TOURISM INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION OF **CANADA**

ASSOCIATION DE L'INDUSTRIE TOURISTIQUE DU **CANADA**

November 21, 2024

The Honourable Marc Miller
Minister of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada
365 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 1L1

RE: IRCC Policy Changes Impacting International Students and Newcomers, and Recommendations for Strengthening Canada's Tourism Sector Workforce

Dear Minister Miller:

I am writing on behalf of the Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC) and our partners to address recent IRCC policy changes related to the Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP) program and Canada's Immigration Levels Plan. I also ask that you consider our sector's recommendations for strategic investments to attract and build the next generation of Canada's tourism workforce.

Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada's (IRCC) recently announced a detailed list of 966 Canadian academic programmes that would provide post-graduation work permit (PGWP)- eligibility to international students. Notably, this announcement excluded all international students studying at community colleges and those enrolled in public colleges and polytechnics in programs related to hospitality, tourism and culinary education.

This change has significant implications for the tourism and hospitality industries. Our sector draws talent from a diverse higher education system and, in particular, relies on the skills and contributions of students in college and polytechnic programs which are at the forefront of training skilled workers for tourism careers.

International Students' Strong Workforce Contributions

While we understand the intent to address labour shortages in certain industries, excluding international students in tourism, hospitality, and culinary programs from the PGWP will likely cause material harm to a critical pipeline of skilled labour, exacerbating talent attraction and retention challenges for tourism employers and magnifying long-standing labour shortages in Canada's visitor economy.

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We are concerned that recent exclusions overlook regional economic drivers and the unique needs of local employers who rely on skilled international graduates to meet staffing demands. The revised list of PGWP-eligible programs was based solely on national labor market data, which we believe is insufficient for such policy decisions. We urge a broader approach that includes a regional focus.

Tourism's Workforce Recovery

As you know, the tourism sector was one of the hardest hit during the pandemic, and excluding its essential educational programs from the new permit system will have lasting effects on efforts to fully rebuild its workforce. These impacts will be felt across Canada's economy and communities for years to come.

Reductions in the available labour pool will directly affect thousands of tourism-related businesses in Canada that are already facing challenges in finding the right talent to grow and succeed. It is critical that tourism programs at public colleges and polytechnics be included in the list of eligible PGWP programs, to mitigate these challenges and ensure a robust tourism workforce in the years to come.

Strategic Investments in Workforce Development are Required

Maintaining strong employment levels is essential to keep our tourism workforce resilient and competitive globally. This is why tourism stakeholders are focused on building long-term resilience. However, recent policy changes were made without new programs, investments, or support to mitigate their impact.

With record unemployment among youth, newcomers, and underrepresented communities, the tourism sector has a unique opportunity to turn workforce challenges into solutions that uplift both individuals and communities. Achieving this, however, requires strong, strategic investments in the tourism workforce, and partnerships on key cross-sector initiatives, such as those led by Tourism HR Canada (THRC).

We believe that new strategic investments aimed at bolstering the participation of Canada's youth, Indigenous peoples, and newcomers in rewarding tourism careers are necessary to offset the impacts of recent IRCC policy changes. TIAC and our sector partners have developed recommendations for key investments which align with the government's goals for economic and social prosperity.

Conclusion

We appreciate your understanding of how recent IRCC policy changes impact our sector's businesses and essential hospitality, tourism, and culinary educational programs. By prioritizing new strategic investments in the tourism workforce as part of

the 2024 Fall Economic Statement and the 2025 Federal Budget, we can strengthen tourism's economic contributions across Canada's communities.

We strongly believe that meeting with you is essential to discuss these priorities and work together on solutions to strengthen Canada's tourism industry. We are requesting a meeting at your earliest convenience to share our insights and explore collaborative strategies for meaningful progress. TIAC's Director, Policy and Government Affairs, Nik Mills, would be pleased to help facilitate the scheduling of a meeting. He may be reached at nmills@tiac-aitc.ca or (613) 889-4642.

Sincerely,



Beth Potter
President and CEO, TIAC



Walt Judas
CEO, TIABC



Andrew Siegwart
President and CEO, TIAO



Craig Foley
CEO, Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador



Corryn Clemence
CEO, TIAPEI



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Darren Reeder
President and CEO, TIAA



Darlene Grant Fiander
President, TIANS



Dylan Soo
Executive Director, TIA Yukon



John Gunter
Chair, Board of Directors, TIA Manitoba

CC.

The Honourable Soraya Martinez Ferrada, Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec

The Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages