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Pathways to Permanence and Immigration Levels: A Critical Policy Discourse Analysis (CPDA) of Struggles and Limits to Societal Membership for Migrants Amidst and Emerging from COVID-19 (2020-2022) in Canada

John Carlaw & Kushan Azadah
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Abstract

Who, and under what terms should members of Canadian society without full immigration status be able to access permanent residence has been the subject of long-term struggle and debate in the country's settler colonial context. Applying a critical policy discourse analysis (CPDA) approach (Montesano Montessori et al., 2019a) to examine press releases, platforms, and mandate letters from actors active in Canada's "immigration battleground" (Ambrosini, 2021) from March 2020 to the end of 2022, this paper examines intensified struggles over access to permanent residence and permanent immigration levels in Canada amidst and emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic. It compares competing policy discourses and stances across much of the political spectrum on both these issues and organizations' general orientations to migration and belonging.

Outside of the far-right and Québec separatist Bloc Québécois (BQ) party, who apply their own notable political pressures, from March 2020 to the end of 2022 there was near discursive consensus at the federal level amongst the actors we examine concerning the need for "pathways" to permanent residence for those living under temporary migration categories in Canada. This is an important discursive opening in policy discussions for more inclusive changes to the terms of societal membership in Canada and its boundaries of belonging. However, this surface-level consensus is far from being reflected or implemented in government policy at the scale such apparent discursive consensus would imply.

Despite criticism from migrant rights organizations and the social democratic NDP, employers have been further empowered as actors in terms of setting the terms of societal membership in Canada in a manner that matches their policy demands and advocacy for greater access to migrant worker labour. To date, measures to implement "pathways" to permanent residence have been modest in comparison, despite the discourses of government mandate letters that would imply a facilitative approach to access to permanent residence and citizenship across skill levels and legal statuses. Indeed, the expansion of migrant labour continues to far exceed that of permanent immigration levels. Thus, while the ubiquity of pathways discourse has indicated a potential political opening for more inclusive policies, actual policy developments demonstrate their limits to date despite discourses celebrating the contributions of migrant and precarious status workers during and emerging from the pandemic.

Substantively, in the documents examined here, pathways discourses and proposals appear to have provided a way for actors with very different political and policy agendas to signal their commitments to immigrant and migrant rights without necessarily engaging in more inclusive structural change that would address the insecurity and labour and human rights violations experienced by many living under temporary or precarious statuses. For that reason, and because of the stakes of these debates, the gap between actors' political and policy discourses demands sustained and intense scrutiny. As seen in recent government and opposition migration discourses, the growth of Canada's migrant worker and precarious status population and the important substantive rights that accrue to those who achieve permanent residence mean that pathways discourses and policies granting access to permanent residence will continue to be of tremendous importance. The paper concludes with some reflections on post-2022 developments, including December 2023 statements by Canada's Immigration Minister that a "broad and comprehensive" regularization program is forthcoming and a significant decline in public support for current immigration levels.

Keywords: permanent residence, immigration levels, societal membership, COVID-19, discourse analysis, policy studies, Canada

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1. Introduction¹

A glaring truth that's hit home I think for many Canadians is that the jobs that we have perhaps traditionally called low-skilled are actually essential. From caring for our seniors to putting food on our tables, people have awoken to the reality that these supposedly low-skill jobs are actually anything but. From taking care of our seniors to putting food on our tables, these roles are vital and in the time of the pandemic, they are often lifesaving.

Our front-line workers – whether they are working in our hospitals, taking care of our elderly or helping to put food on our tables – are our guardian angels and saviours.

With this new program, we do more than express our gratitude; we demonstrate it. And equally important, we spur a broader shift in how our country sees these jobs and the people who do them. I hope that a generation from now, Canadians will look back on this moment as a time when we began to better recognize the value of their work and an immigration policy that reflected it.

While much has changed over the past year, one reality remains unchanged, namely, that immigration continues to be essential to Canada's future.

Much has changed over the past year, but more than ever, immigration is vital to Canada's short-term recovery and long-term prosperity. What began as temporary changes to keep our economy have blossomed into a wider shift in how we see entry immigration in Canada. This program is a watershed moment. I look forward to seeing the difference that it makes for many years to come. We're keeping our ship on course to help Canada achieve its full potential and our country can only reach its full potential if everyone here reaches theirs.

- Then-Canadian Immigration Minister Marco Mendicino, on the announcement of a "new pathway to permanent residency" (TR2PR) program, May 5, 2021 (Mendicino, 2021)

"Glaring truth." "Essential." "Guardian angels." "Saviours." "Better recognize their work." "Watershed moment." Such was the language frequently employed in government and media discourses concerning migrants and immigrants amidst the health and economic crises that arrived with the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada.²

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² Scholarship on the discursive changes concerning Canadian immigration policy has burgeoned since the pandemic began. For a sample of the literature that focuses on the "essential" narrative see Chaulagain et al. (2022), Esses et al. (2021), and Macklin (2022). See Mohammed et al. (2021) and Stack & Wilbur (2021) for a more detailed analysis of the discursive framings that emerged in the healthcare sector, such as "guardian angels", "heroes," and "saviours." Adams (2022), Galloway (2021), and Newbold et al. (2021) assess the possibilities and trajectories of far-right populism fueling xenophobia in Canada during and emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Publicized in a Government of Canada news release in May of 2021, then-Minister of Immigration Marco Mendicino's comments, coinciding with the launch of the "Temporary to Permanent Residency" (TR2PR) pathway for up to 90,000 essential workers and recent international student graduates, reflects both what seemed unique and constant during the "watershed moment" of the COVID-19 period in Canada. In the realm of continuity, is the linking of immigration to economic prosperity. In terms of change, he cites a pandemic-inspired realization of the need for an immigration policy that recognizes the contributions of all workers, even those in "low skill" categories – which he highlights are in fact, "anything but." Such discourses were common across much of Canada's political spectrum as stories of health risks, exploitation, and death drew media headlines and civil society attention in a time experienced by many as a health and social crisis.

Furthermore, in his late 2021 mandate letter to incoming Minister of Immigration, Sean Fraser, Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau charged him with "Build[ing] on existing pilot programs to further explore ways of regularizing status for undocumented workers who are contributing to Canadian communities" and "Expand[ing] pathways to Permanent Residence for international students and temporary foreign workers through the Express Entry system" (Trudeau, 2021b).³

Taking the former Immigration Minister Marco Mendicino's words as a starting point, this paper seeks to identify what "realizations" and counter-discourses and policy stances were taking place with respect to immigration and societal membership at the height and gradual loosening of COVID-19 restrictions in Canada, from March 2020 until December 31, 2022, and where they can be situated with respect to the views articulated by several political actors operating within Canada's "immigration battleground" (Ambrosini, 2021). We chose this period in order to examine documents from the onset of rapid case increases and pandemic-related immigration and public health restrictions in Canada (March 2020) until the country's emergence from such restrictions and its path to economic recovery. Most of the analysis in this paper was undertaken in 2023.

This paper primarily focuses on two fundamental matters of societal membership, namely 1) access – or lack of access – to ("pathways" to) permanent residence in Canada for those living and working in the country, and 2) annual immigration levels, where such pathways would ultimately find expression. These topics are crucial because permanent residence grants those who hold it access to most social and economic rights and entitlements, including the right to change employers.⁴ For these reasons, granting permanent residence – and ultimately citizenship, though the latter is not the focus of this paper – can reasonably be taken as perhaps the ultimate indicator of the Canadian states' respect for and acceptance of immigrant and migrant workers and their rights.

Of course, the voices of the governing Liberal Party and government were not the only ones to be heard on these topics. From the far-right of the political spectrum were expressions of alarm, conspiracy theories, and calls to suspend and subsequently cut immigration levels significantly. At the other end of the political spectrum, migrant-led social movements demanded "status for all" to address the structural inequalities they argued were fundamental to the negative treatment, exploitation, and health risks being experienced by migrant workers and undocumented people. Some of the latter's demands have at times been echoed by Canada's social democratic New Democratic Party (NDP), and Canada's labour movement. For their part, Canadian business interests have argued for greater access to migrant labour, while discourses

³ A description of how Canada's Express Entry system works is available on the IRCC (2014) website.

⁴ Citizenship, which can be granted after a minimum of three years of permanent residence, additionally offers the right to run for or vote for candidates for political office at the municipal, provincial or national level. For recent discussions concerning changes to Canada's overall citizenship regime and access to citizenship more specifically, see Abu-Laban (2023) and Winter (2021).

of “pathways” to permanent residence became ubiquitous from the centre-left to mainstream right of the political party spectrum. In the case of Canada’s Conservative Party, such discourses were also combined with anti-asylum seeker discourses and calls for order at the Canadian border, particularly at Roxham Road, Québec (Conservative Party of Canada, 2021, pp. 127–137). Lastly, the Québec separatist Bloc Québécois (BQ) simultaneously argued for the recognition of the work of “guardian angels” in the health care sector by giving them permanent residence while also arguing that only those who can demonstrate knowledge of French should be able to become full citizens within the province. They also concurrently argued that growing immigration levels in Canada represent a threat to the province while also expressing a greater need for access to migrant labour, and for Québec to take even further control over its immigration system.⁵

Examining this period of crisis, continuity and change, this paper aims to outline and deepen our understanding of discourses and political approaches to migration and societal belonging in Canada through the study of competing dominant, hegemonic, and subaltern actors and projects in these realms amidst and emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic. Such differences and the intersections are significant not only in terms of discourse and ideology, but because they result in competing policy prescriptions, outcomes, and social relations of tremendous significance. These include access to secure immigration status, citizenship, and the right to formal political participation. They further include relative access to refugee protection, social services, employment rights, economic security, and greatly impact the general political and social climate for societal belonging.

In Canada, these contestations take place within the context of a settler colonial federal state with its own political dynamics and potential for innovative but complex solidarities (Abu-Laban, 2023; Fortier, 2013; Walia, 2013) and where racialized migrant worker programs have a long history and have grown significantly in size and scope (Sharma, 2006; Vosko, 2022). It is one where immigration is considered a central part of growing the country’s population and meeting its demographic needs, but where the country’s dominant immigration model has been shifting from one of primarily welcoming immigrants as permanent residents with a clear pathway to citizenship to a “chutes and ladders” model, where migrants and immigrants endure much more difficult and precarious migration paths that may well not lead to full societal membership (Carlaw, 2023; Goldring & Landolt, 2012). Despite this increase in precarious status migration and the rise of global and local right-wing discourses and extremisms, the social facts of a diverse settler colonial society and a pro-immigration common sense ideology of multiculturalism remain the central terrain of Canada’s identity and immigration “battleground” (Abu-Laban, 2023; Ambrosini, 2021; Bannerji, 2000; Carlaw, 2021b; Reitz, 2014; Thobani, 2007).

Developments under COVID-19 forced Canada’s Liberal government and other actors to wrestle with migration narratives and realities on several fronts, including important decisions concerning immigration levels, access to permanent residences, and refugee and migrant worker policies and protections.⁶ It is important to assess these parties, governments,

⁵ Under the 1991 Canada-Québec Accord, the province of Québec is able to establish its own immigration levels for economic immigrants. The federal government still retains control over immigration concerning family reunification, migrant workers, and refugees. As such, immigration powers have been a key point of debate across levels of federal and provincial government, including whether the powers afforded under the current agreement should be revised and to what extent. Political parties supporting Québec nationalism such as the Bloc Québécois and the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) endorse calls for the province to achieve full control over immigration, while other actors, including in the business community, see such changes as unnecessary and counter to Canada’s national interests concerning sovereignty and social and economic development (Asselin, 2022; Bloc Québécois, 2021).

⁶ For critical overviews of pandemic immigration policies and policy-making practices in Canada, see, for example, Esses et al. (2021), Perzyna et al. (2022), Shields & Abu Alrob (2020), and Shields & Alrob, 2021.

and their competitors comparatively to find not only common dynamics of exclusion but also openings for inclusive change.

Overall, it is argued that discursively, with the exception of Canada's far-right and the Bloc Québécois, most of the actors in Canada's political system express support for all of immigration and diversity in general, significant immigration levels, and "pathways to permanent residence" in particular. However, there remain significant struggles over the terms of membership offered to those arriving and already present in Canada without full citizenship or permanent residence status. While many actors are employing the language of "pathways," the substance of their arguments and policy positions concerning immigration policy, social relations, and access to permanent residence remain very different.

Substantively to date, pathways discourses and proposals appear to have provided a way for actors with very different political and policy agendas to signal their commitment to immigrant and migrant rights, but without necessarily engaging in more inclusive structural change that would address the insecurity and labour, and human rights violations experienced by many living under temporary or precarious statuses. However, if followed through upon in an ambitious manner, statements by Canada's current Immigration Minister, Marc Miller, that Canada is likely to implement a "broad and comprehensive program regularization program" in the spring of 2024 could provide a significant challenge to this interpretation of statements and policies based on documents and announcements from March 2020 to the end of 2022 (Macklin et al., 2023; Woolf, 2023a).

The next section, section 2, discusses the methodology of the project behind this paper, including a framework of the "immigration battleground" and critical policy discourse analysis (CPDA) approach. This includes a brief contextual section, complemented by a chart (Figure 1) that includes major developments that took place between COVID-19 restrictions implemented in March of 2020 until December 31, 2022. It then discusses the sources compiled and themes used to examine the materials collected for this study. Section 3 discusses findings of analysis undertaken, with a focus on discourses, policies, and policy stances related to 1) immigration more generally, 2) discursive competition and the limits of discourses of deservingness, 3) contested "pathways" discourses and policies, and 4) how these debates are reflected in particular actors' stances on annual immigration levels, within which these actual policies are largely set. The paper concludes by reflecting on its findings and developments and political and policy trajectories since the end of 2022.

2. Methodology and Context

The goal of this paper is to identify key discourses, policy stances, contestations of migration and integration, and the actors promoting them within Canada concerning access to permanent rights, and to root them in discussions of policy, social relations, and national identity. Two useful approaches and heuristics in the pursuit of this endeavour include 1) the "battleground of asylum and immigration policies" (Ambrosini, 2021) – henceforth the "immigration battleground," and 2) critical discourse policy analysis (CDPA) (Montesano Montessori et al., 2019a).

Building upon and seeking to move beyond some of the limits of venue shopping, multi-level governance (MLG), and critical humanitarian approaches,⁷ Ambrosini (2021) has recently

⁷ While praising the venue shopping and MLG approaches for several reasons, particularly their attentiveness to "vertical" dimensions and scales related to policymaking, the latter in particular "is also the target of criticisms. Noted, among other aspects is the lack of focus on actors, on networks and on conflict (Pettrachin 2020). A more thorough analysis of the horizontal dimension of governance, of divergences between public and non-public actors, of the role of civil society with its various subjects, should be integrated into the discussion of asylum and immigration policies" (Ambrosini 2021, 378). While certainly alert to the need for critical analysis, Ambrosini offers some critique of critical humanitarian studies for limiting its assessments of humanitarian organizations to perhaps "*at best* ... softening the

outlined the notion of the “battleground of asylum and immigration policies,” which he characterizes as,

a contentious field in which different actors interact, sometimes cooperating and in other cases conflicting. Different levels of public responsibility are involved but also non-public actors play a role. They encompass various pro-migrant supporters but also xenophobic movements. Both sides can establish alliances and coalitions and try to mould public policies. (Ambrosini, 2021, p. 379)

Ambrosini’s notion of the immigration battleground addresses the complexities of contested policies and civil society alliances, as well as tensions amongst migrants, civil society groups and well-meaning supporters, the role of public authorities, and the voices and actions of refugees and migrants themselves. The latter of these include a spectrum of actions, from what Chimienti calls the “weak agency” of continued presence and survival in a society to efforts to push for deep structural change, or very public acts of “activist citizenship” (Ambrosini, 2021, pp. 386–387). The civil society right is of course, he notes, part of such processes and contestations (Ambrosini, 2021, p. 383). Grasping the larger picture is important because “social and political actors define their identity taking part in this ‘battleground’ in relation, and also in contrast with the positions of other actors” (Ambrosini, 2021, pp. 379–380).

While Ambrosini rightly encourages analysis at multiple scales, for feasibility reasons, including the volume of materials to examine and to place a reasonable limit on the scope of analysis, this paper will primarily focus on political contestations at the federal level of politics in Canada during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁸

To examine these contestations in a manner that combines considerations of both contested discourses and world views as well as public policy, we employ a critical discourse policy analysis (CDPA) approach (Montesano Montessori et al., 2019b). This approach is attractive for such a project for its explicit and combined attention to both discourse and policy within a larger social context in a manner that is attentive to questions of power and hegemony. Overall,

CPDA encourages and facilitates a relational analysis of policy; second, it emphasises the constitutive role of discourse in policy analysis; third, CPDA encourages analysis of the context of policy discourse and of the mutually constitutive relationship which holds between them; fourth, the CPDA approach encourages analysis of the connection between policy and power. (Farrelly et al., 2019, p. 264)

In their volume outlining the approach and providing several case studies, a historical materialist policy analysis and conception of CDPA rooted in Poulantzas and Gramsci’s work goes as far as suggesting comparing dominant and emerging “hegemony projects” and linking them to policy questions, even if some actors’ ambitions do not necessarily entail such goals of leadership or transformational social change (Caterina, 2019, pp. 218–219).

Drawing on this approach, but admittedly simplifying the process for reasons of summary, key steps in conducting such an analysis can include 1) placing texts in their social context, 2) selecting and preparing data/texts appropriate to answer the questions posed, and 3)

harshest consequences of migration policies, mixing a bit of compassion with the dominant frame of repression” (Fassin 2005, 2012)” (Our emphasis; Ambrosini, 2021, p. 378).

⁸ While the focus here is at the federal level, some aspects of Québec provincial politics in particular become part of this debate due to the presence of the separatist Bloc Québécois, the party holding the third largest number of seats in Canada’s federal parliament. At times, they issue press releases simply reiterating their support for the policy stances of Québec’s current provincial government (See Bloc Québécois, 2021, for example).

choosing one's theoretical approach and methods to apply (Montesano Montessori, 2019). Each is done here in turn.

2.1 Social and Policy Context

Canada is a settler colonial state, with long standing but complex hierarchies amongst European-origin settlers, racialized immigrants and migrants, and Indigenous peoples (Thobani, 2007). In this context, notions and hierarchies of citizenship must be considered critically. For Indigenous peoples in Canada, for example, there is likely no "liberation" to be found in enthusiastically embracing national citizenship, for example, as it is at best, a "kinder, gentler form of colonialism" for those whose territories and assets have been appropriated and continue to be subject to struggle (Green, 2017). For migrants and immigrants, our current century has witnessed changes in its citizenship and immigration model from one primarily – though by no means only (Sharma, 2006) – favouring permanent and stable immigration status on arrival to Canada to one of increased precarity and insecurity (Goldring & Landolt, 2012), including a vast expansion and reliance on migrant worker programs and labour embraced by both Liberal and Conservative governments (Akbar, 2022; Carlaw, 2021a).

For the last several decades, Canada has witnessed at times contradictory processes of neoliberalism and securitization, where the labour of migrants and immigrants is desired, but securitization and neoliberal impulses simultaneously operate in a restrictive manner towards migrants classified under humanitarian categories and immigrant and migrant families (Abu-Laban et al., 2023). This is particularly the case in terms of the governance of asylum, where Canada has intensified its efforts to prevent refugee claimants from arriving to its territory, culminating most recently in the expansion of its "Safe Third Country" agreement with the United States to apply across the entire Canada-US border in March 2023 (Atak et al., 2021; IRCC, 2003).

These trends of intensified securitization, neoliberalization and an immigration and migration model that generates more precarious conditions of migration has resulted in a growing undocumented population whose numbers are not known but are expectedly significant and growing (Smith & Young, 2022). Presently, for each person granted the security of permanent residence, there are two or more migrant workers or international students who have uncertain or no access to permanent status (Perzyna, 2023; Statistics Canada, 2023b). As of January 2023, in a country that recently reached a population of 40 million, according to the Migrant Rights Network (MRN), who has rallied support behind their call for "status for all,"

There are at least 1.2 million people in Canada on temporary work, study or refugee claimant permits issued in Canada each year. Those in low-waged work in particular have no access to permanent residency so eventually they are forced to either leave or stay in the country undocumented. As a result, there are over 500,000 undocumented people in the country.

That is, there are at least 1.7 million migrants – 1 in 23 residents in Canada – who do not have equal rights. (Migrant Rights Network, 2023b)

In the face of these realities, many migrants, students, workers, and their allies have mobilized to address these exclusions. This includes early 2023 protests in several cities demanding "status for all," including protests to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CBC News, 2018).

Amidst and emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, despite some positive discourses and limited policy developments recognizing the contributions of migrant workers who have

mobilized to challenge the structural inequalities they face, Canada has also witnessed increased authoritarian populist attitudes and mobilizations, racism, and hate speech that undermine democratic politics and contest more established and inclusive migration discourses that are more consistent with its international reputation for championing comparatively welcoming immigration and multiculturalism policies (Aytac et al., 2022; Chakraborty, 2022; Esses et al., 2021; Graves, 2021, 2022; Triandafyllidou, 2022; Vosko et al., 2022). These developments include the increased prominence of conspiracy theories, including echoes of the idea of a “great replacement.” According to one 2022 poll, “37% (or 11 million) think there is a group of people in this country who are trying to replace native born Canadians with immigrants who agree with their political views” (Anderson & Coletto, 2022). Thus, from the stances emanating from major political parties to those of migrant rights advocacy groups, as well as the increasing prevalence of far-right voices, there is a full spectrum of views with respect to immigration in Canada, albeit with varying levels of support.

As a baseline from which policies in Canada were being set on the eve of the pandemic, one might reasonably consider the March 2020 Immigration Levels Plan Announcement, released days before COVID-19 border closures and restrictions seemingly in complete ignorance of the disruption about to come:

The new plan will benefit all Canadians because immigration drives economic growth, spurs innovation and helps employers access the talent they need to thrive. Welcoming more newcomers will help to address the demographic challenges of an aging population and to compete and win in a competitive global marketplace.

The proposed plan is based on the solid economic foundation of the previous levels plan and continues to responsibly grow the number of permanent residents admitted to Canada each year, from 341,000 in 2020 to 351,000 in 2021 and 361,000 in 2022. (IRCC, 2020a)

The plan had a heavy economic focus and made no mention of a program to regularize the status of undocumented members of society nor of pathways to permanent status for migrant workers except for a tiny agricultural worker pilot project. Notably, in an officially bilingual state (English and French), the statement highlighted a focus of increasing Francophone immigration to Canada outside of the province of Québec alongside its discourses of global competitiveness. Referring to the Canadian government’s 2021 to 2023 Immigration Levels Plans, Macklin notes that its,

messaging was positive about immigration at a moment when many states have doubled down on xenophobia and exclusion – and that is remarkable in itself. The critical question is whether the insights gained because of Covid-19, which carry with them profound potential for transforming migration policy, can survive the pandemic. (Macklin 2022, p. 40)

Below, Figure 1 offers a list of important political and policy developments immediately prior to, during, and emerging from the COVID-19, and serves as the remainder of this section. As will be discussed further, considered together they are indicative that at least with respect to questions of expanding access to permanent residence, the lessons espoused in many actors’ discourses to recognize the rights and contributions of precarious status and migrant workers have been far less than transformative amidst a shifting political environment.

Figure 1: Key Policies, Proposals, Initiatives and Developments Concerning Access to Permanent Residence and Citizenship in Canada, March 1, 2020-December 31, 2022)⁹

Date	Measure or Development
March 12, 2020	<p><u>Immigration Levels Plan 2020-23 Announced: A baseline for assessing COVID-19 influenced policy shifts?</u> Days before the reality of COVID-19 hits Canada and lockdown and border measures are announced, Canada announces immigration levels of 341,000 in 2020 to 351,000 in 2021 and 361,000 in 2022 (IRCC, 2020a).</p>
March, 2020	<p><u>Border Closure</u> Canada and the United States suspend all “non-essential” travel across the Canada-US border, including asylum seekers, “Despite initial indications that asylum seekers would have access to non-discriminatory screening and self-isolation measures” (Perzyna et al., 2022, p. 15).</p>
May 2020	<p><u>Agrifood Pilot Project: Tiny pilot project for historically excluded class of migrant workers</u> The Canadian government announces a three-year-long Agri-Food Pilot project to give up to 2,750 non-seasonal agricultural workers and family members the opportunity to transition to permanent status (IRCC, 2020i; Kachulis & Perez-Leclerc, 2021; Triandafyllidou & Nalbandian, 2021)” (Perzyna et al., 2022, p. 23).</p>
August 2020	<p><u>“Guardian Angels” Program: Selective belonging amidst the COVID-crisis</u> “In August 2020, in response to significant media attention regarding the number of refugee claimants working in the healthcare sector in Québec, the federal government announces a new ‘Guardian Angel’ permanent residency pathway through two programs: one inside Québec and one for the rest of Canada (IRCC, 2020w; Thevenot & Miekus, 2020). This temporary program, which ran from 14 December 2020 to 31 August 2021, targeted individuals with pending and failed refugee claims providing direct patient care in designated occupations such as orderlies, nurses’ aides, nurses, assistant orderlies, and certain home support workers, over a specified period, subject to medical, security and criminality screening (see Refugees and Refugee Claimants below for more discussion) (IRCC, 2021m)” (Perzyna et al., 2022, 9). According to IRCC, as of October 1, 2022, more than 8,500 individuals had received permanent residence (IRCC, 2023b).</p>
October 30, 2020	<p><u>2021-23 Levels Plan Tabled: “Making up for shortfalls”</u> “To compensate for the shortfall [due to a disruption to their original 2020-2022 plans] and ensure Canada has the workers it needs to fill crucial labour market gaps and remain competitive on the world stage, the 2021 to 2023 levels plan aims to continue welcoming immigrants at a rate of about 1% of the population of Canada, including 401,000 permanent residents in 2021, 411,000 in 2022 and 421,000 in 2023. The previous plan set targets of 351,000 in 2021 and 361,000 in 2022” (IRCC, 2020c).</p>
January 15, 2021	<p><u>Mandate Letter for the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship (Trudeau, 2021a): Pathways Discourse Appears for the First Time in a Mandate Letter</u> The letter includes mandates to:</p>

⁹ Perzyna et al. (2022) provide an ambitious and remarkably thorough analysis of COVID-19 pandemic policies and policy-making processes.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Continuing work on sectoral and regional pilot programs” ● “Continue to implement measures that create pathways to permanent residency for those who have provided health care in long-term care homes or medical facilities or performed other essential services during the COVID-19 pandemic.” ● “Continue exploring pathways to permanent residency and citizenship for temporary foreign workers.”
<p>February 13, 2021</p>	<p><u>A Record-Setting Express Entry Draw (for economic class immigration) Accepting Record Low Scores:</u> As part of a strategy to meet its 2021 immigration targets, “the Express Entry Draw that took place on 13 February 2021 and targeted candidates in the Canadian Experience Class program. This historic record-breaking draw offered 27,332 invitations to apply for permanent residency (the previous record was 5000) to those with a qualifying score, or Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS), as low as 75 (the previous low for an all-program draw was 413 in 2017) (Singer, 2021)” (Perzyna et al., 2022, p. 8).</p>
<p>April 14, 2021</p>	<p><u>Temporary to Permanent Resident (R2PR) Program</u> “IRCC announced the TR-PR Pathways Initiative, which introduced a new pathway to PR for over 90,000 essential workers and international graduates already residing in Canada” (Smith & Young, 2022, p. 14). This program ran from May 6, 2021, to November 5, 2021 (Perzyna et al., 2022, p. 7). The “essential workers” component of the program is likely overly-emphasized given that 40,000 of the total number of spaces were reserved for recent international graduates.</p>
<p>September 20, 2021</p>	<p><u>2021 Canadian Federal Election: Liberals narrowly re-elected despite losing popular vote, People’s Party Reaches Record Support</u> The first Federal election since the start of the pandemic sees the centrist Liberal Party re-elected with a minority government supported by the social democratic NDP. Despite winning the largest share of the overall vote, the Conservative Party finishes second in the number of seats. The far-right People’s Party of Canada wins nearly 5% of the popular vote (vs. 1.6% in 2019), with speculation that their stronger than expected performance could have cost the Conservative Party up to 24 seats (Raycraft, 2021). The Liberals, NDP and Conservative platforms all promise to expand “pathways” to permanent residence for migrant workers and international students. Other actors, such as the Migrant Rights Network and Canadian Chamber of Commerce express their own priorities to the government during and following the campaign.</p>
<p>December 16, 2021</p>	<p><u>Mandate Letter for the New Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Sean Fraser (Trudeau, 2021b): Expand pathways and further regularization programs</u> The letter includes mandates to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Make the citizenship application process free for permanent residents who have fulfilled the requirements needed to obtain it. (Unfulfilled as of January 2024) ● “With the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, establish a Trusted Employer system for Canadian companies hiring temporary foreign workers” (Granted in April 2022 budget) ● “Build on existing pilot programs to further explore ways of regularizing status for undocumented workers who are contributing to Canadian communities.” ● “Continue working with Québec to support the French-language knowledge of immigrants in Québec, respecting provincial jurisdiction and complementing existing measures, and continue to implement an ambitious national strategy to support Francophone immigration across the country.”

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Expand pathways to Permanent Residence for international students and temporary foreign workers through the Express Entry system. With respect to pathways for agricultural temporary foreign workers, you will be supported in this work by the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.”
February 2, 2022	<p><u>Conservative Party Leader Erin O’Toole Ousted by his party</u> Amidst the height of the Convoy movement’s occupation of downtown Ottawa (the capital city of Canada), as a result of a leadership review process initiated by members of the Conservatives’ parliamentary caucus, Erin O’Toole is ousted as leader of the Conservative Party, primarily for pursuing a more moderate than expected political path by many members of the party’s base and members of parliament in the 2022 election, as well as a lack of embrace of the “freedom convoy” (Gurney, 2022; Walsh et al., 2022). It remains unclear what path his party will pursue concerning immigration policy.</p>
February 14, 2022	<p><u>2022-24 Immigration Levels Plan Tabled: Raised further</u> Per the government’s announcement, “[t]o ensure Canada has the workers it needs to fill critical labour market gaps and support a strong economy into the future, the 2022–2024 Immigration Levels Plan aims to continue welcoming immigrants at a rate of about 1% of Canada’s population, including 431,645 permanent residents in 2022, 447,055 in 2023, and 451,000 in 2024” (IRCC, 2022a).</p>
April, 2022	<p><u>Budget 2022: Business receives its “trusted employer” model</u> The federal government presents its annual budget, including funds devoted to implementing a “Trusted Employer Model” for repeat employers of migrant workers, a “new foreign labour program for agriculture and fish processing”, and to faster process employer applications (Government of Canada, 2022).</p>
September 10, 2022	<p><u>New Conservative Party of Canada leader: A shift to the (further) right</u> Pierre Poilievre is elected leader of the Conservative Party of Canada in a landslide first ballot victory over former Progressive Conservative Party of Canada Leader and Québec Premier Jean Charest (Tasker, 2022). Poilievre notably courts the support of anti-vaccine, conspiracy theorist, and pro-Convoy elements of the population and his party and represents a return to a harder line neoconservative approach to politics in comparison to his immediate predecessor, Erin O’Toole. It remains to be seen how this will impact future party platforms.</p>
November 1, 2022	<p><u>2023-25 Levels Plan tabled: Raised to record highs</u> The Federal government sets immigration targets of 465,000 permanent residents in 2023, 485,000 in 2024 and 500,000 in 2025. “The plan also brings an increased focus on attracting newcomers to different regions of the country, including small towns and rural communities” (IRCC, 2022b).</p>
Significant subsequent developments (or lack of developments)	
January 20, 2023	<p><u>Out-of-status construction worker program in the Greater Toronto Area expanded from 500 to 1000 people: A small boost to another tiny pilot program</u> A project started in 2019 to regularize the status of 500 out of status construction workers in the Greater Toronto Area that collaborates with the Canadian Labour Congress is doubled to 1000 workers. According to the government, “Under the pilot,</p>

	<p>applicants who have significant work experience in construction occupations in the GTA, family members in Canada, a referral letter from the CLC and no reason for being inadmissible other than overstaying their visa and working without authorization may be able to apply for permanent residence in Canada.” Furthermore, the department of “IRCC is exploring broader regularization pathways for undocumented migrants and their families. Pathways to permanent residence will offer more opportunities for individuals to enter or stay in the job market and fill labour shortages” (IRCC, 2023a).</p>
<p>March 24, 2023,</p>	<p><u>Expansion of the Canada-US Safe Third Country Agreement: Increased securitization, likely increased unsafe crossings and irregularization</u> Canada and the United States announced the expansion of the STCA across the entire land border, including internal waterways. Those who crossed the border into Canada to make an asylum (refugee) claim and are caught within two weeks of crossing and do not meet one of the Agreement’s exceptions, will henceforth be returned to the U.S. (IRCC, 2003; includes 2023 updates).</p>
<p>Levels Plan 2023</p>	<p><u>Federal Government to maintain immigration levels plans of 500,000 per year as of 2025 amidst increased scrutiny</u> The new levels plan maintains the previous immigration targets for 2024 and 2025, which were set to 485,000 permanent residents and 500,000, respectively. The levels for 2026 are aimed to plateau at 500,000. According to the government, “[t]his plan prioritizes economic growth, and supports family reunification, while responding to humanitarian crises and recognizing the rapid growth in immigration in recent years” (IRCC, 2023c).</p>
<p>December 2023</p>	<p><u>Year-end comments by Immigration Minister Raise Hopes Concerning a Regularization program, pledges to reduce migrant worker numbers amidst increased scrutiny over permanent and temporary migration levels</u> While lacking details and sharing that he expects to encounter many views on the subject, Immigration Minister Marc Miller tells the Globe and Mail newspaper that his department is “preparing to create a ‘broad and comprehensive program’ that would allow many without valid documents to apply for permanent residency. Among those included would be people who entered the country legally, as temporary workers or international students, and then remained here after their visas expired” (Woolf, 2023a). Amidst concern over the cost of living and housing shortages that some have linked to increases in permanent and temporary migration, Miller also states his department plans to reduce the number of migrant workers in Canada and “take action” concerning the treatment of international students. Earlier in December his department announced that international students would face a doubling of the required assets to be able to attend a post-secondary institution in Canada from abroad (Woolf, 2023b).</p>

2.2 Actors and Texts Selected for Examination

After considering the social context, a key task in critical discourse policy analysis (CDPA) is the selection of actors and texts and the preparation of those to texts to answer the questions posed. Seeking to identify and capture the nuances of debates of Canada's "immigration battleground," we chose to examine actors that are 1) of high significance in their own right for their contributions to immigration related debates, and/or are 2) representative of larger constituencies. For this reason, we employed the actors and documents indicated in Figure 2, below. As discussed in the next section, 2.3, we have primarily examined press releases generated by these actors and published on their websites.

To locate these documents, where possible, we used search functions and/or tags within organizations' websites, particularly the term "immigration." This was possible for the Canadian government's Ministry of Immigration Refugees and Citizenship (IRCC) website, the Business Council of Canada, The Canadian Labour Congress, UNIFOR, Rebel Media, and the Bloc Québécois party. Other sources, such as the Canadian Council for Refugees, New Democratic Party and the Conservative Party of Canada necessitated looking at all their press releases over the time frame indicated to select those relevant to these topics. By the nature of their work, most releases and statements by the Migrant Rights Network and Canadian Council for Refugees were highly relevant.

Rebel Media is the only media organization considered in this sample. We treat it as an actor within Canada's "migration battleground" in its own right because of its influential, entrepreneurial, far-right, and oppositional bent. It has exported several far-right media personalities with outspoken views on immigration, and its news was found to have been consumed by the Christchurch, New Zealand mosque shooter, for example (Elmer & Burton, 2022; Tuters & Burton, 2021; Saunders, 2022). Other far-right media and movements have a far less stable media presence. The influential Yellow Vests Movement in Canada, for example, which combined petro-nationalism with anti-immigration and anti-refugee narratives saw its Facebook page with 100,000 members deplatformed in October 2020, for example (Tewksbury, 2021). Significant elements of that movement continued their political activity in the "Freedom Convoy" movement, which also saw favourable coverage by Rebel Media (Canadian Anti-Hate Network, 2022; Graves, 2022). Rebel Media is the successor to Sun News, a project to create a "Fox News North" in Canada and its earlier close ties to the Conservative Party have proven controversial (Carlaw, 2021b, pp. 20–21).

These documents were collected first in Google Docs, organized by actor, and subsequently imported as individual documents into NVivo software for further analysis. Pieces were selected based on whether they discussed immigration levels, pathways to permanent residence, and/or visions of immigration and immigration policy more generally. Pieces that focused only on asylum policy were excluded from the sample for this paper, though will be examined in future work related to this project.

Figure 2: Actors and Types of Documents Selected for Analysis

Actor	Texts coded from March 2020 to December 31, 2022	Number of Documents
<i>“Political Centre” & Liberal Party</i>		
Federal Ministry of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship (IRCC) & Liberal Party of Canada	IRCC Press Releases, Mandate Letters to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, 2021 Liberal Election Platform	47
<i>Business Community</i>		
Canadian Chamber of Commerce (CCC)	Press Releases, Public ‘Mandate’ Letters to Immigration Minister & Budget requests	9
Business Council of Canada (BCC)	News Releases, Press Releases, Op-Eds, Statements, Letters	22
<i>Migrant Rights Organizations and Left civil society</i>		
Migrant Rights Network (MRN)	Press Releases (Media Releases + Updates), Public Letter(s) to Cabinet	22
Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR)	Public Statements	8
Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)	Articles, Media Releases, Op-Eds	12
UNIFOR	New Releases	12
New Democratic Party (NDP)	2021 Election Platform, News Releases	14
<i>Québec’s Independence/Sovereignist Party</i>		
Bloc Québécois (BQ)	2021 Election Platform, News Releases	26
<i>Centre Right</i>		
Conservative Party of Canada (CPC)	2021 Election Platform, News Releases	19
<i>Far-Right</i>		
People’s Party of Canada (PPC)	Press Releases, 2021 Election Platform	6
Rebel Media	News Articles	37

2.3 Undertaking Critical Policy Discourse Analysis

As proponents of critical policy discourse analysis (CPDA) recognize, neither is there nor is it desirable to enforce the use of a single approach to critical discourse or policy analysis, nor a combination of the two.¹⁰ Methodologies should be adapted to the particular question(s) at hand.

Within this umbrella of critical discourse policy analysis, we employ an abductive approach, namely a mix of deductive and inductive thematic analysis informed by prior critical discourse approaches in the Canadian context that have identified both dominant themes in immigration debates and their nuances, albeit with respect to analysis of newspapers (For example, Bauder, 2011; Perzyna & Bauder, 2022; Tungohan & Careless, 2022). Particularly influential in our initial and overall approach was Bauder's *Immigration Dialectic Imagining Community, Economy, and Nation* (2011). There, Bauder examines a period of major reforms to Canadian and German immigration laws between 1996 and 2004. Across the two countries, he identifies key themes in media coverage that assisted in our early approach to coding materials and developing themes. The most prominent categories of Canada's immigration debate that he found, in descending order of prominence, were the themes of 1) danger, emphasizing "crime, threats to 'national security,' and social problems" often revolving around "the perception that some immigrants are destructive to democracy and social order" (Bauder, 2011, p. 65); 2) humanitarianism, including "the construction of the boundary between deserving and undeserving refugees," (Bauder, 2011, p. 103); 3) political speculation and analysis concerning policy and partisan developments; 4) economic utility, particularly how to realize economic benefits and regulate labour markets, as well as whether particular immigrants and migrants are *victims* of exploitation or a *threat* to the economic well-being of Canadians (Bauder, 2011, pp. 129–130); and 5) cultural concerns, which "can appear in positive and negative forms: as a defence or rejection of multiculturalism, or as an expression or rebuff of racism, ethnic discrimination, and Eurocentric hegemony" (Bauder, 2011, p. 66).

Interestingly, in media discourses in Canada at the time, Bauder found cultural concerns to be largely absent. Furthermore, for its part at the time, while "[T]he economic aspect may be the centerpiece of immigration policy, but for media and public debate it is simply not as interesting as other more contested aspects (in particular, the danger aspect)" (Bauder, 2011, p. 122). While in need of adjustment for our purposes, these have proven to be helpful themes in thinking about contestations of migration and belonging in the Canada of the present and amidst COVID-19.

Rather than examining the dialectics of media coverage, however, our goal is to make sense of Canada's immigration battleground with respect to access to permanent residence and citizenship during this period, necessitating a set of texts that permits a deeper assessment of specific and related actors and their discourses. As indicated above in Figure 2, those umbrella organizations include organizations of national scope, in addition to Canada's five most popular parties in the 2021 federal election, according to vote share received.

Drawing upon Bauder's themes, the principal investigator (PI) conducted a preliminary round of coding with his themes in mind before working with his research assistant (RA) to come to a common understanding of them. As we worked with the materials, we developed a significant number of sub-categories and saw the need to adjust and reorganize his themes for our own purposes, resulting in a much more abductive approach. Because media was not the primary focus of our study, we set aside the political speculation theme. We also wanted to closely examine policy-specific discourses. Because of this we have engaged in parallel coding of documents under two broad categories: 1) wider migration and related societal discourses,

¹⁰ In their volume introducing Critical Policy Discourse Analysis (CPDA), for example, the editors and authors of case studies employed a wide variety of critical theoretical approaches and discourse theoretical tools (9 of each) to a wide variety of subject matter (Farrelly et al., 2019, pp. 265–266).

and 2) policy specific discourses. Ultimately, our re-organized themes of general migration discourses became:

1. Visions and critiques of Canadian society, culture, and immigration.
2. Political economy discourses, including sub-themes such as economic, social justice, and deservingness discourses.
3. Humanitarian discourses.
4. Danger and threat discourses.
5. COVID-19 specific discourses.

Taking perhaps an even wider approach to “culture,” we wanted to capture actors’ broader views about Canadian society and its connection to immigration.¹¹ We also employed the theme of political economy rather than economy. While Bauder’s analysis of the economy theme is quite nuanced, we felt the term political economy better reflected the diversity of discourses concerning the economy and could incorporate sub-categories and themes such as social justice discourses, conventional economic discourses, and deservingness narratives.

Operating within the sphere of critical policy discourse analysis, we also wanted to pay attention to specific policy prescriptions and contestations over them. For that reason, we coded instances of discussions of specific policies and policy approaches, including critiques and debate. The benefit of coding by policies and policy prescriptions is that it allows one to see which policies particular actors promote or contest, and how they interpret them.

We undertook our organizing of materials and process of coding and developing and refining dominant themes employing NVivo software. Following the development of initial codes by the principal investigator, the research assistant also coded articles, and the PI and RA discussed the application of various codes before further refining them collaboratively.

3. Discussion: Realms and Stakes of Contestation

For this paper, the focus of our analysis is on terms of societal membership, particularly access to permanent residence within the larger context of Canadian immigration policy for those already within Canada, leaving important debates over asylum and refugee policy which have their own dynamics, for future analysis. This focus reveals fundamental debates and contestations concerning societal membership and belonging including the terms of membership under which new members of Canadian society should both arrive and work.

3.1 General Discourses of Canada, Immigration, & Belonging

With the exception of the far-right – Rebel News and the People’s Party of Canada (PPC) – in our sample, there is clearly a discursive pro-immigration consensus across most of the political spectrum in Canada, frequently associating it with economic prosperity while praising demographic diversity. Businesses, organized labour, as well as the NDP, Liberal, and Conservative parties all engage in positive diversity discourses.

¹¹ Concerning its attempt to combine Critical Policy Studies and Discourse Analysis, proponents of CPDA argue that “Both CPS and CDA conceptualise policy as resting on political ‘imaginaries,’ the discursive simplification of an infinitely complex terrain of political action, and the assumed landscape of possibility for government intervention. They thus construct a particular version of the problem, legitimated on the basis of available expert evidence, and are shaped by the dominant mode of governing (Hay, 1996; Jessop, 2002; see also Farrelly, Chapter 1)” (Montesano Montessori et al., 2019b, p. 6). We attempt to capture some of these imaginaries within this work.

It must be noted that the Conservatives pair their more open discourses with “law and order” discourses concerning the border and employ the language of “illegal” migration, consistent with their behaviour while in power from 2006 to 2015 (Carlaw, 2017; Conservative Party of Canada, 2021). They attempt to connect this approach to nationalistic discourses about Canada and the benefits it offers to the hard-working individual in a manner that can be simultaneously used against those migrants and immigrants they feel offend its sense of fairness or justice.¹² In the period considered here, including the 2021 election, they were led in large part by Erin O’Toole, who, despite promising to “take back Canada” and engaging in more controversial policy stances in his leadership contest victory, sought to bring his Conservative Party closer to the political centre in many respects before his ouster by his party’s representatives in parliament amidst the “freedom convoy” in early 2022. Furthermore, even the far-right PPC claims respect for some historic dynamics of diversity in Canada, albeit framed in civilizational terms that juxtapose the “gradual integration” of prior generations of immigrants with the purported threat of today’s “cult of diversity” and “extreme multiculturalism” under current Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (PPC, 2021a).

In place of full-throated nationalistic praise for Canada, as their lowest common denominator, the Liberal Party and government, the NDP and labour unions, and, to a lesser extent, business umbrella groups recognize social inequalities, and that some measures must be taken to address them. While having very different prescriptions and degrees of focus upon them, each names racism, discrimination, and other forms of social inequality and, to some extent, the country’s settler colonial context within which their pandemic and reconciliation related discourses are found even if it is not directly identified as such.¹³ However, beneath these discursive similarities lay important policy differences, as will be further discussed.

In speaking out regularly in social justice terms, the Migrant Rights Network (MRN) arguably foregrounds such contemporary colonial realities the most amongst the actors considered here, and managed to bring together some labour unions and the group Indigenous Climate Action in support of its calls for full immigration status for all with discourses directly addressing the exploitation many workers face due to their precarious immigration status. Its core demands for “justice for all” include “Indigenous self-determination, gender justice, and an end to racism, particularly anti-Black racism and Islamophobia, and specific policies to end social oppression” (Migrant Rights Network, 2020b, 2023a). Demonstrating a perspective with a global scope, another core demand is for “An end to practices that force people to migrate including climate change, wars, corporate impunity and economic exploitation” (Migrant Rights Network, 2023a). The network also criticizes the behaviour of Canadian companies and governments in helping to drive migration, as one MRN press releases describes Canada “as the 10th largest contributor to global climate change, which is forcing millions of people from their communities as they flee environmental destruction, conflict driven by increasing resource scarcity, and massive land grabs that give way to huge development projects – including

¹² According to the Conservatives’ 2021 election platform, “Nowhere on earth is there more equality of opportunity, embrace of diversity, or success for newcomers than Canada. In a dangerous world, Canada remains a beacon of the best humanity has to offer, providing safety and opportunity to all. We are a country determined to measure success not on a person’s faith or family name but on the merit of their abilities, the promise they possess, and on their determination to succeed” (Conservative Party of Canada, 2021).

¹³ In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that addresses Canada’s settler colonial history, particularly the legacy of residential schools that separated Indigenous children from their families, the Liberal federal government promised to implement all 94 of the Commission’s recommendations, some of which are related to the country’s oath of citizenship, the presence of Indigenous languages and names on identity documents, and educational materials for prospective citizens (IRCC, 2021). In 2021, the Liberals followed through on their commitment to change the nation’s citizenship oath to include that “the laws of Canada, including the Constitution ... recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples,” but as of the writing of this paper in January 2023, the government had not implemented a new citizenship guide despite promising to do so by the end of 2021.

Canadian-owned mining and extractive activities” (Migrant Rights Network, 2020b). Thus, their societal critique extends to both domestic and global realities and policies.

For its part, Canada’s far-right frequently employs pejorative discourses of “mass” immigration or migration and associate immigration with several threats to society, demonstrating they are fishing for financial and political support from, or seeking to expand the pool of, anti-immigrant voters or donors in Canada, and in Rebel Media’s case, globally. Besides their hysteria over border crossings by asylum seekers crossing into Canada through Roxham Road, Québec, many of Rebel News’ characterizations of developments in the immigration realm amidst the pandemic are implicit rather than explicit critiques of government policy, such as invoking opinion polls supporting reductions in immigration levels. However, they also employ conspiracy discourses as they invoke the popular spectre on the far-right of George Soros in response to collaboration between the Canadian government and Soros’ Open Society Foundation concerning refugee resettlement (Levant, 2020; Rebel News, 2020). There and elsewhere, they combine discourses concerning refugee and general immigration policy, including claims to “expose the influence of George Soros’ Open Society Foundations (OSF) and the power OSF wields over the Canadian immigration ministry,” mixed with fundraising appeals to pursue such lines of investigation (Gunn Reid, 2020a, 2020b, 2022; Langer, 2023). In such stories, Canada is portrayed as at risk at the hands of external threats in the form of shadowy figures or irregular migrants.

The People’s Party of Canada (PPC), who obtained nearly 5 per cent support in the 2021 general election but have failed to elect a member of parliament under their banner since their founding in 2018, describe themselves as the only party brave enough to depart from mainstream consensus which is in favour of higher immigration levels. They contest that immigration policy “should not be used to forcibly change the cultural character and social fabric of our country,” nor should “political parties employ mass immigration as a political tool to buy votes among immigrant communities” (PPC, 2021a, 2021b). The PPC’s 2021 platform participated in right-wing conspiracy discourses about the Global Compact for Migration, asserting that it will “make it easier for millions of people to move to Canada and other Western democracies at will” (PPC, 2021a).

Direct discourses against multiculturalism come from the People’s Party and the Bloc Québécois (BQ), though both cite support for diversity. The BQ cites Québec’s distinctiveness as a French-speaking society with a distinct culture from the rest of the country that should set its own model of integration, while also demanding that the federal government cede all remaining immigration policy concerning, if not already granted to, the Québec provincial government (Bloc Québécois, 2021). These general orientations by each of the actors play out when it comes to their immigration-related policy prescriptions and discourses.

3.2 Contested Discourses and Associated Policies: The Limits of Deservingness

Though not the case for the right to extreme-right, amidst the pandemic and the risks incurred by vulnerable workers, for many actors, discourses of deservingness moved to the fore of discussions about migration and immigration, as did discussions about which and how those without full immigration status in Canada could access a more secure status. As seen in the introductory quote to this paper, Canada’s then-Immigration Minister went as far as to invoke the need for a generational shift in how Canada treats immigrants and migrants across the skill spectrum in a manner that could potentially depart from the country’s longstanding, heavy emphasis on “high skill” migration (Ellermann, 2020).

Within public discourse, the term essential became ubiquitous, with some rising to the discursive status of heroes – or “guardian angels” in the case of refugee claimants working in health care – as the pandemic increasingly revealed how reliant Canada has been on migrant

workers for essential services across various sectors of society, including agriculture, health care, and food processing, among others (Akbar, 2022; Alrob & Shields, 2022; Chaulagain et al., 2022, 2022; Macklin, 2022).

There have clearly been limits, however, to the extent of how apparent discursive and policy openings have provided access to permanent status in the form of permanent residence and citizenship for precarious and temporary status migrants in practice. In the case of migrant workers in agriculture, for example, Macklin notes how civil society organizations (CSOs) advocating for migrant and refugee rights pressured the government to address the power imbalances between seasonal agricultural workers and their agri-business employers, in which exploitative conditions based on precarious immigration status and tied employment are endemic to the program. This often results in working and housing conditions that put migrant workers at increased risk of infection, illness, and even death, particularly amidst the pandemic. These CSOs called on the government to prevent the deportations of migrant workers who tested positive for COVID-19, citing that employers were responsible for failing to provide safe, clean, and well-provisioned accommodations. However, the government largely deflected the issue, and instead provided employers with millions of dollars to implement protective measures they had already pledged and failed to provide (Macklin 2022). Macklin argues that this demonstrates how even when migrant agricultural labour is upgraded to 'essential' status, it does very little to change the status of the labourers themselves. Indeed,

upgrading the work to essential did not make the workers essential. Rather, it exposed the extent to which migrant agricultural labour is essential because the workers themselves are dispensable. This is not a paradox: slave labour is essential to a slave economy but, and because, enslaved people have no intrinsic worth in that economy. (Macklin, 2022)

While the case of migrant agricultural workers is one of the most extreme examples of a lack of worker freedoms and the sacrifices imposed upon migrant workers, Macklin's analysis reminds the reader of the structural position of quickly growing migrant worker population in Canada's economy – that much of their "essential" value flows from the limitations to their bargaining power, wages, and the insecure immigration status that contributes to them. To counteract these structural factors, many CSOs, see permanent residence as a necessary prerequisite to a secure existence with safe working and living conditions – conditions that are by no means guaranteed by being labeled or praised as "essential."

In a June 2022 release entitled "Time for Change," the Canadian Council for Refugees argued for "radical transformation" while invoking the Black Lives Matter movement and the disproportionate share of racialized migrants in frontline positions during the pandemic,

The pandemic has shown us that we are all profoundly connected to each other – if one person is at risk, we are all at risk. The categories of immigration status are meaningless to the virus, but because our society is organized according to immigration status, many members of society are put in situations where they are particularly exposed to the danger. Whether in cramped living conditions, unsafe working environments, or denied access to health care, many are put at unnecessary and unjustifiable risk ...

Canada depends on immigration for its economic and demographic health. The pandemic makes it difficult to meet the immigration targets in the traditional way, by bringing in people from abroad. But there are thousands of people who are already in Canada, who are already contributing immensely to our society, despite being denied the opportunity to participate fully due to their immigration status. We can easily meet our targets by giving them a swift pathway to permanent residence. (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2020)

Similar discourses were provided by Canada's largest union, UNIFOR, and the Canadian Labour Congress, albeit more frequently in a manner that also demanded full immigration status for workers arriving in the future as well (Yussuf, 2020). The CCR also raised the question of fitting precarious status migrants into Canada's overall immigration levels to match the need for them to have "pathways" to permanent residence, two key themes that will be returned to further below.

Overall, however, what has been witnessed in the period addressed in this paper is that the policies designed to give such workers access to permanent residence fall far short of the discourses that are to welcome them. It is in this context that the policies and discourses concerning "pathways" to permanent residence have become a crucial battleground.

As visible in Figure 1, a number of measures were instituted to grant various pathways to permanent residence for groups of migrants that previously may not have had such a path, ranging in size from 2,750 workers and family members per year under the Agricultural Pilot announced in May, 2020, to the 90,000 Temporary to Permanent Residence (TR2PR) program, albeit with the latter including 40,000 international student graduates in addition to "essential workers." According to Canada's immigration department, as of October 1, 2022, only just over 8,500 individuals had received permanent residence under its highly touted "Guardian Angels" program that ran from December 14, 2020, to August 31, 2021, for refugee claimants "who worked in direct patient care" amidst the pandemic (IRCC, 2023b). These modest figures can be contextualized within Canada's overall annual permanent immigration levels to which they pale in comparison, as planned targets have ranged from 341,000 for 2020 just before pandemic hit Canada, to a planned 500,000 by 2025 in the Liberal government's 2023 to 2025 plan (IRCC, 2020b, 2022c). Discourses and the disconnect between them and policies concerning "pathways" and access to permanent residence are discussed next, within the framework of the number of immigrants that will be granted such status per year in Canada.

3.3 Terms of Societal Membership: "Pathways," Employer Power and Access to Permanent Residence (PR)

In wrestling with the question of access to permanent residence (PR) in Canada and how it has been addressed amidst and emerging from COVID-19, the policy questions and ubiquitous discourse of "pathways" to PR have become crucial. Aside from the far-right of the political spectrum, if there is a relative discursive consensus about anything amidst and emerging from the COVID-19 crisis in national political debate, it has been the need for further "pathways" to permanent residence for those living and working under temporary or precarious immigration status for their economic and social contributions to Canada. As noted above, in terms of policy, the federal government created several largely temporary or pilot programs that offered a pathway to permanent residence for particular segments of Canada's temporary migrant or precarious status population, often to reward their "essential" contributions to the country (see Figure 1). However, the discursive and policy implications that accompany such proposals bring with them several key questions to which the actors considered in this paper who are contesting the nature and shape they might take have very different answers. These include:

- How short, direct, or long is the pathway?
- Where and how does the pathway begin?
- Who controls that pathway?
- Who and how many people have access to these pathways? Are and should such pathways be exceptional, or the norm?
- What about those who have fallen or been pushed off the "path"? (Regularization)

- While beyond much of the discourses evidenced amidst COVID-19, how does one reach the end of the path to Canadian citizenship itself?

With their desire to reduce immigration levels and more so to advance reactionary discourses, the far-right in our sample was largely silent and had very little to say about these questions. Interestingly, the Conservative Party's 2021 platform was enthusiastic about providing pathways to permanent residence, though accompanied by a conditional invitation to "those who are prepared to work hard," rather than recognizing the many contributions already made by many immigrants and migrants, or as part of a rights-based discourse.¹⁴

Through its mandate letters and many announcements, the federal government has created an ever-growing number of "pathways" to permanent residence, though they have frequently been small in size and scope, while other associated policy directions have been mused about but have yet to materialize. The Prime Minister's mandate letter to the Minister of Immigration in December of 2020, for example, directed the Minister to "Build on existing pilot programs to further explore ways of regularizing status for undocumented workers who are contributing to Canadian communities" (Trudeau, 2021b). It remains to be seen whether this pledge will be implemented with the enthusiasm and resources accorded to "preferred employer" programs granting increased access to migrant worker programs. Despite a motion in parliament sponsored by a government MP in spring 2022 and increased calls from civil society that include national protests, it has taken until December 2023 for recently appointed Immigration Minister Marc Miller to indicate a forthcoming program, though with the details still yet to be announced and a federal election required to be called by October 2025 (Woolf, 2023a). Meanwhile, the one existing program designed to help vulnerable members of society with precarious immigration status to regularize it by achieving permanent residence – that is based on a "Humanitarian and Compassionate Grounds" application process – has seen a steep and unexplained decline in application approval rates (Migrant Rights Network, 2021). As will be discussed below, despite their growth, the composition of the Liberal government's increase in annual official immigration levels has not fully reflected their more inclusive discourses shared at the beginning of this paper when considered alongside the even faster growth in temporary migration.

3.4 Terms of societal membership: More power and access to labour for employers?

In our sample of documents, from right to centre-right and the sovereigntist Bloc Québécois (BQ) (the latter of whom now generally parrots the policy stances of the right-populist provincial government of the province of Québec), while noting that abuses of migrants' rights should be avoided, the Conservative Party, Liberal Party and government, business associations, and the BQ make arguments employing discourses of labour shortages to argue that Canadian federal governments should make access to migrant instead of immigrant labour more, rather than less, readily available. The Conservatives, Liberals, and business groups proposed, and a new "trusted employers" program has in fact been created with further resources devoted to granting employers further access to migrant labour, as such programs continue to grow unabated. While most of these actors frequently speak the language of access to permanent residence, they clearly believe that there is a need for migrant labour without the full rights of permanent

¹⁴ Language in their platform includes that "Canada's Conservatives will create pathways to permanence for those already living and working in Canada, so long as they are prepared to work hard, contribute to the growth and productivity of Canada, and strengthen our democracy. It does not make sense to attract the best and brightest, provide them training and knowledge, and then force these people – with all their potential – to leave" (Conservative Party of Canada, 2021, p. 128).

residency and citizenship, and that employers are to be trusted and empowered actors within such processes. The Conservatives go as far as to suggest employer sponsorship of some migrant workers for permanent residence, while the Canadian Chamber of Commerce called for the expansion of the Atlantic Immigration Program to the rest of Canada, which includes such a pathway (Cohen, 2022; Conservative Party of Canada, 2021). This indicates that despite pandemic discourses about the essential nature of migrants' work and the need to facilitate access to permanent residence as seen above, a significant number of migrants to Canada, including international student and migrant workers are expected to continue to endure interim statuses before they *might* one day find themselves on an elusive pathway to permanent residence and ultimately citizenship.

Amongst the social democratic centre-left, prominent national union umbrella groups, and migrant worker-led movements represented by the Migrants Right Network (MRN), however, it is clear that they find the lessons of the pandemic to be more radical and the need to grant permanent residence to those without it in Canada or arriving to work in Canada more pressing. In doing so, they juxtapose the sentimentality of discourses of essentiality with the reality of how migrant workers are often treated in practice.

The nature of their critique of the government's treatment of migrant workers relative to employers during the pandemic is stated very clearly by an activist with the MRN while arguing against modest, limited pathways for migrant agricultural workers witnessed with the launch of the tiny Agrifood pilot program in May 2020, which drew upon and contested the substance of policies accompanying discourses of "essential workers":

"The federal government is willing to open borders, charter planes, and give employers \$50 million to offset costs of quarantine. Many provinces have created programs to ease the farm labour shortage. Yet migrant farm workers – essential workers that keep the food system running – are being excluded from permanent residency? It makes no sense," says Kit Andres, Migrant Workers Alliance – Niagara. "COVID-19 has shown that migrant labour is essential to the Canadian economy" (Migrant Rights Network, 2020a).

Similar criticisms are prominent in many civil society responses to the "Guardian Angels" program for health care workers in the midst of the refugee claims process and the "TR2PR" programs described in Figure 1, that accompanied then-Immigration Minister Marco Mendicino's discourses of the need for generational change at the beginning of this paper. It is clear that the scale and scope of programs that grant permanent residence to those with temporary and precarious migrant statuses will remain contested for the foreseeable future. That the government implemented its mandate letter directive to implement a "trusted employer" program well ahead of a regularization program is indicative of government priorities and thus that such struggles will surely continue. The substance of the stances of political actors in response to official immigration levels plans announcements are indicative of the terms and significance of these debates, as access to permanent residence, including the categories of immigrants to be accepted, is laid out annually in these plans presented to parliament by Canadian federal governments.

3.5 Permanent Immigration Levels: Contesting their Size and Composition

Ultimately, how many people and under which category those without full immigration status are permitted to become permanent residents is determined by annual immigration levels presented by the government to parliament. Debates about them and accompanying discourses to particular policy stances can also be a helpful barometer of different actors' more general orientations to immigration. Immigration levels in Canada are fundamentally divided into 1) the

economic class (the largest category of immigrants), 2) the family class, and 3) humanitarian categories, in order of their relative size.

While debating immigration levels does not necessarily mean those on one end of a particular debate are anti-immigrant or anti-immigration, when coupled with their wider and largely pejorative immigration and migration discourses, such labels can reasonably be applied to Rebel Media and the PPC, for example. Outside of these far-right actors and the Bloc Québécois, all but the Conservatives in our sample clearly endorse higher immigration levels, including welcoming announcements that Canada is to grant 500,000 people permanent residence per year by 2025.

The Conservatives' exact orientations may well have been shifting during and since the period of this study due to multiple changes in party leadership. Without committing to particular levels, new leader Pierre Poilievre (since September 2022) has spoken in favour of immigration but effectively suggested that "the market," through employers, as well as private refugee sponsors, and family members, should determine the level of immigration to Canada (Maddeaux, 2022).¹⁵ The Conservatives' 2021 platform did not specify what immigration levels it would pursue in office, while the vast majority of the party's immigration and diversity-related press releases tend to be formulaic celebrations or congratulations of communities on culturally significant dates rather than remarking upon specific public policies. In this study, their press releases are mostly remarkable in demonstrating their enthusiasm for political outreach rather more so than their policy preferences.

The Bloc Québécois shows orientations both unique and in important ways similar to other actors considered here. They have recently protested Canada's immigration levels plans while calling for Canada's federal government to devolve further immigration powers to Québec's provincial government, including family reunification, the management of migrant worker programs, and demanding further funding to deal with the costs of asylum seekers in the province. While professing its support for diversity and immigration, the Bloc Québécois has expressed concerns that Canada's rising immigration levels represent a demographic threat to the relative weight of Québec within Canada more generally and rejects multiculturalism as a societal vision (Bloc Québécois, 2021). The party's policy demands pose significant questions concerning the terms of societal membership for those migrating into Canada. While demanding the ability to increase its workforce of migrant workers, Québec is not increasing and has in fact reduced its own permanent immigration levels that could be used to help ensure those workers have access to permanent residence, nor are the Bloc Québécois calling for such policies. This is likely in part because many of these migrant workers are not fluent in French, which the party is calling for to be a prerequisite to become a citizen in Québec. Rather than being a complete anomaly in Canada, however, such a stance bears significant resemblance to language requirements to become permanent residents and citizens elsewhere in Canada, which acts as a barrier to many migrant workers obtaining a more secure immigration status, as pointed out by the MRN.

Thus, it is important to highlight that in the Canadian immigration system permanent resident immigration levels by no means represent all of those arriving to live and work in

¹⁵ According to Poilievre, "immigration levels should be determined both by demand in Canada for immigrants and demand by immigrants to come here. So, for example, I think we should have an employer driven, economic immigration program whereby employers who have advertised jobs, and can't find locals to take them, can quickly sponsor people on work permits to come here, who then can quickly become permanent residents and citizens. And that should really determine our economic immigration. Central planning doesn't work in the economy. It doesn't work in immigration either ... What we should do is let the employers who are in desperate need of the workforce, determine who they need and make it quick and easy for them to bring law abiding, hard working skilled workers to our country ... on refugees, the second stream ... let's allow private sponsorship to drive numbers in that area. And then family reunification should be driven largely by the families that are here, that are able to support bringing loved ones here. My emphasis would be bringing young spouses..." (Maddeaux, 2022).

Canada – far from it – and the balance between them is an important social question. The social democratic NDP's critique of the Liberal government's 2022 immigration levels plan makes clearer some of the important stakes of whether the country welcomes those migrating to Canada as *permanent residents* rather than migrant workers, as well as highlighting the fact that many have fallen out of both administrative categories:

With respect to Canada's overall immigration policy for Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW), the Liberal government has chosen to perpetuate a system that favours abuse and exploitation by increasing their reliance on TFW. There is no denying that there is a power imbalance in the TFW program that has resulted in many migrant workers being exploited, including being subject to wage theft and poor working conditions.

The Minister should expand immigration Permanent Resident (PR) levels instead of increasing Canada's reliance on temporary workers, who will remain vulnerable to labour exploitation.

Furthermore, over 500,000 people are already in Canada without permanent status. They range from students to migrant workers to those who are undocumented. Many will be able to fulfill the labour skill shortage if they can access a pathway to PR status. The Minister should recognize their talent and contributions to Canada and help them on their permanent resident path.

New Democrats are calling on the government to regularize temporary and undocumented workers in Canada and provide new migrant workers with PR on arrival. (NDP, 2022)

With this critique of the government's immigration levels plans, the NDP echoes the social justice political economy discourses of the MRN and organized labour during the pandemic that there should be significantly more ready access to permanent residence for those arriving to and already within Canada, while reminding us that permanent residence levels are only one indicator of the status of new members of Canadian society. Their critique also highlights the continued failure to follow through on increasing access to permanent residence for those with undocumented status. This is seemingly a missed opportunity given the positive discourses and dispositions surrounding the contributions of migrant workers and asylum claimants during the pandemic, for example. It is difficult to imagine a better constellation of circumstances to undertake inclusive change in this policy realm than existed emerging from the pandemic as expressed in the March 2020 to December 2022 documents examined in this study. While there have been significant shifts in public opinion amidst increased economic insecurity in Canada in the interim that likely signify further challenges to making larger inclusive changes, they also demonstrate discursive resources that may be drawn upon by those who would make them.

Overall, it can be seen that Canada's battleground of immigration and belonging is complex, with perspectives ranging across the political spectrum, by economic interests, as well as dynamics of federalism and separatism, each of which shapes actors' approaches to questions of access to permanent residence and citizenship.

Conclusion and Postscript

This paper has employed a critical policy discourse analysis (CPDA) approach to examining struggles over access to permanent residence amidst and emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic by examining documents produced by actors across Canada's political spectrum from

March 2020 to December 2022, a time of rapid change. This approach has enabled us to compare and contrast competing policy discourses and stances on both this issue and organizations' general orientations to migration and belonging. Outside of the far-right and Québec separatist Bloc Québécois party, it has found near *discursive* consensus concerning the need for “pathways” to permanent residence for those living under temporary migration categories – an important discursive opening in policy discussions.

However, this surface-level consensus is far from being reflected or implemented in government policy at the scale that such apparent consensus might imply both during and since this period. Amidst a rapidly shifting environment in terms of public opinion, this implies potentially an important and tragic lost opportunity for those who would advocate for inclusive policies towards migrant workers and those without secure immigration status. This is a mirror that the migrant-led MRN in particular has continuously held up to Canadian society and has at times been echoed by the labour movement and social democratic NDP.

Despite criticism from the NDP, labour unions, and migrant justice organizations, employers have been further empowered as actors in terms of setting the terms of societal membership in a manner that matches their policy demands, interests, and advocacy. Measures to implement “pathways” to permanent residence have been modest in comparison to the growth of migrant worker programs, despite discourses that would imply a facilitative access to permanent residence and citizenship. The expansion of migrant rather than permanent immigrant labour is far exceeding permanent immigration levels. Thus, while the ubiquity of pathways discourse has indicated a potential political opening for more inclusive policies, actual policy developments – or a lack thereof – demonstrate their limits to date and fundamental continuities.

These dynamics have been further illustrated in recent Statistics Canada data, which indicates record and quickly growing numbers of non-permanent residents within the population – 2,198,679 of 40,097,761 (approximately 5.5%) on July 1, 2023, a figure that some critics argue significantly underestimates the true number of migrant workers and others without a secure immigration status in Canada (Lundy & Woolf, 2023; Statistics Canada, 2023a).

Since the end of the period under consideration, there have been further important developments and potentially a rapidly shifting political landscape. Amidst greater economic insecurity, public opinion has quickly shifted. Environics Research data show a rapid decline in the number of Canadians who disagree with the statement that Canada accepts too many immigrants from September 2022 to September 2023, with economic reasons primarily cited for concern, and Abacus data and other pollsters show that a majority of Canadians now believe that current immigration levels are too high (Neuman, 2023; Sheppard & Coletto, 2023). The government has also faced intensified criticism over temporary immigration levels and that combined, the two are too high, and that the government has ignored anticipatable impacts on housing prices and access to social services (Globe and Mail, 2024). Amidst these concerns, in December 2023 Immigration Minister Marc Miller stated that his department planned to reduce the number of migrant workers in Canada and “take action” concerning the treatment of international students after tabling an immigration levels plan that would see permanent immigration levels stabilize at 500,000 in 2025 and 2026 (IRCC, 2023c; Woolf, 2023b). While lacking details and sharing that he expects to encounter many views on the subject, the Minister also told the Globe and Mail newspaper that beginning with construction workers, his department is,

preparing to create a ‘broad and comprehensive program’ that would allow many without valid documents to apply for permanent residency in Spring, 2024. Among those included would be people who entered the country legally, as temporary workers or international students, and then remained here after their visas expired. (Woolf, 2023a).

With an election having to be called by October 2025, it is unclear even if announced in greater detail to what extent such a program would be implemented.

In this context, it is not fully clear how the Conservatives, well ahead of the governing Liberals in public opinion polls in early 2024, will navigate their attempts to achieve an electoral “minimum winning coalition” that both preserves the support of those they fear losing or failing to regain from the People’s Party, and the necessary support of racialized and ethnicized voters it alienated during its time in office through exclusionary policies and rhetoric in areas such as citizenship (Carlaw, 2017; Carlaw & Winter, 2023; Curry et al., 2022). Former PPC leader Pierre Poilievre has frustrated some far-right pundits with a refusal to state what immigration levels he would implement (Shepherd, 2023). Seemingly, in an effort to appeal to conservative and nationalist Québec voters, in May 2023 the PPC voted for a motion in parliament sponsored by the separatist Bloc Québécois to oppose the pro-business Century Initiative’s proposal that Canada seek to raise its population to 100 million by the year 2100 (from 40 million at present), a motion that included language that the country’s present immigration levels were consistent with that goal (Parliament of Canada, 2023). In a year-end interview in an apparent effort to portray whatever level he decides to pursue as objective, Conservative Party leader Pierre Poilievre argued his immigration levels plans would be “mathematically driven” and linked to housing construction, “growth in the number of doctors and nurses,” and job availability (Lawton, 2023). When asked if he supports an “amnesty” in the context of Minister Miller’s comments concerning regularization cited above, he responded that “permanency should be given to people who come here lawfully, not to people ... who deliberately broke the rules to be in the country” and that he “would restore lawful immigration” (Lawton, 2023). Thus, in his attempt to return the Conservatives to power, Poilievre is balancing the preferences of a complex set of potential voters. Discursively this may mean in addition to working with pro-immigrant and migrant discursive resources strengthened during the pandemic, to best make the case for a comprehensive regularization program Immigration Minister Miller will need in part to educate the public that many who fall out of a secure immigration status enter Canada with a recognized one but fall into irregularity as the system becomes an ever more complex one of “chutes and ladders” of complex paths and roadblocks to citizenship rather than permanent residence upon arrival (Carlaw, 2023; Goldring & Landolt, 2012).

Ultimately, and substantively, pathways discourses and proposals appear to have provided a way for actors with very different political and policy agendas to signal their commitment to immigrant and migrant rights and their well-being, but without necessarily engaging in more inclusive structural change that would address the insecurity and labour, and human rights violations experienced by many living under temporary or precarious statuses. The continued growth of Canada’s migrant worker and precarious status population and the substantively important rights that accrue to those who achieve permanent residence mean that pathways discourses and policies granting access to permanent residence will continue to be of tremendous importance and highly contested

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