

March 5, 2026

The Honourable Lena Metlege Diab, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship  
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada  
365 Laurier Avenue West  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 1L1

Dear Minister:

On behalf of Restaurants Canada, I am writing to express our concern regarding the recent changes to the 2026 Express Entry categories, which no longer include cooks (NOC 63200) under eligible trades.

We support the government's objective to better align immigration pathways with long term economic priorities and to focus on high demand sectors. The removal of cooks from category-based selection is inconsistent with this objective and does not reflect ongoing and well documented labour shortages in the restaurant and foodservice industry.

Foodservice is Canada's fourth largest private sector employer and the largest employer of newcomers. Half of Canadian restaurants are owned by entrepreneurs who immigrated to Canada. When restaurants thrive, local economies and tourism thrive alongside them.

Despite sustained wage growth - the second highest of all industries in the last two years - domestic recruitment efforts, and investments in training and retention, the industry continues to face persistent labour shortages in many regions, especially in rural and tourism areas of the country. A recent KMPG report estimates 78,000 vacant positions across the sector today, with that number projected to exceed 105,000 by 2030. Cooks are a highly skilled position and are foundational to restaurant operations on which all other positions are dependent. In 2024, cooks accounted for 15.4% of total restaurant employment. Excluding this occupation from Express Entry category-based selection limits a practical and proven pathway to permanent residence for workers who are already contributing meaningfully to Canada's economy.

Given the government's broader efforts to reduce temporary resident levels, it is even more critical that permanent immigration pathways remain responsive to essential, in demand skilled occupations such as cooks.

We strongly encourage the government to reconsider the removal of cooks from the eligible trades list under Express Entry category-based selection. Ensuring that this occupation remains accessible through permanent immigration pathways would reflect real labour market realities and support economic growth in communities across Canada.

Restaurants Canada stands ready to work collaboratively with your department to ensure immigration policy supports both economic growth and successful integration. We request the opportunity to meet with you and your officials to discuss the sector's workforce needs in more detail.

Yours sincerely,



Kelly Higginson  
President and CEO