external agencies if necessary. Specifically, they listed the Intercultural Association of Victoria and the Victoria Immigration and Refugee Center Society as two organizations that are best-suited to address any further concerns of international students.

Maritime Provinces: The Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program

According to a report by the Canadian Bureau for International Education, the Maritime Provinces (consisting of Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick) collectively host around 6% of international students in Canada and retain the fewest number of these students post-graduation compared to other provinces (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2018). In recent years, the Maritime Provinces have also struggled with labour market challenges, as those within the area move to other provinces or leave the country. As an innovative approach to address the labour shortage and retain more international students in the area, the federal government, in collaboration with those provinces, launched the Atlantic Immigration Pilot (AIP) on February 20, 2018. This program was based on Nova Scotia’s success since they adjusted their requirements to the Nova Scotia Nominee Program in 2014 (Grant, 2014). Although the AIP is not specifically geared towards international students, they benefit the most from the program because it expedites the PR-application process for recent graduates who have job offers, allows up to 24-months for graduates to apply and does not require them to spend additional years post-graduation residing and working in the province (which is a requirement of other programs). On March 1, 2019, the Government of Canada announced that it would be extending the AIP for two more years (Genest, 2019).

Memorial University Newfoundland

Memorial University Newfoundland (MUN) is a post-secondary institution which places a strong emphasis on educating and retaining international students within the province (Pilgrim, 2018). One of the main parts of their Strategic Internationalization Plan 2020 is a focus on attracting and retaining global talent. To achieve this, the university's Strategic Internationalization Plan suggests a focus on building a "strong post-graduation transition programming and support of welcoming community initiatives which nurture relationships between the host culture and newcomers" (Memorial University Newfoundland, 2015, p.15). In addition to offering students one-on-one advising sessions with immigration advisors, the MUN internationalization office website contains extensive immigration information including instructions for how to obtain documents for the application process. The website is written in simple English with sequential information about the benefits of staying in Newfoundland, program options and eligibility, and how to receive help with PR applications.

Queen's University

Like the University of Victoria and MUN, the International Center at Queen's University maintains an extensive website with information and resources for international students pertaining to before, during and after their time at Queen's. One section titled "After Queen's" contains information about health care and insurance providers for temporary workers, how to extend study permits, and links to the different immigration programs for those who wish to immigrate.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, findings from this exploratory research seem to indicate that there is a gap between the supports that international students require to transition to PR and the services offered by service providers. In the case of settlement service organizations, the main barrier is that it is outside their mandate to support temporary residents such as international students. For post-secondary institutions, their ability to support international students with PR-related concerns depends on the institution's mandate and the amount of staff and resources that are allocated for this purpose. If post-secondary institutions do not employ a sufficient number of ISA with RCIC certifications, their staff would lack capacity and qualifications to provide advice about PR applications.

One potential limitation of our study is that these conclusions are based on responses from a handful of service providers in Guelph-Wellington. It is also worth restating that this study focused on what service providers perceived to be the challenges in supporting international students, and the gaps between students' needs and what the service providers are able to offer. While we plan to examine this issue from the perspective of international students, their perspective is not included in this report.

Recommendations

Based on the literature review and the findings from our informant interviews, we offer the following recommendations for stakeholders and policy makers who we perceive to be the main stakeholders in this issue:

Governments should recognize that there are many international students at post-secondary institutions who wish to obtain PR and immigrate to Canada. Due to the complexities of the application process, many of these students require additional support. One way that instructions about the types of PR and the application process could be simplified is by consolidating information about the different streams of PR, application process and links to service providers who are able to serve international students on an official comprehensive website. This website would be a valuable reference for both international students and service providers who wish to help them. Second, the federal or provincial governments could consider enabling settlement services to support international students as part of their mandate. We suggest that this could be done through allowing settlement service organizations a more flexible use of the funding received. Additionally, many of the staff interviewed mentioned that information workshops about different parts of the PR application process were helpful, so the federal government could consider continuing to partner with post-secondary institutions and settlement services to host more workshops with IRCC representatives.

Recognizing that there is a grey area in terms of whether **post-secondary institutions** should provide support for international students with PR-related inquiries, we

recommend that these institutions first examine whether it is one of their goals to enable their students to successfully obtain PR after graduation. If it is a priority to assist international students with the PR application process, post-secondary institutions should consider increasing the number of ISA with RCIC certifications. They should also continue to work in collaboration with settlement service organizations and governments to increase the number and types of workshops about the PR application process. Another way to help reduce the number of inquiries that ISA receive about PR applications could be to include a section on the institution's website with information, resources and links relating to permanent residence applications. As mentioned, each institution can decide whether they provide support for PR-related inquiries, however, based on the results of this study, we would recommend providing this support. Considering that existing literature and our interviews suggest that many international students are interested in immigrating to Canada, institutions that can provide evidence that their alumni are able to successfully receive permanent residence might appeal more to prospective students.

Recognizing that it is not currently part of **settlement service organizations'** mandate to serve international students, it would nevertheless be helpful if front-line staff had a clear and consistent protocol in the event that they receive inquiries from international students. One way that they could do this would be through having a list of services and resources to redirect international students to. It might also be useful include relevant information on organizations' website to increase visibility and facilitate access.

Lastly, for **Local Immigration Partnerships** and other similar organizations, this study highlights the importance of continuing to bring together stakeholders to identify gaps in local services. Many of the staff who were consulted through this research were excited to have the opportunity to discuss the gaps that they saw within their service network, and some of the innovative approaches taken in other provinces seem outline steps that could be taken by service providers in Guelph-Wellington. We hope that these suggestions could help improve the services provided to international students in the future.

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