

Ottawa Journal: building on improvements to Canada's Caregiver Program

Canada's Caregiver Program allows Canadian families to recruit foreign nationals to live and work in their homes to provide care for children, elderly persons, and persons with disabilities, when there is a shortage of Canadians available to fill the position. Our Government values the contributions that caregivers make to Canadian families and the economy. Following extensive consultations with caregivers, our Government is responding to their concerns with significant improvements to the Caregiver Program, while also working to ensure that Canadians always have the first chance at available jobs.

In recent years, our Government has already delivered important improvements to the Caregiver Program, including making open work permits available to live-in caregivers immediately upon applying for permanent residence, increasing the amount of time available for a caregiver to complete the work requirement, adopting a standardized employment contract for live-in caregivers, and arranging emergency processing for new work permits in cases where caregivers have been abused by their employer.

And now, our Government is building on these improvements.

We are removing the requirement that foreign nationals live in the home of their employer. This will help better protect caregivers from vulnerable situations, including uncompensated overtime, poor working conditions, or worse. In addition, the live-in requirement for foreign caregivers has kept caregiver wages low, hindering opportunities for Canadian caregivers. By removing this requirement, this will help boost caregiver wages and result in greater opportunities for Canadian caregivers.

Our Government's improvements to the Caregiver Program will also enhance the efficiency of the permanent residence application process for caregivers. To address the backlog of caregiver applications, we nearly doubled permanent resident admission levels for caregivers in 2014 and continue to ramp up the processing of applications.

Furthermore, to ensure that going forward permanent residence applications are processed within six months, we are launching the Caring for Children Pathway and Caring for People with High Medical Needs Pathway programs. Following the completion of the application's requirements, these programs will help reunite caregivers who have spouses and children at home more rapidly.

Our Government is proud to support caregivers who deliver important support to Canadian families. We are reforming the Caregiver Program to improve processing times for permanent residence, reunite caregivers with their families, and protect caregivers from potential abuse.

By David Tilson, MP