

ISSUE

With approximately 250,000 new immigrants coming to Canada each year, immigration continues to have a significant impact on the social, economic and political landscapes of the nation. New Canadians have helped build vibrant communities and a strong workforce across the country for decades, and will continue to contribute to our collective growth and prosperity in the future.

CONTEXT

Since 2008, the federal government has embarked upon a significant system of change to the Canadian immigration system through the use of Ministerial Instructions. Through this instrument, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has been empowered to provide direct instruction to immigration officers on Canada's immigration policy and practice without the need to go through Parliament. This process has resulted in rapid change to immigration policy; change that will have lasting impact on the nature of immigration, and thus of the immigrant population in Canada for decades to come.

An example of these changes has been Canada's shift to an Expression of Interest (or Express Entry) model, whereby prospective immigrants must complete an "expression of interest" before being invited to apply to immigrate to Canada. Under this model, prospective immigrants, who qualify on all other aspects of the immigration application, are screened and invited to apply to immigrate based on the economic and labour force needs of Canada, its provinces and territories, as well as major employers and employer groups.

The purported goal of this shift is a more effective and efficient immigration system that more appropriately

selects immigrants based on current economic conditions. However, this model represents a significant shift toward an immigration system that is geared only toward the economy and labour market. There are further concerns that, in the name of efficiency, the Express Entry Model places undue power over immigration decisions in the hands of employers and employer advocacy groups, taking it out of the hands of Canadians.

Canada needs an efficient and effective immigration but there needs to be significant checks and balances in place to ensure that the system supports the social and economic needs of the nation.

QUESTIONS

- In your opinion, what is the overarching goal of Canada's immigration program?
- How would you address the potential imbalances in the selection process under the Express Entry Model?
- Do you believe that it is appropriate to invest so much power in the Minister of Immigration through the use of Ministerial Instructions?

RESOURCES

For more information and additional fact sheets in this series: <http://spno.ca/canada-votes-2015>