CANADA PULSE INSIGHTS

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Toronto/GTA Give Federal Government Poor Marks for Immigration Fixes, Local Pressures Continue and Fuel Divided Views On Newcomer Contributions

A new public opinion poll by Canada Pulse Insights for Rogers CityNews finds sizable majorities of residents in Toronto and across the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) who say they will continue to welcome newcomers, but most want the flow of immigration entrants to be maintained at the reduced levels set by the federal government in January 2025 over the next year.

Reflecting on the impact of those policies over the past ten months, only 27 percent of Toronto residents and 21 percent across the GTA credit Ottawa with improving immigration management. The findings highlight perceptions that higher levels of immigration are having a negative impact on areas such as youth employment, housing affordability, and access to hospital emergency rooms—which is likely also fueling the view among a sizable proportion across the total region that new immigrants are not having a positive impact on their city.

Regardless, and despite calls from mayors and others that the strain on local resources due to a surge of immigrants to their municipalities requires more funding and effort from the federal government, just one in three (31%) across the entire region say that Ottawa is not providing enough financial and other support mechanisms to municipalities for their intake of newcomers.

Low Confidence in Federal Management of Immigration System

Although federal policies enacted ten months ago appear to have slowed the pace of immigration, public confidence in the government's performance remains weak.

Only one quarter (25% Toronto, 23% GTA, 27%) of residents across the region believe Ottawa is managing the immigration system—especially with respect to its impact where they live—better than it was a year ago. Half (51%—Toronto 50%, GTA 51%) say the system is operating in the same manner as it was then, while one quarter (25%—Toronto 27%, GTA 22%) say it has become worse.

Broader Context: Labour/Employment, Health Care, and Housing

Despite adjustments made to immigration flows earlier this year, the survey results point to widespread concern that immigration pressures continue to interact with affordability and service-delivery challenges across the region.

- **Corporate reliance on foreign labour**: three-quarters (76% Toronto, 77% GTA) say most companies depend

on foreign workers to reduce labour costs rather than to address genuine labour shortages.

- **Youth employment**: 52 percent of Torontonians and 59 percent of GTA residents agree that higher foreign worker permit levels—not a slowing economy—are the reason young people cannot find jobs.

- **Health-care system**: Half (50%) of Toronto residents and 58 percent across the GTA agree that higher immigration levels—not a lack of doctors or medical services—are a major factor behind congested emergency rooms.

- **Housing affordability**: A majority (58% in Toronto and 65% across the GTA) believe housing affordability problems stem more from population pressures linked to immigration than from developers or landlords seeking higher profits

Community Attitudes toward Immigration and Local Pressures

Likely reflecting those perceived pressures, views are sharply divided on the social impact of newcomers. In Toronto, opinion is split between half (50%) who agree that new immigrants are having a positive impact on their city while the other half disagree.

In the GTA, just 43 percent agree that new immigrants in their city are having a positive impact compared with the majority (57%) who disagree.

Municipal Funding and Local Support

Despite local pressures and social concerns, as well as calls from mayors and other officials for increased funding, an average of only one third (33%) of those living in the combined Toronto/GTA region believe the federal government needs to provide more financial and other support mechanisms to municipalities for their intake of newcomers. The remainder are split between those who believe their municipality is getting the right amount (34%) of support or too much (31%).

In Toronto, 35 percent say their municipality does not receive enough financial and other support from the federal government, while 35 percent feel the amount is about right and another 30 percent believe too much is being provided.

Across the GTA, 31 percent believe their municipality does not receive enough financial and other support from the federal government, 36 percent say the level is about right, and 33 percent believe too much is provided.

Future Immigration Levels

Across the entire region, two-thirds (66%) of residents want immigration into Canada to continue—with a majority (56%) wanting to do so with the current restrictions in place and another one-in-ten (10%) wanting to loosen the restrictions to receive newcomers, especially among certain groups. This group is contrasted with one-third (34%) don't want to let any newcomers into the country for the foreseeable future.

In Toronto, 70 percent say Canada should continue to accept newcomers over the next year as follows: 59 percent want the federal government to maintain intake at the newly reduced level, and 11 percent would prefer looser restrictions. Three in ten (30%) believe allowing immigrants into the country should be paused for the foreseeable future.

Across the GTA, a smaller two-thirds (64%) prefer keeping the door open to immigrants being allowed to enter the country over the next year—with the majority (54% of that group) wanting to maintain the current reduced levels, while another 10 percent would favour easing restrictions. The remainder (36%) want to halt new arrivals to Canada for the foreseeable future.

Preferred Categories for Admission

Among the 70 percent of Toronto respondents who support continuing immigration, preferences for how many within the classifications of immigrants allowed into the country begin with those who are economic immigrants (skilled work/business 83%), followed by international students (48%), family-sponsored immigrants (46%), refugees and protected persons (42%), and temporary foreign workers (41%).

In the GTA, among the two-thirds (64%) who support continued immigration, the pattern of categorical selection is similar: economic immigrants (skilled work/business (78%), followed by international students (48%), family-class immigrants (45%), refugees and protected persons (35%), and temporary foreign workers (34%).

About the Survey

This public opinion poll was undertaken for Rogers CityNews by Canada Pulse Insights. The online survey was administered by the sample and data collection experts at Sago from September 30 to October 6, 2025, among adult (aged 18+) residents of Toronto (n=406) and throughout the Greater Toronto Area (GTA n=403). The data has been weighted to represent the adult population based on the most recent census. For comparison purposes, probability samples

of this size for both the city of Toronto and the GTA each have a margin of error of ±4.9 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Any discrepancies between the text of this release and the data tables are due to rounding.

Canada Pulse Insights is an independent, Canadian owned public opinion research firm led by veteran pollster John Wright. The company adheres to the Canadian Research and Insights Council (CRIC) public opinion research standards and disclosure requirements. Sago, formerly the Schlesinger Group, is CRIC accredited and brings more than 55 years of experience in both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

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