

October 13, 2026

An Open Letter to Alberta Voters

On October 19th, Albertans will vote on 10 referendum questions. Not surprisingly, much of the attention remains focussed on the question of separation. As a result, the nine other questions have received far less discussion, including those under the heading of immigration which propose significant changes to current policies and practices.

The private foundations which have authored this letter share a commitment to the fair and equitable treatment of all persons. We are concerned that the proposals set out in the questions on immigration do not meet this commitment.

Alberta, like the rest of Canada, benefits greatly from the contributions of immigrants and newcomers, including those who come to live in the province on a temporary basis. They are our neighbours, our colleagues and our friends. They work in all sectors of the economy, volunteer in our communities and contribute significantly to Alberta's richness and diversity.

And yet the referendum questions overlook these contributions. Instead, they amplify misunderstandings about immigration, propose new limits or restrictions on non-permanent residents' access to publicly funded services and raise concerns about voting in elections.

Question 1 asks Albertans whether they support the Government of Alberta taking greater control over immigration to decrease immigration levels and placing a priority on economic migration, with Albertans having the first priority on new employment opportunities. These things are already taking place.

Questions 2, 3 and 4 propose new limits or restrictions on non-permanent residents' access to provincially funded programs such as health care, education and social services. These changes are unfair and unnecessary and will potentially result in the children of temporary foreign workers being denied access to public education and international students and other adults losing access to health care.

Question 5, which is not a question about immigration, proposes that proof of citizenship be a requirement of voting, despite there being no evidence of voter fraud.

So, what do Albertans need to know before they cast their ballots on the immigration questions included as part of the referendum?

They need to know that there is no evidence of widespread voter fraud in Alberta and that it is those citizens without passports or other documentation, typically the more vulnerable or marginalized members of our society, who will potentially be prevented from exercising their right to vote should new proof of citizenship requirements be introduced.

They need to know that the province does not face challenges from uncontrolled immigration and that recent changes in immigration policy have significantly reduced the number of immigrants who come to the province, both as permanent and non-permanent residents.

They need to know that the majority of immigrants who come to Alberta, with permanent residence status, are economic migrants, recruited to work in key sectors of the economy, such as health care, construction and manufacturing. And that the government of Alberta has successfully used its Rural Renewal Program to attract immigrants to live and work in smaller communities facing economic and demographic decline.

Albertans also need to know that the majority of non-permanent residents come to the province either to work or to study, and in many cases both. That non-permanent residents frequently fill positions that Albertans are unable or unwilling to take and that they pay income taxes and other employment deductions, in the same way as other Alberta residents.

They need to know that non-permanent residents make up only five percent of the provincial population, a proportion that is lower than that of other provinces, and that most come to Alberta without their families.

Finally, they need to know that the proposed limitations or restrictions on non-permanent residents' access to publicly funded services are unjust. And that the solution to overcrowding in schools and hospitals is to build the infrastructure necessary to meet the needs of our population, not to deny certain vulnerable members of community access to education and health care.

Immigration remains a complex and polarizing topic and one that demands careful thought and balanced discussion. The immigration questions included as part of the referendum are unlikely to contribute to this kind of analysis. Rather, they run the risk of promoting misunderstandings or confusion about immigration to the province and propose changes to current policies and practices that will place unnecessary burdens on non-permanent residents and their families.

On October 19th, Albertans have the right to know that they are voting on questions about changes to immigration policies and practices that are well-considered, based on evidence and which present fair and balanced options.

At present, this is not the case and Albertans need to know that.

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