



BRING BACK THE IMMIGRATION INTERVIEW PROCESS

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In the past couple of years, Canada's immigration program has moved away from the focus on the family class, and is instead targeting those in the skilled worker class. The government has gone a step further than this, by setting targets for each category inside the skilled worker class.

This has helped to address the situation of far too many jobs going unfilled in Canada, especially in the high tech sector. However, more can and should be done to ensure that jobs requiring foreign skilled workers are filled by the best talent the world has to offer.

Over the years, Canada's skilled worker program has drifted away from a system where visa officers selected the best candidates available. Instead, it has become a self-selection program. Gone are the days of every potential immigrant being interviewed by a visa officer. Instead, suitability is now determined by paperwork.

By getting back to an interview-based system, immigration to Canada can become more efficient and successful for Canadians and foreigners alike. Just as a good employer would never hire someone based on a resume alone,

Canada should not offer a work visa based only on an application form. Canadian visa officers should meet and speak with each skilled worker candidate. Naturally it would be impossible to meet with everyone who applies, but applicants who have been screened by some objective criteria can be interviewed relatively easily. We can insulate the system against bias, in cases where applicants are to be turned away, by insisting that program managers concur in any such rejections.

Moving back to an interview component will require some changes in our approach overseas. Visa officers sitting behind bulletproof glass using broken microphones and surrounded by Kevlar walls do not present the right image of Canada to anyone. While we do not deny that security for our visa officers is a concern, we believe there is a need to balance that concern against the image being presented to foreign immigrants. In the case of skilled workers in particular, since they must submit their papers in advance before they are called in for an interview, they can be effectively screened in virtually all cases. They should be treated with more dignity than what is currently the norm.

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become more efficient and successful for Canadians and foreigners alike. The sooner we return to it, the better.

We recently sent a letter to Jason Kenney, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, which addresses these and other immigration concerns. We will keep you posted on the outcome of any correspondence.

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