

FMRI



FORUM OF MINISTERS
RESPONSIBLE FOR IMMIGRATION

Federal, provincial and territorial immigration Ministers meet to plan for the future of Canada's immigration system

News release

March 10, 2023 – Halifax, Nova Scotia – The Forum of Ministers Responsible for Immigration (FMRI) met today at the Canadian Museum of Immigration in Halifax, Nova Scotia to continue their discussions on the future of immigration in Canada. Ministers focused on advancing joint initiatives to respond to pan-Canadian immigration priorities and were pleased with progress made towards improving the effectiveness of Canada's immigration system to meet economic and regional needs.

In follow-up to the meeting last July, Ministers discussed increasing provincial/territorial (PT) involvement in economic immigrant selection, increased allocations in the Provincial/Territorial Nominee Programs (PNPs), finding ways to improve application processing times, reducing duplication and providing greater agency over PNPs. Ministers welcomed IRCC's first ever Multi-Year Allocation Plan, which includes an unprecedented 44% growth in PNP allocations for 2023. The plan also includes notional allocations for 2024 and 2025. Ministers also had productive conversations about settlement and integration efforts, Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) and Canada's humanitarian response to the developing situation in Ukraine.

Canada's Immigration Ministers condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine and discussed how Ukrainians and their family members who are fleeing Russia's aggression and violence have been welcomed and supported. Ministers reviewed the initial results of the Ukraine Rapid Impact Evaluation, taking stock of the policies and supports put in place related to Canada's immigration response. Ministers discussed the impacts of the response on PTs, communities and municipalities, as well as immigration stakeholders. Ministers continued to emphasize the need for a collaborative multilateral approach to cost and information sharing to ensure newcomers are welcomed in a coordinated and comprehensive manner. PT Ministers urged Canada to clarify the timeframe of the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) and to extend temporary measures, including the Canada-Ukraine Transitional Assistance Initiative and temporary hotel accommodations, to assist displaced Ukrainians arriving in Canada. Ministers raised the need to have future discussions on pathways to Permanent Residency for Ukrainians for those who seek to remain in Canada or are unable to return home to Ukraine.

Some Ministers raised the high volumes of asylum claimants crossing into Canada between ports of entry and reflected on their capacity to manage the new arrivals. The importance of continuing to work together in supporting vulnerable people who come to Canada to seek asylum was noted.

Ministers discussed collective priorities on FCR, particularly as it relates to internationally-educated healthcare professionals (IEHPs), with a focus on the important role of immigration and the FMRI in responding to labour shortage issues, with PTs collaborating towards better credential recognition for new Canadians. Ministers agreed to collectively focus on key areas including in the selection stage, understanding the complex regulatory environment, advancing the quality of FCR pre-arrival information sharing and enhancing federal, provincial and territorial (FPT) collaboration, particularly with the Forum of Labour Market Ministers.

Ministers recommitted to working together to deliver a more agile, client-centered economic immigration system where there is increased PT involvement in the selection of economic immigrants. Ministers noted the distinctive and essential FPT government roles and responsibilities that contribute to Canada's immigration system, and the need to maintain complementary and flexible programs. PT Ministers received updates on the development of category-based selection through the Express Entry economic immigration platform and joint opportunities to reduce duplication in application processing, including streamlined assessments of PNP applications. Ministers discussed the necessity of improving federal immigration processing times for both temporary and permanent pathways. The FMRI placed a collective focus on ensuring the effectiveness of the immigration system in meeting economic and regional needs and continued to recognize that PT knowledge of regional labour market needs is an advantage that must be leveraged.

Ministers considered how to continue to advance FPT collaboration on immigration targets and regional economic immigration, including key programs such as the PNP and Atlantic Immigration Program (AIP). The PNP remains the primary tool for regional immigration and addressing employers' labour market needs. Ministers agreed that the regionalization of immigration remains important and that, as immigration targets increase, absorptive capacity of communities to welcome newcomers needs to be examined.

Ministers reflected on past service delivery models, the current approach, and what may be needed in the future for the delivery of settlement services, with an emphasis on exploring opportunities to better support outcomes and retention, including greater PT involvement and enhanced funding. Ministers took stock of current federal and PT roles in settlement services, recognizing both successes and challenges, as well as opportunities going forward. Ministers noted the value of locally-informed, flexible and responsive services that support immigrants' integration and retention in their PT of landing. Ministers agreed to discuss service delivery models and the role of the federal, provincial, territorial governments at the next FMRI meeting.

Ministers agreed to take steps to ensure public support for immigration remains strong, and to continue to work together to ensure that long-term FPT immigration and settlement goals contribute to Canada's current and future prosperity. Minister Fraser invited his colleagues to contribute to the recently launched Strategic Immigration Review.

Note: *As requested by the Government of Quebec, the Quebec minister responsible for immigration holds observer status at the Federal-Provincial/Territorial Ministers' Table. Under the Canada-Québec Accord, Quebec assumes sole responsibility for establishing immigration levels, and for the selection, francization*

and integration of immigrants. In areas under its responsibility, Quebec develops its policies and programs, and legislates, regulates and sets its own standards.

Prince Edward Island officials participated as observers due to a provincial election.

About the FMRI: The Forum of Ministers Responsible for Immigration is an FPT decision-making body with the goal of supporting a flexible, timely and effective immigration system for Canada. In 2020, FPT Ministers established a vision for immigration to Canada and a mission for the FMRI. The vision articulates a co-ordinated strategic plan for a system that strengthens the positive economic and social benefits of immigration in all parts of Canada. The FMRI's mission is to advance joint immigration priorities and to enhance Canada's immigration policies and programs.

Quotes:

"Immigration is key to maximizing Canada's economic potential, whether it is addressing labour shortages in the short term, or attracting the skills our communities will need for the next generation. I value the relationships with my provincial and territorial colleagues, knowing that these partnerships are crucial to strengthening and improving Canada's immigration system, and contributing to our long-term economic growth. Today, we had productive discussions on shared priorities such as sharing the benefits of immigration through enhancing the Provincial Nominee Program, reducing barriers to Foreign Credential Recognition, addressing irregular migration, and continuing our proud humanitarian tradition by supporting newcomers from Afghanistan, Ukraine, and other vulnerable populations around the world. I look forward to continuing our conversation so that together, we can build an immigration system that is client-centred, and responsive to our country's social and economic needs."

- The Honourable Sean Fraser, P.C., M.P., Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and federal co-chair of the Forum of Ministers responsible for Immigration.

"Partnership, collaboration, and a shared vision for enhancing Canada's immigration policies and programs are at the centre of how federal, provincial, and territorial governments navigate the ever-changing immigration landscape. Through today's meeting we looked to build momentum to further clarify the roles and responsibilities of our respective governments to successfully attract, integrate, and retain immigrants. We discussed how to address emerging challenges related to accessible, affordable, and appropriate housing as we continue to see unprecedented growth through our various immigration streams and humanitarian efforts. We must ensure newcomers, immigrants and asylum seekers have the proper supports to fully participate and succeed in a welcoming Canadian society. As provinces and territories, we are proud of the considerable progress made and aim to strengthen our partnership with the federal government toward establishing a flexible, complementary, and predictable immigration system that addresses regional demographic issues and current and future labour market needs."

- The Honourable Arlene Dunn, Minister Responsible for Immigration and Minister Responsible for Opportunities New Brunswick and provincial-territorial co-chair of the Forum of Ministers responsible for Immigration.

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