

[La version français]

Dear Friends,

The federal government has delayed the introduction of an immigration status regularization program despite massive organizing efforts led by undocumented refugees and migrants, and widespread support from civil society organizations and groups across Canada. The delay has profound negative effects on people without immigration status.

[Minister Miller has said](#) there is no consensus on the issue among Canadians.

A coalition of organizations invites you to sign onto this open letter, calling on the government to implement a regularization program without delay. It is based on a [joint OpEd](#) published on July 3, 2024 in Hill Times.

Please read the Open Letter below and [complete this form](#) to endorse as an organization or individual.

If you have any questions please contact communications@ocasi.org

OPEN LETTER:

Immigrant and diaspora organizations and allies back regularization for undocumented people

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau and Minister Miller,

We are writing to you as leaders of immigrant and diaspora organizations across Canada and refugee, migrant and immigrant allies. Many of us have communicated to you previously about our support for a regularization program for people without immigration status in Canada.

We have learned that your government's plans for a regularization program are delayed or stalled because of a perceived lack of consensus on the regularization of undocumented people. This hesitancy ignores the moral and economic imperatives at stake. Canada has a responsibility to offer protection and stability to those who have long contributed to our society from the shadows. Contrary to concerns expressed by

some about “queue jumping,” many Canadians, especially within immigrant communities, support regularization. Here’s why.

A Matter of Justice and Solidarity

Many of our organizations have provided services and support to, and advocated with people without immigration status. We, our clients, and many immigrants, like other Canadian citizens, personally know non-status people. Undocumented people are members of the communities we serve, members of our networks, friends, partners, neighbors, family, and coworkers. They care for our children, build our homes, and deliver our food. Their lack of status makes them vulnerable to exploitation, from unfair wages to denial of healthcare.

Many have fled war, persecution, or severe economic hardship, only to face a precarious existence due to barriers to legal status. Immigrant communities overwhelmingly support regularization because we understand these hardships and empathize with those trapped by the unforgiving web of the immigration system.

Understanding the Path to Becoming Undocumented

It’s crucial to dispel the myth that undocumented immigrants are “queue jumpers.” Becoming undocumented is not a choice but often a consequence of an opaque and unfair immigration system. Many arrived legally as refugees or migrant workers but faced insurmountable obstacles in renewing their status or obtaining permanent residency.

Immigrants know, through personal experience or those of our parents and grandparents, that access to permanent residency is fraught with high fees, long waits, and complex requirements that many cannot meet. Thousands fall through the cracks not because they are trying to subvert the system, but because the system fails to provide fair options. As service providers and advocates, we have seen these effects first-hand, and the impact it has on families and communities. When immigrants see undocumented people, they know it could be them. Regularization is not about rewarding lawbreakers; it’s about rectifying systemic failings that leave many vulnerable and uncertain.

Regularization: A Pathway, Not a Shortcut

The idea that regularizing undocumented people amounts to “jumping the queue” is a misconception. Regularization does not mean granting immediate permanent residency

without scrutiny. It means allowing individuals to apply for permanent resident status, subject to the same assessments as any other applicant. This would place them in the queue where they belong, acknowledging their long-term contributions and connections to Canada.

Regularization programs can ensure fairness and integrity, offering a transparent process where individuals must meet specific criteria, such as proving residence in Canada. This is not about creating shortcuts but about integrating those already part of our communities into the legal framework, enabling them to contribute more fully to society.

Economic and Social Benefits

Regularizing undocumented immigrants is not just a humanitarian gesture; it's an economic boon. These individuals are already contributing significantly to our economy, often in sectors facing severe shortages. By bringing them out of the shadows, we can enhance their wages, productivity, purchasing power and tax contributions. For community organizations, it will reduce the struggle to find creative ways to help undocumented people meet their basic needs in the face of lack of access to most programs and services. According to research done on France applied to Canada, regularization would grow the economy by over \$28 billion dollars and as Minister Miller said, that's more than the economic growth from multiple oil and gas pipelines. This growth will fund public infrastructure and services, which will result in improving the working and living conditions of all Canadians including recent immigrants.

For undocumented women immigrants facing gender based violence, their extreme vulnerability exposes them to unspeakable and unrelenting economic, physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Regularization will reduce the most significant barrier to them to seek help when facing gender based violence. It should be of high priority to the government that has prioritized eradicating gender based violence in Canada.

Regularization promotes social cohesion and stability, and reduces exploitative labour practices. When people live without fear of deportation, they are more likely to invest in their communities, seek education for their children, and pursue opportunities. This leads to stronger, more integrated communities where everyone has a stake in our collective success. Undocumented people already live here, regularization is about including them in the family of rights.

The time is now.

Canada has welcomed diverse communities of newcomers over the years. This has strengthened us. We cannot let fears and misconceptions dictate policies that leave hundreds of thousands in a perpetual state of limbo and fear. In a time of growing xenophobia, abandoning regularization will send the wrong signal to immigrant voters about the current government's priorities. The decision to regularize undocumented immigrants aligns with our values of fairness, compassion, and inclusivity.

The time for change is now. Immigrants are ready to support this initiative. We urge you to act quickly to implement a comprehensive and inclusive immigration status regularization program.

Signed by:

1. Anglican Diocese of Toronto
2. AMSSA
3. BLAC Legal Action Centre
4. Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers
5. Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture
6. Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR)
7. Canadian Mental Health Association York Region and South Simcoe
8. Caregiver Connections Education and Support Organization
9. Citizens for Public Justice - CJL Foundation
10. Co Culture Collective
11. Collaborative Network to End Exploitation
12. Colour of Poverty - Colour of Change
13. Community Development Council Durham (CDCD)
14. CUIAS Immigrant Services
15. Family Service Toronto
16. Faraday Law
17. FCJ Refugee Centre
18. Foyer Du Monde
19. Healthy Muslim Families
20. HIV Legal Network
21. Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba, Inc
22. Immigration and Refugee Legal Clinic
23. Immigrant Services Society of BC
24. JFS Ottawa
25. Kababayan Multicultural Centre
26. KAIROS Canada
27. Law Union of Ontario
28. Madhu Verma Migrant Justice Centre

29. Maggie's Toronto Sex Workers Action Project
30. Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations
31. Migrants Workers Alliance
32. Multi-Agency Partnership of BC
33. National Farmers Union in New Brunswick
34. Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre
35. OCASI - Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants
36. PACE Society
37. Pronet L.U.N.E
38. Refugee Lawyers Association
39. Rexdale Women's Centre
40. Safe Harbour Outreach Project
41. Service Jésuite des réfugiés
42. Settlement Assistance & Family Support Services
43. Sex Workers Advisory Network of Sudbury
44. Sex Workers of Winnipeg Action Coalition
45. Silent Voice Canada Inc.
46. Skills for Change
47. Social Planning Toronto
48. South Asian Women's Rights Organization
49. Stella, l'aime de Maimie
50. SWAN Vancouver
51. SWAP Hamilton
52. Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes
53. The Chi for Peace
54. The Neighbourhood Group Community Services
55. Toronto People with AIDS Foundation
56. Toronto Quaker Meeting
57. Trans Pride Toronto
58. Vancouver Neighbourhood Food Networks
59. Workers' Action Centre
60. YWCA Canada
61. YWCA Hamilton
62. YWCA Toronto
63. Yukon Status of Women Council
64. Z. Ramji Associates Inc.