

POLICY BRIEF: Urgencies Surrounding the Home Care Worker Immigration Pilot Program

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Executive Summary

Despite promises of permanent residence (PR) from Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), recent changes to the care worker pilot programs, including the Home Care Worker Immigration Pilot (HCWIP), have left many workers in highly uncertain and vulnerable positions. The study, conducted by the Migrant Care Worker Precarity Project, a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)-funded research study from 2022–2030, highlights four key issues:

1. **Pause to the Home Care Worker Immigration Pilot:** IRCC’s decision not to re-open the HCWIP permanent resident application portal on March 31, 2026, means that migrant care workers who are already living and working in Canada — for the first time in 36 years — have no way to actualize IRCC’s promise of permanent residency and are left in highly precarious immigration and employment positions.
2. **Permanent Residency Processing Delays:** Workers from all care worker immigration streams face extensive processing delays, from 24 - 70 months, up to 500% more than internal processing targets. These delays have resulted in more than 30 thousand applications to the programs remaining in administrative limbo.
3. **Migrant Care Workers in Canada are Struggling:** Migrant care workers in Canada are struggling to navigate life and work under the changing (and now closed) pilot programs. Their children continue to age, workers face losing their own status, and workers experience undue stress and health inequities.
4. **Inadequate Data and lack of Transparent Reporting:** As of April 2026, we have yet to receive current program statistics and documentation, despite ATIP requests made in March 2025. Our research continues to document the failure to collect and publish data on care workers’ working conditions, program effectiveness, and longitudinal trends.

Our Recommendations:

1. Immediately reopen the HCWIP portal, accept care worker PR applications, and provide migrant care workers with an open work permit while they wait for their PR. Remove unnecessary English and educational requirements to simplify the PR application process for care workers already in Canada.
2. Provide PR for care workers in Canada and ensure PR upon arrival without caps and sub-caps.
3. To support family reunification, freeze the age of dependents at the time of the worker’s arrival in Canada so that dependent children do not run the risk of “aging out” of the dependent category.
4. Implement a regularization program for out-of-status workers and provide out-of-status migrant care workers with open work permits while regularization is being established.
5. Improve efficiency to meet internal IRCC migrant care worker PR application processing time targets. Provide migrant care workers in the backlog with open work permits.
6. IRCC must meet its legislated responsibilities to release requested information on the HCWIP and care workers’ PR applications while also rigorously tracking and reporting migrant care worker numbers, wages, and working hours.