

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT TALENT IN CHATHAM-KENT

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Prepared for:
Chatham-Kent Workforce Planning Board

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Executive summary

The authors of this report review the circumstances of international students in Chatham-Kent and make recommendations to increase their long-term integration into the local labour market after graduation.

Profiled in the report are the federal and provincial policies which have led to a surge in the number of international students coming to Canada, most notably Ontario colleges, and explores the challenges which international students encounter with respect to daily living, attending school, securing work experience, and in seeking permanent residency. The report also examines local labour market demand and identifies sectors which could employ international student graduates based on their area of study.

The report is based on a review of relevant literature and labour market information, and conversations with a range of stakeholders, notably post-secondary institutions, local employers, the immigration sector, and international students residing in Chatham-Kent.

What was learned was that there are international students interested in remaining in the community to work after graduation even though most international students find themselves in the community by chance. The right kind of work can lead to permanent residency status and students need assistance in accessing job opportunities with local employers. Depending on the labour market sector in which they work, there is interest in remaining for the long run and, for those who have families, raising their families in the community. Employers also demonstrate an interest in hiring international students, who have a reputation for being skilled and hardworking.

Effective interventions need to be developed to enable more international students to permanently settle in the community as they face many challenges and barriers. While some services and supports are available, more is required to reduce their struggles, support their academic success, and secure internships and work experience leading to permanent residency and permanent settlement.

The announcement of changes to the student visa program will reduce the number of international students coming to Ontario and will increase the competition for international student enrolments across the province. Providing international students with supports in addition to what they currently receive from their colleges could have the added benefit of attracting future students to Chatham-Kent.

Following is a summary of recommendations:

Recommendation #1: Create a Working Committee on International Students in Chatham-Kent to serve as a platform for information sharing, identification of issues and development of responses

Recommendation #2: Enhance the flow of information to international students, both pre-arrival as well as regular reminders about available services after they arrive

Recommendation #3: Update the International Students webpage on the Municipality of Chatham-Kent's website to highlight local sectors in need of workers, as well as increase traffic to the site through other platforms

Recommendation #4: Undertake an awareness campaign to familiarize local employers about the availability of international students and to explain the regulations and best practices applying to their employment

Recommendation #5: Expand ongoing dialogue with local international students to monitor their concerns and challenges

Recommendation #6: Track international student outcomes, including indicators reflecting their experience in school as well as six months after graduation, to inform further recruitment of international students

Recommendation #7: Create sector-specific Employer Advisory Groups at St. Clair College Chatham campus to socialize and engage with international students to familiarize students with the local labour market and to foster contacts and networks

Recommendation #8: The Working Committee on International Students in Chatham-Kent should prioritize the following areas for action: linkages to employment; promoting more social networking; transportation; housing; English language assessment, practice and instruction; and pathways to permanent residency

The report also suggests that Chatham-Kent stakeholders continue recruitment efforts to attract newcomers through job fairs and partnering with Bridging programs; that there be a focus on attracting families because of the widespread perception that Chatham-Kent is a family-friendly community; and that there should be formal engagement with Lambton College because international students from that college also participate in program placements with Chatham-Kent employers.



Overview of project

Purpose

The scope of this assignment was set out in a Request for Proposals published by the Municipality of Chatham-Kent, which sought to identify local international student workforce attraction and retention opportunities. Thus, the goal of this project was to build an understanding of skillsets and career aspirations, and to provide recommendations for enhanced labour market participation for off-campus and post-graduate work permit jobs, and retention outcomes for international students living in Chatham-Kent. This project was overseen by the Chatham-Kent Workforce Planning Board.

Methodology

The following was to be investigated and described in broad terms:

- The circumstances of the international student population studying in Chatham-Kent, including their numbers, experiences, education, post-graduate goals, participation in the labour force, openness to remaining in Chatham-Kent after graduation, and barriers to employment and settlement
- Labour market demand in Chatham-Kent based on quantitative labour market data and qualitative insights from employers
- Education Program offerings, both current and planned, by post-secondary institutions hosting international students in Chatham-Kent, in particular St. Clair College Chatham campus because the campus hosts the highest number of international students locally

It is important to note that the context of international students changed while the project was underway.

Beginning in late August 2023, the topic of international students started to receive considerable attention in the provincial and national media over their potential contribution to rental housing accessibility and affordability concerns, and then later as the federal government announced a reduction in the number of international student study visas to be issued over the next two years.

To provide context for the recommendations laid out in this report, a section was added describing the rise in the number of international students in Ontario and the contributing factors for the increase, as well as the possible impacts the federal government policy changes would have on future international student enrollments among Ontario colleges generally and, specifically, St. Clair College.

The following activities were undertaken to gather this information:

- A scan of the literature on the topic of international students in Canada
- A local labour market analysis, including data analysis, as well as a review of labour market studies pertaining to Chatham-Kent
- Engagement with international students living in Chatham-Kent, including an on-line survey as well as interviews¹
- Interviews with local employers identifying their current labour market needs as well as exploring

¹ The on-line survey was distributed through key informants, a social media platform and word-of-mouth, and through this, participants were also invited to an interview; as incentive, there was a draw for several prizes of gift cards for completing the survey, as well as gift cards for those who participated in the survey. In total, 10 international students were engaged with, who spoke about their experiences as well as those of their peers. Five other scheduled interviews with international students did not take place, despite follow-up efforts.

their assessment of international students as placement students and as employees²

- Interviews with local post-secondary institutions, including considerable engagement with St. Clair College staff, as well as interviews with representatives from the University of Guelph, Ridgetown Campus and Lambton College; the objectives for these interviews were to identify education program offerings, the context and circumstances behind international student enrolment, understanding their views of the experiences of international students in program selection and settling in, their assessment of international student academic performance and in their program placements, their ability to access employment while in school, as well as their perceptions of the future career and settlement choices of these students
- Interviews with stakeholders in the immigration sector³ to gain their insights into the reasons why international students choose to come to Chatham-Kent, the challenges they experience in living, studying and working locally, and their views on the future plans of these students and the factors which contribute to their staying in Chatham-Kent after graduation

The insights described led to a set of recommendations to enhance the likelihood of more international students choosing to study and then remain in Chatham-Kent after graduation.

Outline of report

This report is organized as follows:

- **Context relating to international students:** a review of policies contributing to the surge of international students, enrolment numbers for Ontario colleges and for St. Clair College, and program enrolments for St. Clair College Chatham Campus; overview of regulations relating to working in Canada as an international student and for accessing permanent residency after graduation; summary of the literature on the experiences of international students in Canada
- **Migration into Chatham-Kent:** an overview of the trends relating to migration into Chatham-Kent among temporary foreign workers, student visa holders, new permanent residents, and migrants from the rest of Ontario
- **Labour market context:** A profile of local labour market data, including employment by industry, employment by occupation, job vacancy trends, changes in the number of establishments by industry and by number of employees, and identification of sectors experiencing growing labour demand
- **Views of local employers:** Summary of insights from local employers
- **Views from local post-secondary institutions:** Review of insights from local post-secondary schools
- **Views from the immigration sector:** Summary of input from the immigration sector
- **Views of international students:** Recounting the personal experiences and views of international students living in Chatham-Kent
- **Changes in international student visa policies:** Overview of recent federal government policy changes in relation to the issuance of study visas and their likely impact
- **Findings and recommendations:** Summary and integration of findings, followed by specific recommendations aimed at increasing the number of international students securing education-related full-time work in Chatham-Kent after graduation

² Interviews were arranged with the assistance of the Chatham-Kent Workforce Planning Board; industry sectors with placements from St. Clair College Chatham were prioritized. In total, 10 employers were interviewed.

³ Included views from settlement services, an immigration consultant, and insights from reports of the Chatham-Kent Local Immigration Partnership.

Context relating to international students

This section profiles international students: how it is that international students have grown in prominence in our post-secondary institutions; trends in terms of study permit holders and enrolments; the literature on the experience of international students.

Policies which have contributed to the surge in international students

There are three government policies which have fueled the very large increase in international students coming to Canada:

- Federal government immigration policy
- Ontario government post-secondary funding policy
- Ontario government policy related to public-private partnerships

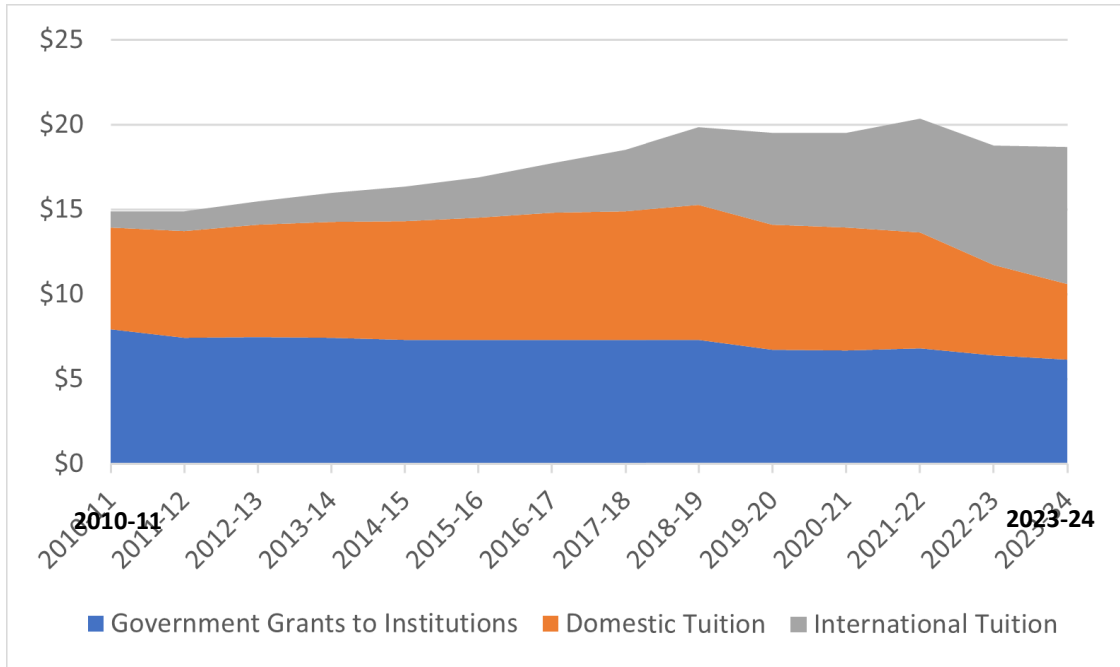
Federal government immigration policy. In 2014, as part of the Government of Canada's International Education Strategy, a goal was set of doubling the number of international students in Canada by 2022. The strategy further highlighted the view that international students should be an important source of skilled labour as applicants for permanent residency after their graduation. The acquisition of a Canadian education, the enhancement of English language skills and the experience with Canadian customs, norms and styles of workplace communication, all acquired in the course of graduating from a Canadian post-secondary institution, made it far more likely that international students could integrate successfully into the Canadian labour market and Canadian society. This was a reasonable assumption: labour market data showed that newcomers who held post-secondary degrees from Canadian institutions fared much better, in terms of employment income and the skill level of their occupation, compared to those whose post-secondary education was acquired outside of Canada.⁴

Ontario government post-secondary funding policy. In 2019, the Ontario provincial government instituted a 10% tuition cut for post-secondary education and froze tuition at that level. A slow decline in the proportion of post-secondary funding coming from government resulted in tuition from international students become the largest single source of funding for these institutions (there was no freeze on the tuition of international students). Chart 1 illustrates the trends in terms of sources of income for Ontario's post-secondary sector (excluding items such as ancillary services, donations and investment income).



⁴ Two studies illustrating these outcomes: Peel Halton Workforce Development Group, *STEM MATTERS: An Overview of STEM Educational Attainment, Employment and Skill Needs in Peel and Halton Regions*, 2018; Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council, *Newcomers and Immigrants in the Hamilton Labour Market: Outcomes and Opportunities for Improvement*, 2020.

Chart 1: Post-secondary institutional income from government sources and tuition, Ontario 2010-11 to 2023-24, in real \$2023 (in billions)

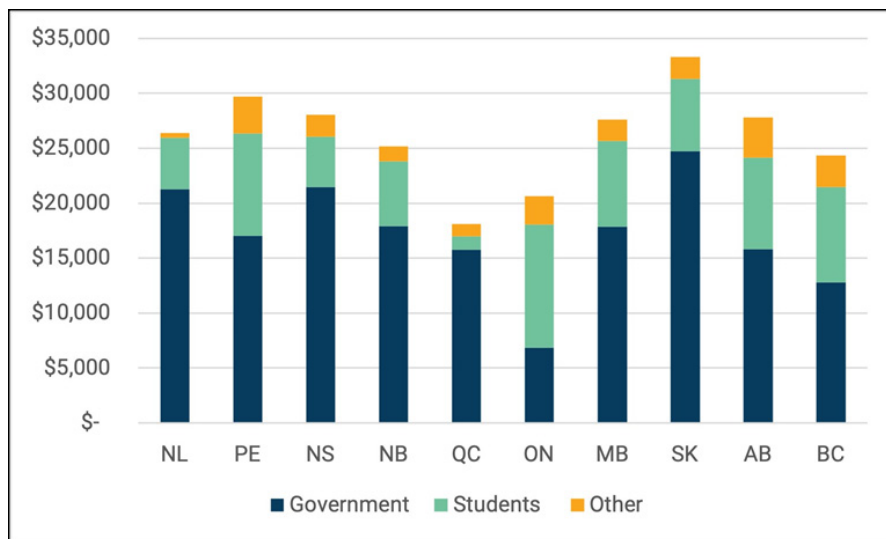


Higher Education Strategy Associates, “State of Postsecondary Education in Canada 2023,” One Thought to Start your Day blog, September 6, 2023

The Ontario government contribution to college revenues is the lowest in Canada (in 2021-22, the contribution per student was \$6,339 compared to the Canadian average of \$11,449), and per-student contribution from tuition fees, especially from international students, are the highest in Canada (Chart 2).

One surprising consequence of these trends is that international students from India now contribute a greater share of the revenues of Ontario colleges than does the Ontario government.⁵

Chart 2: Total per-student college funding by province and source, Canada, 2021-22



Higher Education Strategy Associates, “College Finances 2021-22,” One Thought to Start your Day blog, January 16, 2024

⁵ Higher Education Strategy Associates, “State of Postsecondary Education in Canada 2023,” One Thought to Start Your Day blog, September 6, 2023.

Ontario government policy related to public-private partnerships. Public-private partnerships in the context of Ontario colleges operate in the following way: a public college from outside the Greater Toronto Area enters into a contract with a private career college in the GTA, whereby the public college enrolls international students (for which it gets their tuition) and contracts the private career college to teach these students according to the public college’s curriculum, for which it receives a fee. The rationale is that, just as immigrant newcomers are more likely to settle in the GTA, international students are more likely to want to carry out their studies in the GTA, where there are more cultural and religious institutions that cater to their needs, and often family members who have settled there.

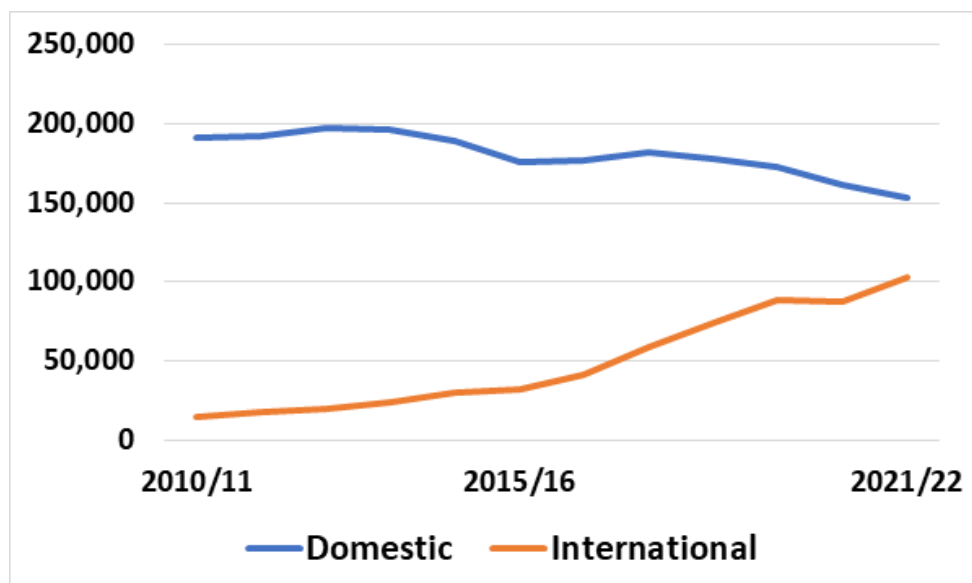
This reliance on public-private partnerships for this purpose started around 2012. The Ontario government commissioned a study into this practice, whose report in 2017 recommended that this practice be ended because it was proving too difficult to ensure that this practice could be properly regulated (recruiting practices, quality of instruction and so on) and that there was potential risk of reputational damage to the entire college system. The government of the day agreed, but that decision was reversed by the current government and the practice was allowed to expand, such that since then almost all colleges outside the GTA entered into such partnerships.⁶

The reason for elaborating on this issue is because a large portion of the increase in international student enrolment actually reflects attendance at these public-private partnership campuses, as opposed to the local campuses of the public colleges where these students are technically enrolled.

Enrolment numbers for international students

These policy dynamics have contributed to the rising number of international student enrolments at Ontario community colleges. Chart 3 shows the relative numbers for domestic and international enrolments for all community colleges.

Chart 3: Domestic and international enrolments, Ontario community colleges, 2011-12 to 2021-22



Statistics Canada, Post-secondary enrolments, Table 37-10-0234-01

⁶ David Trick, Review of Ontario College Partnerships with Private Providers in Canada, prepared for the Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, March 2017; Joe Friesen, “Ontario dismisses 2017 report that satellite college campuses lower quality of education,” *The Globe and Mail*, November 19, 2019; Higher Education Strategy Associates, “A Short Explainer of Public Private Partnerships in Ontario Colleges,” One Thought to Start Your Day blog, September 11, 2023.

Not only has international student enrolment increased dramatically in less than 10 years, but domestic enrolment declined during this same period, which was another impetus to find students elsewhere. Given the data on student visas issued, the number of international students has increased further since 2021-2022.

Ontario colleges have turned to international students in varying degrees. Table 1 shows the proportion of full-time students at each college enrolled in 2021-2022 who were international students. St. Clair College was above the average for Ontario, whereas Lambton College had the highest proportion of international students in the province. It warrants emphasizing that these enrolments include students attending public-private partnership campuses. Thus, in the case of St. Clair College, these figures include students at the Windsor and Chatham campuses, as well as attending the St. Clair College public-private partnership campuses in the Greater Toronto Area.

Table 1: International students as a percentage of total enrolments by Ontario college, 2021-2022

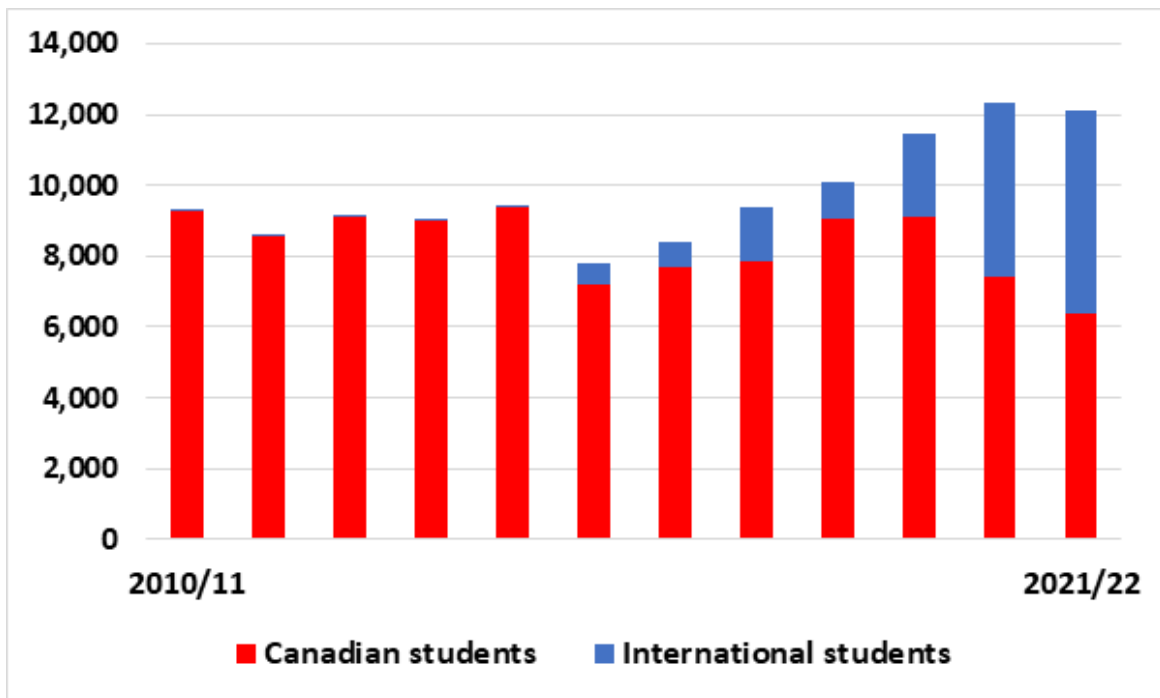
College	Percent	College	Percent
Lambton College	85%	Georgian College	35%
Northern College	76%	Fanshawe College	34%
Canadore College	75%	La Cité collégiale	30%
Loyalist College	69%	George Brown College	28%
Cambrian College	59%	Sheridan College	27%
Sault College	58%	Humber College	26%
Conestoga College	56%	Fleming College	24%
St. Lawrence	48%	Confederation College	23%
St. Clair College	47%	Durham College	19%
Seneca College	45%	Mohawk College	19%
Centennial College	44%	Collège Boréal	16%
Niagara College	41%	Algonquin College	16%
ONTARIO AVERAGE	40%		

Statistics Canada, Post-secondary enrolments, Table 37-10-0234-01

St. Clair College has, only in the last few years, had a substantial proportion of international students. Chart 4 shows the distribution of Canadian and international full-time students over the years.



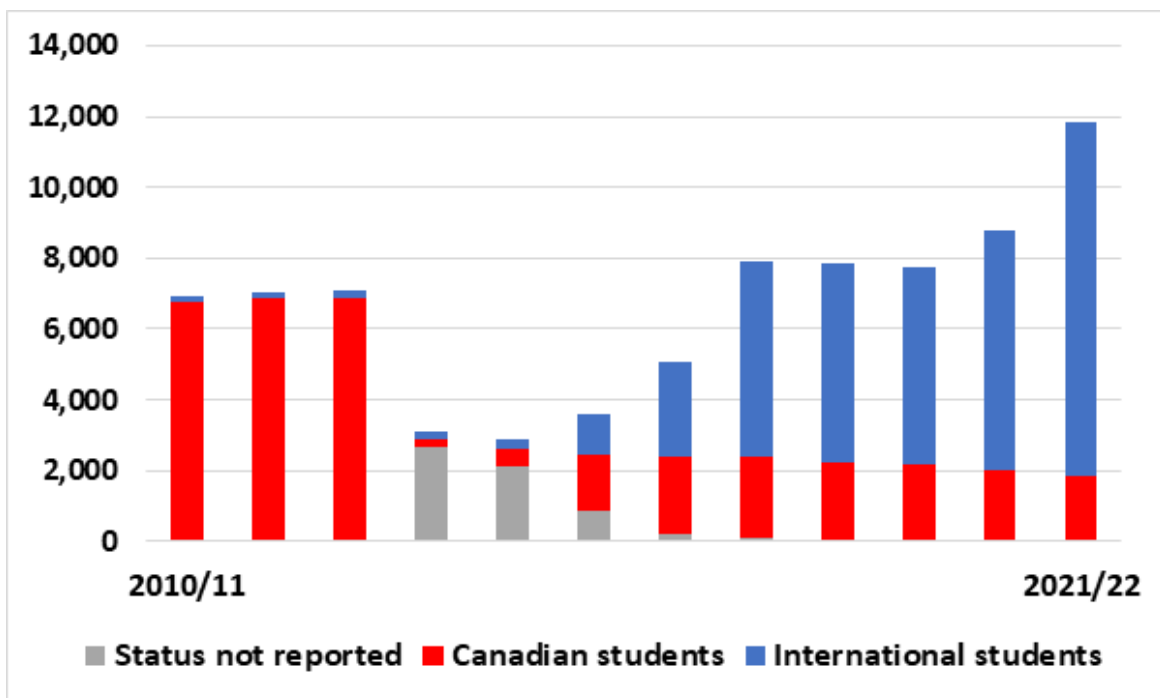
Chart 4: Number of Canadian and international full-time students, St. Clair College, 2010-11 to 2021-22



Statistics Canada, Post-secondary enrolments, Table 37-10-0234-01

By way of contrast, Chart 5 shows the same data for Lambton College, where international students already made up over 50% of enrolments in 2016-17.

Chart 5: Number of Canadian and international full-time students, Lambton College, 2010-11 to 2021-22



Statistics Canada, Post-secondary enrolments, Table 37-10-0234-01

Program enrolment numbers for international students at Chatham campus

Table 2 shows the total number of student enrollments for St. Clair College Chatham, by domestic and international students, by semester.

Table 2: Student enrollments, St. Clair College Chatham, domestic and international students

	Domestic	International
Fall 2018	951	150
Winter 2019	911	140
Fall 2019	873	226
Winter 2020	833	260
Fall 2020	971	195
Winter 2021	913	209
Fall 2021	867	193
Winter 2022	769	164
Fall 2022	788	165
Winter 2023	690	202
Fall 2023	696	295
Winter 2024	658	422

There has been a continuing decline in the number of domestic students and a steady growth in the number of international students, such that the total number of students has remained relatively steady. In the last three semesters, the rate of increase in international students has especially picked up: in Fall 2023, the number was 46% higher than the previous semester, and in Winter, 2024, it was a further 43% higher.

Table 3 lists the programs which international students are enrolled in at St. Clair College, Chatham campus. The data shows the figures for all students enrolled in that program across all semesters, for the fall of each year (there often is a little fall in the numbers by the winter term, as some students drop out). The enrollment figures are listed for both domestic and international students.



Table 3: Enrollment figures by program for domestic and international students, fall of each year, St. Clair College Chatham, 2019-2023

FALL 2018		FALL 2019		FALL 2020		FALL 2021		FALL 2022		FALL 2023	
BUSINESS (4 semesters)											
Dom	Int'l	Dom	Int'l	Dom	Int'l	Dom	Int'l	Dom	Int'l	Dom	Int'l
0	98	0	139	0	119	0	126	0	86	18	66
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR (4 semesters)											
67	7	64	24	62	26	61	21	53	26	50	73
PRACTICAL NURSING (5 semesters)											
207	4	166	21	196	16	187	22	131	24	128	54
ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING TECHNICIAN (4 semesters)											
36	24	43	33	44	19	35	11	38	17	35	27
DEVELOPMENT SERVICE WORKER (4 semesters)											
72	7	78	8	74	8	46	6	39	9	37	23
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST/PHYSIOTHERAPIST ASSISTANT (4 semesters)											
54	0	43	0	53	0	65	0	64	0	27	48
PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS (2 semesters)											
16	0	30	1	24	0	20	0	26	1	20	0

There has typically been a steady growth in the number of international students by program and in the number of different programs in which international students have been enrolled. Initially, the Business program attracted by far the greatest number of international students – until Winter 2022, this course accounted for over 60% of international student enrollments in each term. A more distant second was the Electrical Engineering Technician program, soon joined by the Early Childhood Education and Practical Nursing programs. More recently, the Development Service Worker and Occupational Therapist/Physiotherapist Assistant programs also started enrolling international students. The Personal Support Worker program is on this list because after negligible enrollment, in Winter 2024, 29 international students enrolled in this course. Indeed, in the Winter 2024 term, additional cohorts were added for two programs: another 68 enrolled in a new Business program stream, and 46 enrolled in a new Development Service Worker program stream.



Table 4 profiles the eight programs that international students are enrolled in at the Chatham campus in the Winter 2024 term, together with the number of students per program, domestic and international. There are also an additional eight programs in which another 326 domestic students are attending.

Table 4: Enrollment figures by program for domestic and international students, St. Clair College Chatham, Winter 2024

	Domestic	International
Business	21	131
Development Services Worker	36	69
Early Childhood Educator	43	72
Electrical Engineering Technician	36	26
Occ/ Physio Therapist Assistant	25	46
Personal Support Worker	28	29
Practical Nursing	107	47
Pre-health Pathway to Advanced Diploma	36	2
TOTAL	332	422

Regulations regarding working in Canada as an international student

The regulations respecting working in Canada as an international student are quite detailed, with many qualifications and exceptions. This description is not meant as a guide for determining whether an international student can work or not, but rather to provide a general sense of the overall context for the ability to work, as existed in the fall of 2023, when most of this assignment was carried out and which was the context for the viewpoints expressed by key informants for this report. For those wishing to understand the application of these rules to the circumstances of a particular international student, reference should be made to the regulations available on-line at the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada website.⁷

Working on-campus

- Can only start working after the start of their study program
- Can work if one's study permit lists a condition that says one is allowed to work on- or off-campus
- Can work on campus without a work permit if one is a full-time student and have a study permit
- There is no limit to the number of hours one can work on-campus

Work as a co-op student or intern

- One can apply for a co-op or intern work permit with a letter from one's school confirming that a work placement is required to complete one's program

⁷ Various additional requirements or qualifications of the rules are not listed in this description, for example, the need to have a Social Insurance Number.

Working off-campus

- One can work off-campus without a work permit if one is a full-time student in a program that is at least six months long and leads to a degree, diploma or certificate
- The rule had been that one could work up to 20 hours per week, but this limit was lifted for 2023 for those who had applied for their study permit in 2022

Post-graduate work permit

- Graduates of college and university programs, including public-private partnerships, were eligible to apply for a work permit after graduation
- The length of the work permit depended on the length of study program⁸
 - Less than eight months: not eligible for a work permit
 - Eight months to two years: same length as the study program
 - Two years or more: three-year work permit

Pathway to permanent residency for international students

The pathway to permanent residency is not guaranteed for all international students who study in Canada, and it can be a lengthy process for many. Much depends on the area of study, the immigration program for which they might be eligible, their success in obtaining the right post-graduate work, and whether they already have family in Canada. Indeed, there is a growing number of international students who are transitioning to permanent residency, as the total number of international students exceeds the number of newcomers gaining residency each year in Canada.

An international student must prove Canadian work experience in their area of study to be eligible to apply for Permanent Residency. Only select programs provide eligibility for permanent residency:

- Business and Management
- Finance and Economics
- Healthcare and Medicine
- Engineering
- Computer Science
- Information Technology

Categories such as skilled labour depend on the Provincial Nomination Program for a pathway. Other government program streams providing a pathway to permanent residency in Ontario are:

- Canadian Experience Class (requiring at least 12 months of work experience in a skilled occupation)
- Express Entry (of which the Experience Class is a part)
- Work Permit
- Skilled Worker Stream
- Family Class

⁸ There are various exceptions to these general rules.

Literature on the experiences of international students

Only recently has the phenomenon of international students in Canada attracted much study and, not surprisingly, many of these studies focus on the experiences of these students in Peel Region.⁹ These studies typically convey similar messages about international students, of which the most prominent are:¹⁰

Attraction to Canada: Canada is an attractive destination for many international students, including a long history of receiving immigrants, oftentimes the presence of friends or family already in Canada, the good reputation of its education system, the ability to work during and after graduation, the potential pathway to permanent residency in Canada, and, generally, a diverse and tolerant country

Attraction to colleges: Colleges often provide shorter programs, which appear to be more closely linked to labour market needs, meaning that international students pay less in tuition, are more likely to get a job, and are more likely to work sooner

Satisfaction with their educational institution: These reports note that students are satisfied that they are getting a quality education and feel welcome in these schools

A sense of exploitation by recruiters: Many international students purchase the services of a recruiter, primarily to navigate the visa application process. Common complaints are that they are over-charged, misinformed about financial realities of living in Canada, the challenges of finding employment, and misinformed about the likelihood of securing permanent residency¹¹

Challenged academically: International students sometimes find it difficult to adjust to different styles of teaching, different expectations regarding faculty/student roles, workload and academic standards, and also with language, where their English language skills may not include the range of specialized vocabulary that applies in their field of study; they may also experience more challenges in expressing themselves freely in oral and written communications, which may impact their academic success

Challenged financially: The far higher tuition paid by international students is just one of the financial hurdles they have to overcome; rising inflation in Canada has made their budgets tighter, which are sometimes based on erroneous assumptions;¹² as well as rising housing costs (which is partly the consequence of larger numbers of temporary residents, including international students, living in Canada)¹³

9 In terms of Designated Learning Institutions (approved post-secondary schools which can host international students), Mississauga has 49 and Brampton has 30. <<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/designated-schools.html>>.

10 Studies relied on for this overview are: Amira El Masri and Noah Khan, International Students' Lived Experiences: A Review of Literature, Centre for Global Education and Internationalization, Sheridan College, 2022; Indus Community Services and Punjabi Community Health Services, Invited & Forgotten: International Students in Crisis, 2021; Peel Newcomer Strategy Group, International Students Needs Assessment Report, 2018; Region of Peel, Staff Council Report, "Regional Supports and the Impact to International Students in Peel," Meeting Date: 2021-12-09.

11 The fee charged by recruiters (or "education agents") has been described as nominal, typically no more than CDN \$500 in India. The incentive for the recruiter is that they typically receive a commission of 15%-20% of the international student's first year of tuition from the Designated Learning Institution, and sometimes higher, which works out to CDN \$1,500 to \$7,500 per student. Sabi Marwah, Ratna Omidvar, Hassan Yussuff and Yuen Pau Woo, Strengthening the Integrity of Canada's International Student Program, 2023, a report issued by four Canadian Senators.

12 It did not help that the federal government established a threshold for a cost-of-living requirement for international students (proof that one had sufficient funds for expenses) that stayed since 2015 at a \$10,000 a year level, until finally being doubled to \$20,635 at the end of 2023 to reflect actual financial needs. Marie Woolf, "Ottawa doubles the cash foreign students need to study in Canada," The Globe and Mail, December 7, 2023.

13 According to the 2021 Census, 31.8% of study permit holders and 40.1% of those holding a study permit and a work permit lived in unsuitable housing (not enough bedrooms for the size and composition of the household), compared to 9.1% of permanent residents in Canada. Catherine Tuey and Nicolas Bastien, "Non-permanent residents in Canada: Portrait of a growing population from the 2021 Census," Insights on Canadian Society, Statistics Canada, June 20, 2023.

Challenged in finding housing: Not only is cost a challenge in relation to housing, so is access and adequacy, as international students are unfamiliar with the Canadian housing market, often without social networks to fall back on for temporary housing, without knowing their rights, leaving them in a precarious position, vulnerable to exploitation and living in over-crowded and/or unsuitable conditions

Lacking community services: Various community services funded by governments have restrictions on who is eligible for these services, and in the case of international students, they are not eligible to receive the range of settlement services available to newcomers, nor are they eligible to receive employment services funded under Employment Ontario, resulting in restrictions to both the services these students can receive, and how community services can help them

Paid-for college services not reaching students: There appears to be less take-up of on-campus services, in part because students lack awareness of the services or they do not understand what is provided nor how it can help; information about services tends to be shared during initial student orientation when international students are particularly overwhelmed and less attuned to what they might need; some reports note that services are not always culturally-sensitive; students are more likely to make use of certain supports such as language, academic, and financial services; otherwise, students tend to rely on informal supports, such as from friends, family, community organizations or the Internet; services that would be helpful after some time, as well as after graduation, such as career support and immigration services, are seen as lacking; among private colleges as well as on public-private partnership campuses, services are largely missing or inadequate

Health impacts: International students report negative physical health outcomes (change in diet, lack of knowledge about healthcare system or how they can access it) as well as negative mental health outcomes (brought on by isolation, loneliness, and stress arising from financial challenges, housing circumstances and/or culture shock); while many colleges have robust mental health services, they tend to cater to students in crisis and not when there is a need for preventative services or other social interventions which could reduce the sense of isolation¹⁴

Employment challenges: International students are more likely to need employment, both to meet their pressing financial needs and also to establish a career path to improve their chances of obtaining permanent residency; yet they face numerous barriers:

- Lack of knowledge about the Canadian labour market
- Lack of Canadian work experience and a lack of familiarity with Canadian workplace norms and habits
- Lack of social networks to make connections for employment
- A view on the part of some Canadian employers that international students may involve too much immigration red tape
- Some employers are wary of investing the time and opportunity in someone who may decide not to stay in Canada or who may be denied permanent residency
- Federal government subsidies which encourage employers to hire co-op students or summer-job students do not apply to international students

¹⁴ See Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, *Supporting Student Mental Health in Ontario: Exploring Best Practices and Identifying Gaps*, 2023.

Discrimination and exploitation: Some international students cite instances of being racialized and viewed as cultural others, feeling excluded or ridiculed on account of their accent or language errors or because of their unfamiliarity with Canadian cultural norms, such as shaking hands or making eye contact; feelings of overt or covert racism are especially cited with respect to finding housing; some studies also note instances of sexual harassment of women, especially in workplace situations; these various experiences contribute to feelings of being belittled, contributing to stress as well as reinforcing social isolation and a tendency to socialize only with members of one's own group

Data on immigration and labour market outcomes of international students

Data on international students is harder to come by, as they are typically not a distinct category among surveys carried out by Statistics Canada.¹⁵ There is data from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) on issuance of study permits but, in terms of many other variables, one typically needs to rely on specialized studies, in particular where Statistics Canada combines data from several sources.

There are two areas where there is some data which can give shape to two important issues for international students: their pathway to permanent residency and their labour market outcomes.

Permanent residency. While international students apply to study in Canada, their ultimate goal is usually to seek permanent residency in Canada:

- 72.5% of international students plan to apply for a post-graduate work permit
- 59% of international students intend to apply for permanent residence, while around one-third are undecided¹⁶

It certainly has been the case that more international students are obtaining permanent residence. In 2015, 19,000 international students transitioned to permanent residence; in 2022, that figure reached 95,000.¹⁷ Consider, however, that at the end of 2022, Canada was home to over 800,000 international students.

There are clear differences in the rate of transition to permanent residency by program of study. About three in ten international students who entered Canada in 2000 or later became a landed immigrant within 10 years. More than half of international students who had come to study for a master's or doctoral degree became a landed immigrant in that time, while the rate was one in three for bachelor's degree students. Obtaining employment was a critical factor in obtaining permanent residency, as six in ten international students who had paid earnings during their period of study or after graduation became landed immigrants within 10 years of receiving their first study permit, compared with less than 2 in 10 who did not work.¹⁸

Labour market outcomes. International students are working in increasingly larger numbers in Canada, from 21,800 being employed in 2000 to 277,400 employed in 2018 (their share of those with paid work rose from 0.1% to 1.4% in that period). The labour market participation rate of international students studying at the college level has increased from 7% in 2000 to more than half (57%) in 2018.¹⁹

¹⁵ Indeed, this is a challenge relating to all non-permit residents, and the limited data has consequences for public policy. CIBC issued a study in August 2023 which suggested that the official number of non-permanent residents in Canada cited by governments is almost one million lower than the actual number residing in Canada. Benjamin Tal, "Counting heads in Canada – a conundrum," CIBC Economic Reports, August 30, 2023.

¹⁶ Canadian Bureau for International Education, International Student Survey, 2021.

¹⁷ Sabi Marwah, Ratna Omidvar, Hassan Yussuff and Yuen Pau Woo, Strengthening the Integrity of Canada's International Student Program, 2023, a report issued by four Canadian Senators.

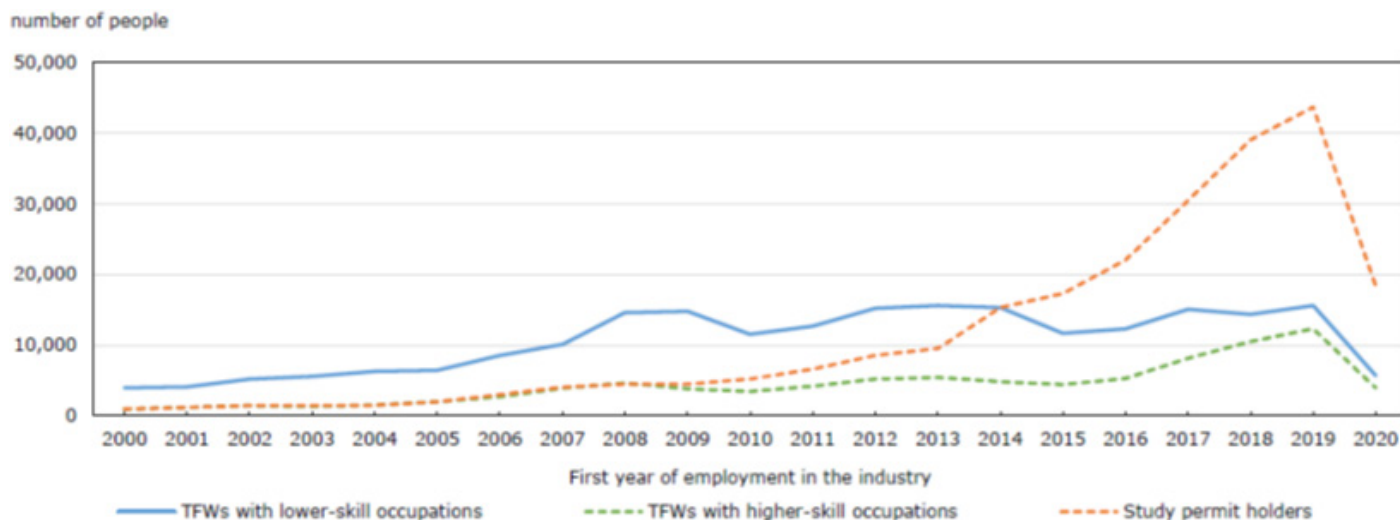
¹⁸ Eden Crossman, Youjin Choi, Yuqian Lu and Feng Hou, "International students as a source of labour supply: A summary of recent trends," Economic and Social Reports, Statistics Canada, March 23, 2023.

¹⁹ Eden Crossman, Youjin Choi, Yuqian Lu and Feng Hou, "International students as a source of labour supply: A summary of recent trends," Economic and Social Reports, Statistics Canada, March 23, 2023.

Given restrictions on the number of hours they are allowed to work, it is not surprising that a large proportion of study permit holders work part-time: of those employed in 2020, 74.4% who only had a study permit worked part-time, as did 63.4% of those with a work and study permit.

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of study permit holders employed in the Accommodation & Food Services sector, to the point where they make up a greater share of employment in that sector than temporary foreign workers (Chart 6).²⁰ (The sharp decline in employment across all categories in 2020 was because of COVID.)

Chart 6: Number of temporary foreign workers (low-skill occupations and higher-skill occupations) and study permit holders employed in their first year in Accommodation & Food Services, Canada, 2000-2020



There is a clear correlation between the surge of international students entering Canada and the large increase in the number of international students starting their first job in the Accommodation & Food Services sector.

Increasing prominence of international students as a policy issue

Through the fall and winter of 2023, the topic of international students shot to the forefront of public attention. While there have been various stories about the plight of international students in the media over the years, especially in the Greater Toronto Area, most recently it has risen to become a national issue, initially as a consequence of stories linking rental housing availability and affordability to the surge in international students coming to Canada.²¹

Within a short period of time, this issue morphed into an examination of why it was that the number of international students had risen so precipitously in the last few years, in particular, in Ontario and specifically among Ontario colleges. Within a few months of the international student story starting to receive increased attention, the federal government announced changes to its policies relating to study permits.²²

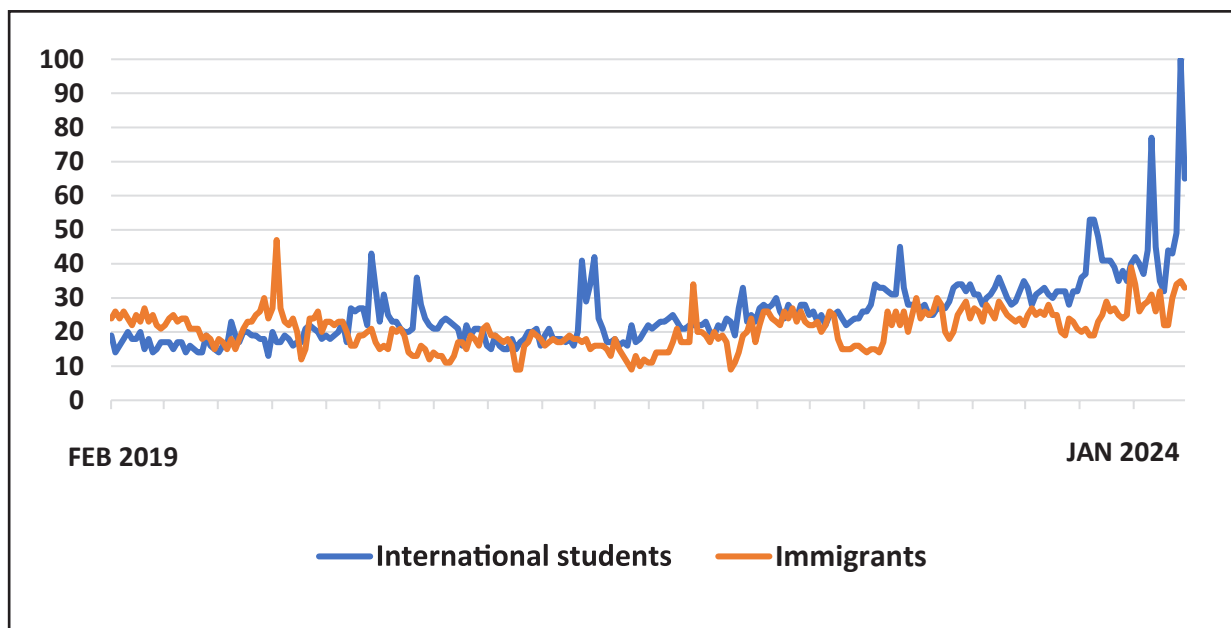
²⁰ Jianwei Zhong, Yuqian Lu, Youjin Choi and Jue Zhang, "Temporary foreign workers with lower-skill occupations in the accommodation and food services industry: Transition to permanent residency and industrial retention after transition," Economic and Social reports, Statistics Canada, June 24, 2023.

²¹ CBC, "We're welcoming record numbers of international students. Here's how they got caught up in the housing crisis," August 28, 2023.

²² Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, "Canada to stabilize growth and decrease number of international student permits issued to approximately 360,000 for 2024," January 22, 2024. The nature of these changes will be profiled later in this paper.

Google Trends tracks search queries in Google, by search terms over time. It is used as a proxy for public interest on a specific topic. Chart 7 shows the trend relating to searches for “international students” in Canada over the last five years and is expressed as a ratio, where the highest number of searches is given a value of 100 and the volume of all other searches are expressed in relation to that 100. As a comparison, the chart also shows the number of searches for the term “immigrants.” The federal announcement in late January 2024 generated a huge number of searches for “international students,” but it is also striking how the trendline for searches on this topic was already increasing, especially as media stories regarding the connection between the surge in international students and the consequences for housing availability started emerging in August 2023. It is also noteworthy that through much of the time profiled, “international students” outpaced “immigrants” as a topic of interest.

Chart 7: Google Trends in Canada, “international students” and “immigrants,” February 2019 to January 2024



Migration trends into Chatham-Kent

There are many categories of individuals coming to Chatham-Kent to study, work and/or establish residence. The following table lists the primary categories, with relevant descriptions of their use in Chatham-Kent:²³

Temporary agricultural workers (requires)	Requires a Labour Market Impact Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural stream • Seasonal agricultural workers (from Mexico or select Caribbean countries)
Net Ontario migrants	This is the net number of Ontario migrants; a positive number means that the number arriving to Chatham-Kent from other parts of Ontario is greater than the number leaving Chatham-Kent for other parts of Ontario; this net number had largely been made up of those aged 45-64 years old, but since 2016, it is increasingly being made up of those aged 0-17 and 25-44 years
International Mobility Program (IMP) participants	Requires a work permit; in Chatham-Kent, most participants are in the category of “Canadian interests: Competitiveness and public policy” ²⁴
New Permanent Residents (PRs)	The count of new PRs for each year
New Study Permit Holders	The count of new Study Permit Holders for each year
Other Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW)	Requires a Labour Market Impact Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost all are manufacturing labourers

Individuals from each of these categories participate in the local labour force in varying degrees: by definition, work permit holders fully participate in the labour force; net migrants from other parts of Ontario would only be partially participating, depending on their age and their labour force participation rate; the same can be said of new permanent residents; study permit holders are often working part-time and during school breaks – they are also a potential future source of permanent residents.

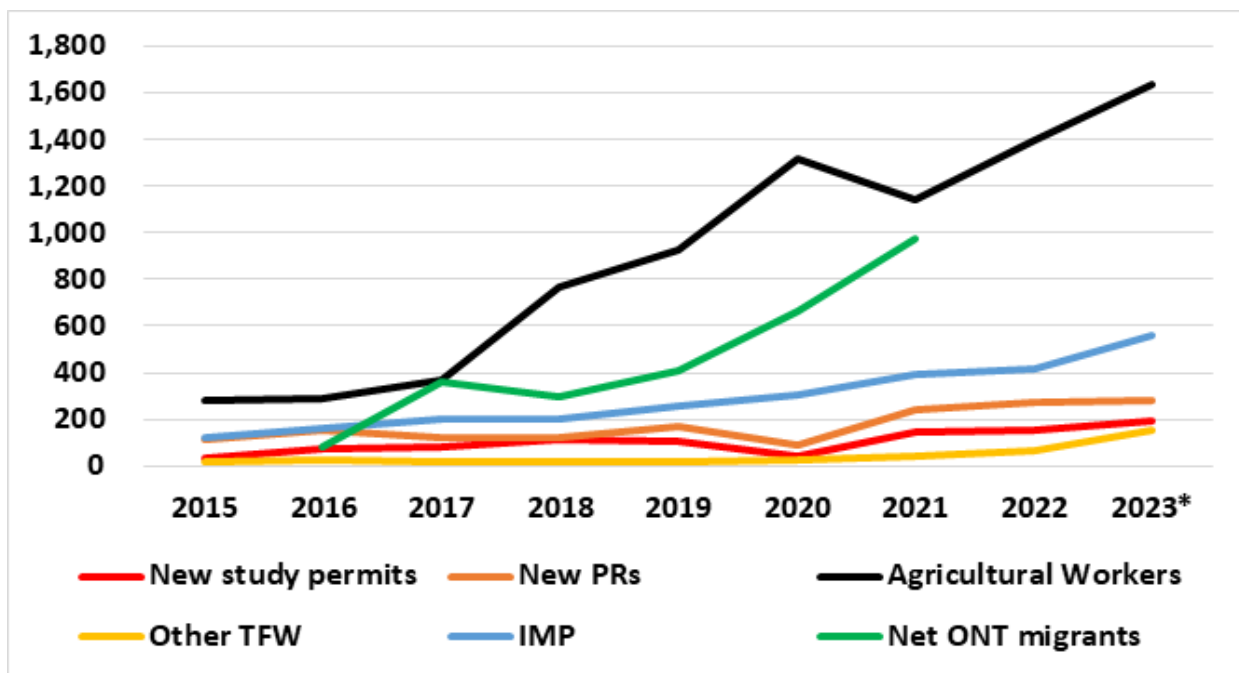


²³ All Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada data is up to October 2023 (i.e., temporary workers and new permanent residents); migration data from other parts of Ontario is only up to 2021.

²⁴ These include family members of foreign nationals authorized to work in Canada, family members of Economic Class permanent resident applicants or provincial nominees, spouses and common-law partners of study permit holders, and various foreign academic researchers and fellows.

Chart 8 shows the trend in the numbers for each of these categories.²⁵

Chart 8: Annual number of migrants by category, Chatham-Kent, 2015-2023 (2023 up to October only)



Data for net Ontario migrants is only available up to 2021. The net figure for 2015 was a negative value.

Every migrant category has been growing, with agricultural workers increasing sharply since 2017. However, in comparing these figures, one thing should be kept in mind: the number of temporary foreign workers, including agricultural workers, represents the number of work permit holders in that year. The number of study permit holders in a year represents the number of new study permit holders but, in any given year, there is a larger number of all study permit holders, because many of them are in programs lasting two years or more, so that their total number is cumulative.



²⁵ The values for Chart 9 are presented in Table A1 in the Appendix to this report, which includes a breakdown of figures for the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program and the Agricultural Stream.

Labour market context

In order to identify how international students could help meet local labour market needs, it is necessary to profile local labour market demand and future labour market needs. This will be done by describing the current mix and trends in relation to employment by industries and by occupations in Chatham-Kent through the description of the employer landscape (mix of establishments by sector and number of employees) and job vacancy trends.

This review relies on different sources of data, some of which is available specifically for Chatham-Kent, while other data is only available at the Windsor-Sarnia Economic Region level, encompassing three census divisions: Essex, Lambton, and Chatham-Kent.

Employment by industry

The 2021 Census provides the most recent labour market data specifically for Chatham-Kent. In most instances, the census provides a very robust dataset because the sample is so large (approximately 25% of residents are required to answer a long questionnaire next to the basic census questions). However, the 2021 Census was administered in May 2021, when the after-effects of the COVID lockdowns were still being felt across the economy and labour market. As a result, certain industries and occupations most affected by COVID reported reduced numbers.

Table 5 shows employment by industry in Chatham-Kent in 2021 and calculates the percentage change from the 2016 Census, then compared to the percentage change figures for Ontario as context.



Table 5: Resident employment by Industry, comparisons between 2016 and 2021 Census, Chatham-Kent

	NUMBER 2021	PERCENT CHANGE 2016-2021		PERCENT DISTRIBUTION 2021	
		C-K	ONT	C-K	ONT
ALL INDUSTRIES	43,770	-5.2%	-1.8%	100%	100%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, farming	3,360	-5.2%	2.5%	7.7%	1.5%
Mining and oil and gas extraction	180	12.5%	10.8%	0.4%	0.5%
Utilities	875	-10.7%	9.2%	2.0%	0.8%
Construction	3,610	23.0%	11.0%	8.2%	7.5%
Manufacturing	5,615	-8.1%	-7.7%	12.8%	9.3%
Wholesale trade	1,490	-15.3%	-11.3%	3.4%	3.5%
Retail trade	5,295	-0.3%	-7.3%	12.1%	10.5%
Transportation and warehousing	2,065	-14.5%	8.1%	4.7%	5.3%
Information and cultural industries	720	0.0%	-7.1%	1.6%	2.4%
Finance and insurance	1,010	-9.0%	4.5%	2.3%	5.9%
Real estate and rental and leasing	440	-16.2%	2.6%	1.0%	2.2%
Professional, scientific, technical	1,560	12.2%	18.4%	3.6%	9.9%
Management of companies	20	-20.0%	112.4%	0.0%	0.4%
Administrative and support	1,885	-15.7%	-8.3%	4.3%	4.3%
Educational services	2,820	-1.2%	-3.2%	6.4%	7.5%
Health care and social assistance	6,360	5.9%	11.6%	14.5%	12.6%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	420	-42.1%	-35.8%	1.0%	1.3%
Accommodation and food services	2,330	-25.8%	-33.3%	5.3%	4.5%
Other services	1,630	-22.2%	-19.0%	3.7%	3.5%
Public administration	2,080	-3.5%	3.5%	4.8%	6.4%

Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

Cells which are shaded orange highlight instances where there were employment losses between 2016 and 2021. Overall, employment in Ontario declined by 1.8%, while in Chatham-Kent it was a considerably larger 5.2%. The largest percentage losses at the provincial level were in Arts, Entertainment & Recreation; Accommodation & Food Services, and Other Services, and these were mirrored in Chatham-Kent. Chatham-Kent also experienced significant losses in Real Estate & Rental and Leasing; Administrative & Support Services; Wholesale Trade; Transportation & Warehousing; Utilities; Finance & Insurance; and Manufacturing.

Cells which are shaded green highlight the five largest industries by employment in Chatham-Kent. In all five instances, the employment share of these industries is larger in Chatham-Kent than in the rest of the province, especially in the case of Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (Chatham-Kent: 7.7%; Ontario: 1.5%).

Several industries in Chatham-Kent did increase their employment; among the larger industries, these were: Construction (by a very large 23.0%); Professional, Scientific & Technical Services (12.2%, below the provincial growth rate); and Health Care & Social Assistance (5.9%, also below the provincial growth rate).

It is also possible to track employment levels by industry using the Labour Force Survey, however this data is only available at the economic region level. Nevertheless, this data is likely indicative of local trends. Table 6 presents the data.

Table 6: Resident employment by Industry, Labour Force Survey, Windsor-Sarnia Economic Region, 2019-2023

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
ALL INDUSTRIES	270,000	235,000	264,200	273,300	298,300
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, farming	6,000	5,200	5,600	5,000	5,800
Utilities	2,800	1,900	--	3,000	3,100
Construction	16,900	17,600	19,100	19,600	20,500
Manufacturing	56,600	53,000	50,000	53,600	57,700
Wholesale trade	7,200	5,800	8,800	9,000	9,600
Retail trade	32,600	26,200	32,100	31,700	33,300
Transportation and warehousing	11,400	10,400	11,300	11,100	9,800
Information and cultural industries	2,400	1,700	3,100	2,900	2,300
Finance and insurance	9,100	8,300	10,100	8,300	10,200
Real estate and rental and leasing	3,400	1,800	3,700	2,900	3,600
Professional, scientific, technical	7,700	8,500	11,300	11,300	14,000
Administrative and support	10,100	7,600	6,700	8,300	8,400
Educational services	18,400	17,600	18,900	20,900	22,200
Health care and social assistance	37,400	33,900	40,300	42,100	45,500
Arts, entertainment and recreation	6,700	4,000	4,900	5,500	7,700
Accommodation and food services	23,600	14,900	18,500	17,600	19,200
Other services	7,100	6,200	6,700	7,300	7,200
Public administration	9,800	9,900	10,700	11,900	16,400

Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey

Two industries have been removed from this list because the smaller sample size resulted in most of the data points being unreliable. Those industries were: Mining, Quarrying, & Oil and Gas Extraction; and Management of Companies

Some industries which experienced notable employment losses between 2016 and 2021 in Chatham-Kent rebounded in the Windsor-Sarnia data by 2023, such as Manufacturing; Wholesale Trade; and Finance & Insurance. Other sectors continued their employment growth: Construction; Professional, Scientific & Technical Services; and Health Care & Social Assistance. Educational Services, which had a slight decline in the Chatham-Kent numbers, also showed healthy growth by 2023 in Windsor-Sarnia.

On the other hand, some declining trends continued, namely in: Transportation & Warehousing; and Accommodation & Food Services.

Comparing employment growth between 2019 and 2023 in Windsor-Sarnia to figures for Ontario show that the following sectors grew at a notably higher rate:

- Construction (in Windsor-Sarnia: 21.3%; in Ontario: 15.7%)
- Wholesale Trade (W-S: 33.3%; ONT: 9.7%)
- Professional, Scientific & Technical Services (in W-S: 81.8%; in ONT: 33.0%)
- Educational Services (in W-S: 20.7%; in ONT: 5.9%)
- Health Care & Social Assistance (in W-S: 21.7%; in ONT: 8.9%)
- Public Administration (in W-S: 67.3%; in ONT: 22.2%)

Employment by occupation

The same analysis can be done of employment by occupation as by industry. Table 7 shows the Census comparison for Chatham-Kent.

Table 7: Resident employment by occupation categories, comparisons between 2016 and 2021 Census, Chatham-Kent

	NUMBER 2021	PERCENT CHANGE 2016-2021		PERCENT DISTRIBUTION 2021	
		C-K	ONT	C-K	ONT
ALL OCCUPATIONS	43,770	-5.2%	-1.8%	100%	100%
Management occupations	5,195	-0.5%	10.4%	11.9%	13.1%
Business, finance and administration occupations	5,700	-0.3%	-0.1%	13.0%	16.5%
Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	2,120	10.4%	20.3%	4.8%	9.2%
Health occupations	3,950	12.7%	15.6%	9.0%	7.8%
Occupations in education, law, social, community and government services	4,505	-3.3%	-0.7%	10.3%	12.2%
Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport	535	-21.3%	-9.5%	1.2%	2.9%
Sales and service occupations	8,895	-19.2%	-19.6%	20.3%	18.8%
Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations	8,130	3.1%	0.8%	18.6%	13.5%
Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations	1,445	-21.7%	-9.3%	3.3%	1.4%
Occupations in manufacturing and utilities	3,305	-11.6%	-12.1%	7.6%	4.6%

Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

The most significant differences in terms of the share of employment by occupation between Chatham-Kent and Ontario are the following:

- Chatham-Kent has a smaller share among Natural and Applied Sciences Occupations (C-K: 4.8%; ONT: 9.2%)
- Chatham-Kent has a higher share among Trades, Transport and Equipment Operators (C-K: 18.6%; ONT: 13.5%)

Also well, Chatham-Kent has a slightly higher share among Occupations in Manufacturing and Utilities, and a slightly lower share among Business, Finance and Administration Occupations.

In most instances, the percentage change in employment by occupation was very similar between Chatham-Kent and Ontario, except for the following categories:

Larger decrease in Chatham-Kent:

- Occupations in Art, Culture, Recreation and Sport
- Natural Resources, Agriculture and Related Production Occupations

No increase or not as large increase in Chatham-Kent:

- Management Occupations
- Natural and Applied Sciences Occupations

It is notable that Health Occupations grew by a large percentage in Chatham-Kent; while lower than the provincial increase, it bucked the overall larger decline in employment. Also, Health Occupations in Chatham-Kent make up a slightly higher proportion of all employed compared to the Ontario average.

The Labour Force Survey also reports on employment levels by occupation, which is available at the Windsor-Sarnia Economic Region level. It should be noted that the National Occupation Classification used in Table 7 relied on the 2016 NOC version, so that comparisons between the 2016 Census and 2021 Census could be made using the same categories. Table 8 relies on the 2021 NOC version, with one major difference being that Management Occupations now only refer to Legislative and Senior Management Occupations. Specific management roles, such as Managers in Health Care or Restaurant Managers, which used to be classified under Management Occupations, are now classified under the relevant occupation category, so that Managers in Health Care are found in Health Occupations, and Restaurant Managers are found in Sales and Service Occupations, and so on. As a result, Legislative and Senior Management Occupations becomes a much smaller category and in the Labour Force Survey, the sample is not large enough to reliably report on employment levels in this category for Windsor-Sarnia.

Table 8: Resident employment by occupation categories, Labour Force Survey, Windsor-Sarnia Economic Region, 2019-2023

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
ALL OCCUPATIONS	270,000	235,000	264,200	273,300	298,300
Business, finance and administration occupations	35,700	32,400	35,100	38,900	41,000
Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	16,200	18,600	20,800	22,100	28,800
Health occupations	24,200	23,500	26,600	28,600	31,600
Occupations in education, law, social, community and government services	26,300	24,800	30,400	28,700	34,800
Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport	4,400	3,400	2,800	2,300	3,300
Sales and service occupations	76,000	53,700	70,500	70,300	73,200
Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations	50,600	46,600	45,700	48,000	48,900
Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations	7,300	6,100	8,100	6,300	7,100
Occupations in manufacturing and utilities	28,600	25,600	23,800	27,700	28,900

Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey

Table 8 reveals several patterns:

Occupations which lost employment in 2020 and which have not quite recovered:

- Occupations in Art, Culture, Recreation and Sport

Occupations which lost employment in 2020 and have returned or almost returned to 2019 levels in 2023:

- Sales and Service Occupations
- Trades, Transport and Equipment Operators
- Natural Resources and Production Occupations
- Occupations in Manufacturing and Utilities

Occupations which lost employment in 2020 and which have increased considerably since:

- Business, Finance and Administration
- Health Occupations
- Occupations in Education, Law, Social, Community and Government Services

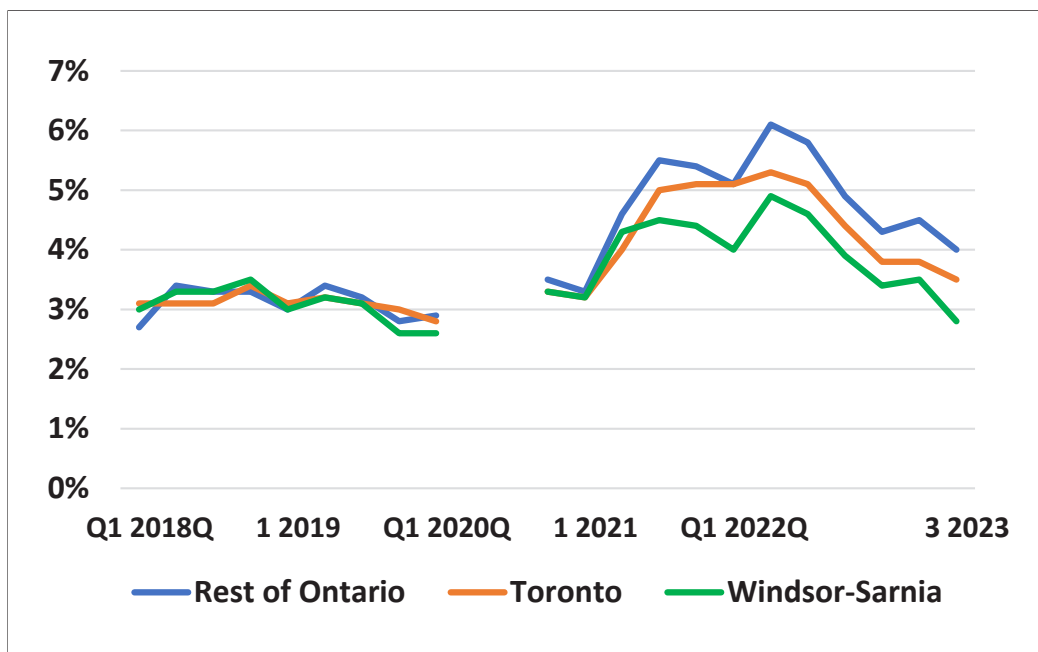
Occupations which have grown consistently and rapidly:

- Natural and Applied Sciences

Job vacancy trends

Statistics Canada administers a Job Vacancy and Wage Survey, reported quarterly, by province and by economic region. Chart 9 displays the job vacancy rates for the Windsor-Sarnia Economic Region and, for comparison, the Toronto Economic Region and the Rest of Ontario (Ontario minus the Toronto Region). There are no values for Quarters 2 and 3 in 2020, as Statistics Canada suspended the survey during the height of the pandemic lockdowns.

Chart 9: Job vacancy rates, Windsor-Sarnia Economic Region, Toronto Economic Region and Rest of Ontario, Quarter 1 2018 to Quarter 3 2023



Statistics Canada, Job Vacancy and Wage Survey

Prior to COVID, the job vacancy rate stayed within a narrow band for Toronto and the Rest of Ontario, as well as for Windsor-Sarnia, although it dipped lower in Quarter 4 2019 and Quarter 1 2020. As the lockdowns lifted, the job vacancy rates increased significantly, although less so in Windsor-Sarnia than in Toronto and the Rest of Ontario. At their peak, in Q2 and Q3 2022, the job vacancy rates almost doubled in the Rest of Ontario from the values before COVID, whereas in Windsor-Sarnia the numbers were around one-and-a-half times the average for the nine quarters before COVID. Since then, the rates have come down everywhere, although in Toronto and the Rest of Ontario the figures in Q3 2023 were still higher than the pre-COVID averages, while in Windsor-Sarnia they were just slightly lower than the pre-COVID average.

The job vacancy data can also be analyzed by occupational categories, for which we only have the actual number of job vacancies. In order to compare the trends, the average job vacancy figure for 2018 is given a value of 100 for each area, and each subsequent year is expressed in relation to that number. For example, a value of 105 means that this figure is 5% higher than the average number for 2018.

At the Windsor-Sarnia level, two clusters of occupational categories emerge with similar job vacancy trends:

Occupations with strong post-COVID demand:

- Business, Finance and Administration
- Natural and Applied Sciences
- Health Occupations
- Occupations in Education, Law, Social, Community and Government Services

Most of these strong-demand occupations are the same ones that had recent robust employment growth.

Occupations with weaker post-COVID demand:

- Sales and Service Occupations
- Trades, Transport and Equipment Operators
- Natural Resources and Production Occupations
- Occupations in Manufacturing and Utilities

These occupations are the ones which had returned or had almost returned to 2019 job vacancy levels in 2023. It is worth noting that some of these categories have some of their labour demand being met by other means, such as the recent increase in temporary agricultural workers and, to some extent, other temporary foreign workers in Manufacturing, and possibly study permit holders working in Sales and Service Occupations.

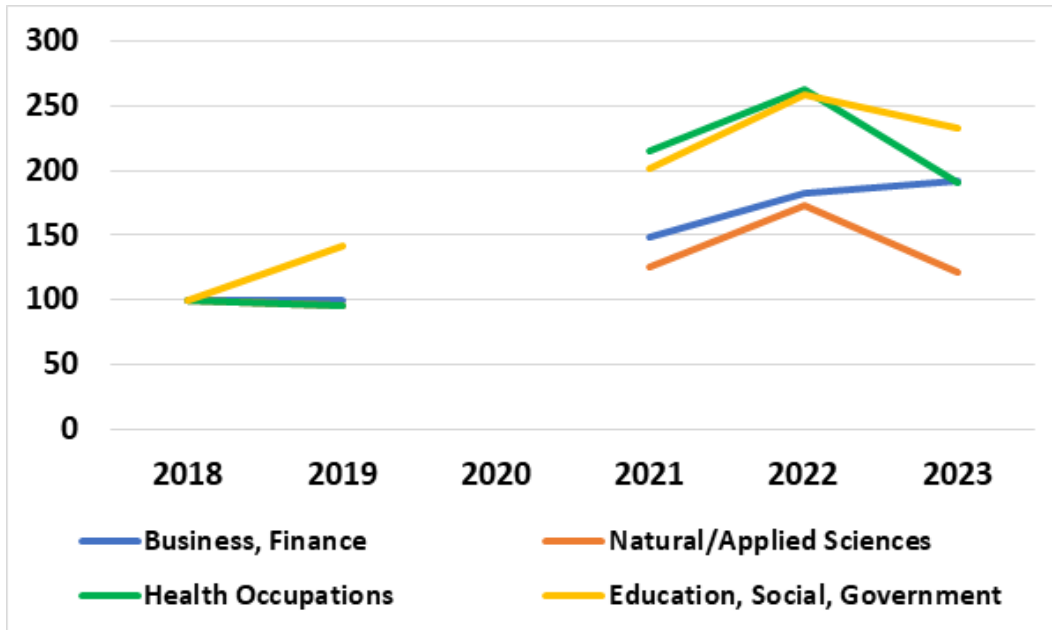
Two other occupational categories often had their data suppressed for several quarters because the sample was not sufficiently reliable. One can still identify a general trend from the available data, as follows:



- Management Occupations: strong post-COVID demand
- Occupations in Art, Culture, Recreation and Sport: weaker post-COVID demand

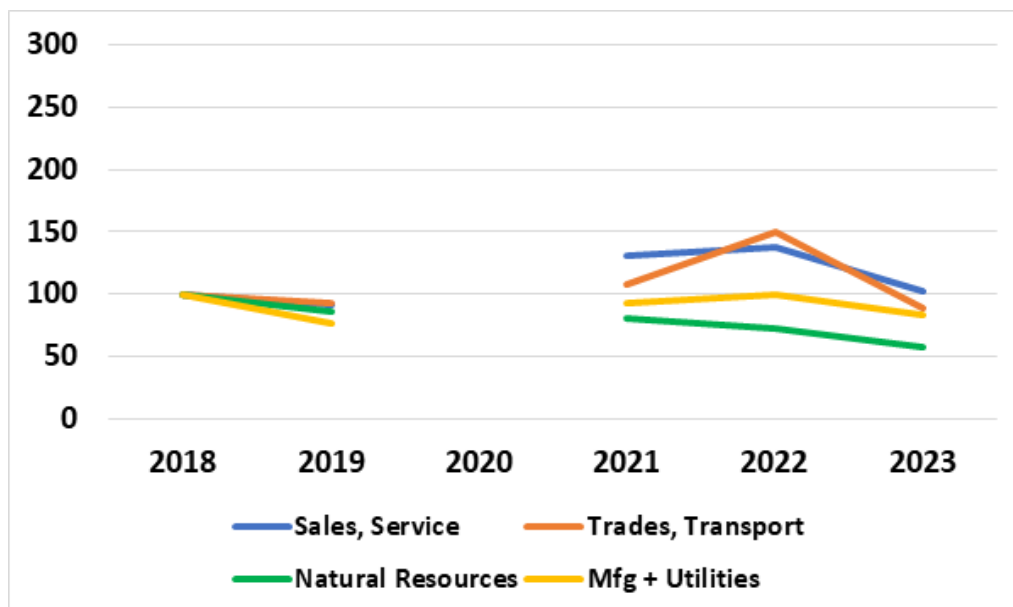
Charts 10 and 11 display the trends for the two clusters. For the 2023 data, an average is calculated using three quarters, which was the current data available.

Chart 10: Occupational categories with strong demand, Windsor-Sarnia Economic Region, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023 (2018 = 100)



Statistics Canada, Job Vacancy and Wage Survey

Chart 11: Occupational categories with weaker demand, Windsor-Sarnia Economic Region, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023 (2018 = 100)



Statistics Canada, Job Vacancy and Wage Survey

Trends in the number of employers

Statistics Canada provides a count of business establishments across the country, cataloguing the data by highly detailed industry sectors and number of employees, organized down to minute geographic areas. This registry makes use of administrative data (corporate income tax and GST filings) and surveys of businesses and is called the Canadian Business Counts. A snapshot of this census of business establishments is released every six months, for June and December of each year.

Table 9 displays the summary figures for all establishments located in Chatham-Kent in June 2023, by industry and by number of employees. Some explanation for this table:

1. The major part of the table provides data for all businesses for which the industry classification is known; these are classified businesses, but around 7% of all businesses in Chatham-Kent are unclassified (that is, Statistics Canada was unable to ascertain the industry of the establishment); across Ontario, the proportion of unclassified businesses is 11%
2. The second-to-last column in each table shows the percentage distribution of all classified businesses by industry
3. The last column shows the ranking of the total number of classified businesses by industry, from the largest (1) to the fewest (20) number of businesses. The five industries with the most classified businesses have their ranking numbers bolded in red
4. The highlighted cells identify the three industries with the largest number of firms for each employee size category (that is, for each column)
5. Where under the percentage distribution a cell has 0%, it means that the number of firms, when expressed as a percentage of the total, is below 0.5% of the total and has been rounded down to 0%. Also, where the total is slightly less or more than 100%, this is due to rounding of the component percentages



Table 9: Number of businesses by industry and by employee size, Chatham-Kent, June 2023

INDUSTRY SECTOR 2-DIGIT NAICS	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES								%	R A N K
	0	1-4	5-9	10-19	20-49	50-99	100+	TOTAL		
11 Agriculture	2458	215	69	45	42	11	8	2848	26	1
21 Mining	17	3	3	0	3	0	0	26	0	19
22 Utilities	68	3	3	1	2	1	1	79	1	16
23 Construction	497	285	90	54	27	5	0	958	9	3
31-33 Manufacturing	115	52	39	28	28	21	19	302	3	11
41 Wholesale Trade	102	38	33	31	20	6	1	231	2	13
44-45 Retail Trade	270	164	123	66	54	23	6	706	7	4
48-49 Transportation/Warehousing	492	88	26	23	13	3	2	647	6	6
51 Information and Cultural	36	13	7	9	2	1	1	69	1	17
52 Finance and Insurance	323	49	20	24	17	4	0	437	4	9
53 Real Estate, Rental, Leasing	1758	95	18	2	5	0	0	1878	17	2
54 Professional Scientific Tech	362	117	34	18	8	1	2	542	5	8
55 Management of Companies	67	9	1	2	2	1	1	83	1	15
56 Administrative Support	177	75	26	13	12	2	3	308	3	10
61 Educational Services	39	2	6	5	2	1	3	58	1	18
62 Health Care & Social Assist	285	141	60	39	27	13	12	577	5	7
71 Arts, Entertainment & Rec	71	6	6	5	14	2	0	104	1	14
72 Accommodation & Food	91	37	47	45	51	7	1	279	3	12
81 Other Services	390	206	64	28	8	0	2	698	6	5
91 Public Administration	0	0	0	1	2	3	3	9	0	20
CLASSIFIED BUSINESSES	7618	1598	675	439	339	105	65	10839		
Percentage of all classified and unclassified businesses	71	15	6	4	3	1	1	100		
Cumulative percentage	71	86	92	96	99	99	100			
ONTARIO percentage of classified and unclassified businesses	72%	17%	5%	3%	2%	1%	1%			

Statistics Canada, Canadian Business Counts, June 2023

Some observations arising from Table 9:

- Establishments in Agriculture, Forestry, Food & Farming make up a very large percentage of all establishments in Chatham-Kent; moreover, they are not limited to establishment with zero employees; they make up one of the three largest industries in each employee size category, save for those with 50-99 employees, where they rank 4th

- Real Estate & Rental and Leasing is the second largest industry by number of establishments, but the vast majority of these have zero employees, and almost two-thirds of these are landlords of residential dwellings
- Construction makes up the third largest sector, both solo operators as well as a significant number of establishments with 1-49 employees
- In the mid-size categories, establishments in Retail Trade and Accommodation & Food Services start occupying the top-three positions
- Among firms with 50 or more employees, establishments in Manufacturing and in Health Care & Social Assistance are very prominent; indeed, these two industries account for almost half of all firms with 100 or more employees

In comparison to the distribution of establishments by industry in Ontario, the Chatham-Kent figures are generally in the same range (within two percentage points of the Ontario numbers), except for three very prominent differences:

- In Chatham-Kent, firms in Agriculture, Forestry, Food & Farming make up 26% of all establishments in Chatham-Kent, compared to 3% in Ontario
- In Chatham-Kent, firms in Professional, Scientific & Technical Services make up 5% of all firms, compared to 14% in Ontario
- In Chatham-Kent, firms in Real Estate & Rental and Leasing make up 17% of all firms, compared to 23% in Ontario

It is worthwhile comparing changes in the number of establishments by categories between different time periods. Statistics Canada cautions against using this data as a timeline of trends in the number of businesses, noting there can differences in how the data is collected and classified. That being said, the data can be suggestive of trends by industry and can be compared to other labour market data.

Table 10 highlights the difference in the number of establishments by industry and by a reduced range of employee size categories, comparing June 2019 and June 2023:

- Zero employees
- 1-4 employees
- 5-19 employees
- 20-99 employees
- 100 or more employees

It should be noted that an addition or a subtraction in any given cell does not necessarily mean that a new establishment was created or that one closed down; rather, it is also possible that an establishment grew and graduated into a larger employee size category or lost employees and declined into a smaller employee size category.

Table 10: Difference in the number of businesses by industry and by employee size, Chatham-Kent, June 2019 and June 2023

INDUSTRY	Firm size (number of employees)					Total number of firms with employees
	0	1-4	5-19	20-99	100+	
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and farming	346	7	-9	6	4	8
Mining and oil and gas extraction	0	-2	0	2	0	0
Utilities	6	1	2	0	-1	2
Construction	54	76	7	4	0	87
Manufacturing	-10	15	2	12	4	33
Wholesale trade	1	-8	10	4	-2	4
Retail trade	35	-2	-11	21	1	9
Transportation and warehousing	16	21	1	-2	0	20
Information and cultural industries	7	3	-1	-4	0	-2
Finance and insurance	-37	-5	-3	5	0	-3
Real estate and rental and leasing	361	-6	-6	1	0	-11
Professional, scientific and technical services	23	11	10	4	0	25
Management of companies and enterprises	-1	1	-3	-1	-3	-6
Administrative and support	30	16	1	3	-2	18
Educational services	8	0	1	0	0	1
Health care and social assistance	46	19	28	6	-1	52
Arts, entertainment and recreation	3	-7	1	4	0	-2
Accommodation and food services	7	-1	0	3	1	3
Other services	18	17	2	-1	2	20
Public administration	0	0	1	1	0	2
NET TOTAL CHANGES, 2019 to 2023	913	156	33	68	3	260

Statistics Canada, Canadian Business Counts, June 2019 and June 2023

Some apparent trends from Table 10:

Industries that grew significantly:

- Firms in Agriculture, Forestry, Food & Farming, with 6 additional firms in the 20-99 employee category and 4 in the 100-or-more employee category (there was a decline of 9 in the 5-19 category, so some of this is likely firms growing in size)
- Firms in Construction (an additional 87 firms with employees)
- Firms in Manufacturing (an additional 33 firms with employees)
- Firms in Health Care & Social Assistance (an additional 52 firms, although one less firm in the 100-or-more employee category; these 52 additional establishments included 23 child daycare services)

Industries that grew moderately:

- Transportation & Warehousing
- Professional, Scientific & Technical Services
- Other Services

The only other significant difference was in Management of Companies and Enterprises, with what appears to be the loss of 3 head offices with 100-199 employees. Otherwise, the degree of change among the various categories of establishments is relatively limited.

Summing up the labour market data

Common trends across these various indicators suggest the following:

- The Health Care & Social Assistance industry and Health Occupations are growing sectors, by every measure
- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting is a very important industry, with a very large and growing share of all establishments, yet the employment demand has been flat (no doubt due to the increase in temporary agricultural workers)
- Construction is a growing industry, by employment and by number of establishments, although Trades Occupations are growing only slightly
- Manufacturing is a significant sector, with the number of establishments growing, yet employment remains relatively flat (to a limited extent, some demand is met through temporary foreign workers)
- While the Professional, Scientific & Technical Services industry, and Natural and Applied Sciences occupations are growing, they make up a disproportionately smaller share of the local economy and labour market
- Business, Finance & Administration Occupations appear to be growing, and while this category is also under-represented in Chatham-Kent, it still accounts for a considerable amount of employment



Views of local employers

The purpose in reaching out to employers was to understand local workforce needs as well as seek their assessment of international students as employees. For that reason, a number of these employers were in sectors that made up of placement students from St. Clair College Chatham, as well as other post-secondary institutions. Thus, most of the employers were from establishments in the health care (hospital, long-term care facilities) and social assistance (child daycares, respite care) sectors, as well as in manufacturing, municipal government and tech support.

Each employer usually had different challenges when it came to occupations for which it was difficult to hire. For example, a hospital may not hire many personal support workers (PSWs), and because they have a slightly higher pay scale, they may not have as much difficulty recruiting PSWs, whereas a long-term care facility may have considerable difficulty keeping up their staffing levels of far more PSWs.

Cumulatively, these employers expressed difficulty in hiring primarily for the following occupations:

- Registered nurses
- Registered practical nurses
- Personal support workers
- Diagnostic and laboratory technicians
- IT occupations in the public sector

In most cases, the challenges relating to recruitment stem from an inability to offer a competitive wage or the prevalence of part-time positions when job seekers would prefer full-time work. And, as mentioned above, competitive pressures arise because of different pay scales between establishments in Chatham-Kent, as well as between Chatham-Kent and surrounding municipalities (Windsor, Sarnia, London, and Kitchener-Waterloo).

It is noteworthy to add that a succession of employer surveys carried out by the Chatham-Kent Workforce Planning Board over the last few years indicate similar findings:

- Among occupations that employers have difficulty recruiting for, mention is often made of registered nurses, registered practical nurses and PSWs (as well as nurse practitioners); labourers in both manufacturing and agriculture are also mentioned
- In terms of retention challenges, employers cite such factors as high competition for workers, as well as pay lower than industry standards

Most employers have experience working with international students, either through college program placements and/or through hiring. Some assume they host international students, because of the growing diversity of their workforce. The few who do not have international students on staff assert that no international student has applied for a position with them.

All employers who have experience with international students rate them favourably as employees, noting that they are as good as Canadian youth or better because they are usually willing to take on more hours at work than their Canadian counterparts. One employer rated their international students as typically their best employees.

When asked whether there are any challenges or barriers to the employment of international students, the following issues emerge:

- Some employers note that it is harder to employ students when they are in school, simply because their course schedule may not make them available (a good example would be childcare centres, which need staff during school hours, when students must attend class) (this observation applies to all students, not just international students)
- English language skills do come up as an issue, both in fluency as well as comprehension: in most cases, it is cited as a minor consideration, as something that comes up infrequently or that can be easily managed; a few employers referred to instances involving an international student where communication posed a challenge, especially when providing front-line assistance to a patient; a language challenge can be exacerbated when wearing a mask
- The aforementioned also extends to cultural understanding, as some employers provide examples of misunderstandings which seemed to be caused by the lack of familiarity with certain Canadian norms or practices
- In some instances, where the international student has prior international training or work experience in a field, the employer needs to train the student in Canadian practices
- Some employers note that international students are unlikely to have a car, thus limiting their availability for certain employment opportunities
- A few employers noted that additional considerations emerge: students might request time off for dates of religious or cultural significance that are different from our statutory holidays, or they might be absent from work for long periods should they need to return home
- One employer noted that these international students are young and away from home and family, and so it is important to check-in with them when needed to ensure they do not feel isolated and without support

While this appears to be a lengthy list, it does not deter employers from hiring international students. Overall, they find them to be good workers. Indeed, four out of five childcare centres indicated they would be interested in supporting international students in obtaining permanent residence.²⁶

In terms of what employers think would support the employment of more international students, the following observations were made:

- Several cited the need for more ESL training for students at their respective colleges
- Some employers shared that they need to provide cross-cultural training for their own supervisors and staff, to better equip them for onboarding and interacting with international students
- Several employers stated there was a good chance they would hire international students who completed college program placements with them
- Several employers noted that they have a good working relationship with St. Clair College, while a few others said they did not know what programs St. Clair College offered at the Chatham campus or they wished to see more collaboration between themselves and St. Clair College
- Some employers wondered whether St. Clair College could assist with transportation support for students in program-related placements

It should also be noted that some employers rely on Lambton College for placements from programs not offered by St. Clair College.

²⁶ From a Fall 2023 survey carried out of local childcare centres by Chatham-Kent Child Care & Early Years.

Views from local post-secondary institutions

There was considerable engagement during this assignment with St. Clair College through helpful and informative interviews with various staff. There were also conversations with Lambton College and University of Guelph, Ridgetown Campus.

St. Clair College – Chatham Campus

With around 125 new international students starting at Chatham in January 2024, the total number of international students at this campus grew to over 400. International students find their way to Chatham in several ways:

- Around 60% come through recruiting agents, who work on commission
- Most of the rest find their own way to Chatham; in some cases, they would have applied to several colleges, attending the accepting college; the students at Chatham also include those who had initially sought to attend St. Clair College in Windsor, but who were offered enrollment at Chatham because their preferred courses were already filled at the main campus
- There are very small numbers who select St. Clair College because of a partnership with an international academic institution or because they transfer from another Canadian post-secondary institution

There is a view that word-of-mouth plays a role in how students end up in Chatham. Chatham is seen as a welcoming community with a lower cost of living. Also, some students prefer living in a smaller town than a large metropolis. Mention was also made of the efforts of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent to recruit first generation Canadians into their workforce, which signals the desire of the local community to be welcoming of newcomers and a commitment to diversity and inclusion.

In the view of St. Clair administration, 99% of international students wish to stay in Canada. There is a small number from specific countries who typically return to their home country after graduation (these countries are United States, Japan, China, South Korea and various European countries).²⁷

In the past, many international students often had previous diplomas or degrees from their home countries but, in the last couple of years, an increasing number are recent high school graduates. Data on the age of international students indicate they are somewhat younger than data indicate for international students enrolled throughout all of Ontario colleges and Ontario universities (Table 11).

Table 11: Age distribution of enrolled students, international students at Chatham, domestic and international students in Ontario colleges and universities

AGE	CHATHAM Campus Int'l	ONTARIO COLLEGES		ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES	
		Dom	Int'l	Dom	Int'l
Less than 20 years	10%	19%	22%	28%	29%
20 to 24 years	66%	41%	35%	50%	48%
25 to 29 years	12%	18%	15%	11%	11%
30 and more years	12%	23%	27%	11%	12%

Ontario data from Statistics Canada, Table 37-10-0163-01, fall snapshot of students, 2021-22; Chatham data is Winter 2024 term

²⁷ Of all international students enrolled at Chatham in Winter 2024, 80% were from India. The next largest source countries were Nigeria (5%), China (3%) and Ghana (2%). In total, students came from 25 different countries.

While only 10% of the Chatham campus international students are less than 20 years old, two-thirds are between 20 and 24 years old, meaning that over three-quarters, 76%, are 24 years or younger. In comparison, the figure for international students attending Ontario colleges in general is 57%.

Staff from the St. Clair international office help students with the application and admission process. Once admitted, there are virtual pre-departure workshops covering such topics as: registration, access to the student information system, health insurance, arrival information, policies regarding working as an international student, and on-campus services and other orientation information.

Prior to arrival and after they arrive, students are provided with information regarding rental housing. Staff point to the efforts the college has made to help students access housing: in Windsor, there is a residence for international students and in Chatham they have a private partnership with landlords that allocate 160 beds for students. When students arrive, they are accommodated in local hotels for three days while they finalize their housing arrangements. This arrangement can be extended. Students are also provided with a list of private landlords in Chatham. While housing is a major concern, staff feel that the housing situation has actually been improving as more housing stock has been coming onto the market.

International students have access to a range of services to assist them, starting with academic support and tutoring. However, as a smaller campus, these services are often available mostly virtually from Windsor, with staff attending Chatham once a week, such as international office staff and employment services. This same limitation of campus size applies to the number of student clubs which are available, limiting opportunities for international students to pursue other interests or engage socially with other students.

Employment is a crucial goal for international students. A good number of them already wish to find employment within weeks of arriving in Chatham. Many take part-time jobs in fast food outlets, retail stores, and gas stations. The college does provide workshops available to the entire student body on resume writing and practicing interview skills, and international students are encouraged to attend. Job fairs for part-time work are only held in Windsor and not Chatham. In limited cases, employers attend classes to explain what job opportunities exist related to the students' field of study. Sometimes job postings are made available on the college website, which can be circulated among specific classes; sometimes students are asked to submit resumes for specific opportunities. All this is dependent on individual instructors. Most of these resources are ones broadly available to all students, while specific efforts targeting international students at Chatham seem to be lacking.

Employment is also critical to international students after graduation for achieving their permanent residency goals. Obtaining employment would be the most important factor in ensuring that international student graduates settle in Chatham. From what employers explained, it is clear that programs with placement components often lead to post graduation employment, which is the case in health care and social services. The impression is that most graduates from the Chatham programs leave Chatham-Kent to resettle in the Greater Toronto Area. This especially appears to be the case for students enrolled in the Business program. Coincidentally, the Business program does not have a placement component.

This is not to imply that simply offering programs which have a labour market demand is a sufficient criterion for a program's success. St. Clair College administration and faculty invest considerable effort into developing programs which reflect employer needs, yet these programs sometimes flounder because of a lack of student interest. It is also the case that international students seek programs which will make their progression to permanent residency more likely. Because of its draw, the Business programs seem to serve that purpose. In general, a very high proportion of international students across all Ontario colleges enroll in various Business programs. It has also been anecdotally reported by several informants that international students sometimes

choose other programs because those programs are considered less challenging and give them a foot in the door in their pursuit of permanent residency.

Again, much of this discussion depends on anecdotal evidence because data is lacking for international students, unlike for their domestic counterparts. The provincial government expects colleges to gather key performance indicators for domestic students, including whether a student is employed six months after graduation, whether the job is related to their field of study, and what is the satisfaction rating of their employer. There is no similar requirement for tracking international student employment outcomes.

Lambton College

One discussion was held with staff from Lambton College to learn about how they were serving their international student population. Lambton College has a far higher proportion of international students than St. Clair College and they have been engaged with this larger number longer than St. Clair. This discussion focused on what was provided at their main campus in Sarnia, which has a larger mass of students, including international students, than St. Clair Chatham.

Lambton can provide more services directly to international students because of these higher numbers, longer experience and because the Sarnia campus is the main Lambton College campus in Ontario. An incomplete list of these services for international students include: student success navigators, who also connect them with resources in the community; provision of transportation to and from the airport; a food bank, clothing drive, help with housing, counselling, and student clubs.

They also have a robust connection with the Sarnia local workforce planning board, which helps with links to job opportunities, together with the presence of a committee where the college, the workforce planning board, the local chamber of commerce, and community agencies can identify intersecting concerns and formulate strategies.

There is a concentrated effort to find placements for students in their programs, which involves reaching out to employers beyond Lambton County and includes canvassing employers in Chatham-Kent. The two Lambton College job developers interviewed for this assignment said they are placing 500-1500 students each term. Finding placements for Business students is challenging with a good portion of students being placed in non-profit organizations without compensation. The international students, however, seek paid placements.

As in the case of St. Clair College, Lambton College acknowledges that it has very little data on the post-graduate outcomes for international students and that it is very challenging to pursue that data.

Ridgetown Campus, University of Guelph

Ridgetown campus is one of 14 Ontario Food and Research stations funded by and part of the Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario. It is administered by the University of Guelph. Their programs are focused on agriculture and veterinary technology, and faculty are involved in research.

This year, 10 international students accepted offers of admission. This is a small campus with a small student body. Given its more isolated location and the age of their residence building, housing poses a serious challenge.

The administration would like to become more connected with employers, enhance their work-integrated learning opportunities, and create stronger pathways to post-graduation employment and career possibilities.

Views from the immigration sector

The view from the immigration sector draws on interviews with the settlement sector and immigration consultants, as well as insights from the work of the Chatham-Kent Local immigration Partnership.

International students are not a category for whom there is much in the way of publicly funded services. As noted previously, they are not entitled to employment services provided by Employment Ontario. Similarly, they are not entitled to the range of settlement services funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), including not having access to ESL classes. There is some provincial funding for services to international students, but it is very small, compared to the extent of their needs.

Adult Language and Learning is one of the primary settlement services in Chatham-Kent; they estimate they have engaged with around 20% of the international student body at Chatham, either when students have sought their services or through presentations they have made. Among the issues of concern to Adult Language and Learning:

- Although international students have a requirement for English proficiency, some nonetheless have difficulty with the language expectations in college as well as in the workplace; without access to free ESL, these students are required to rely on fee-for-service instruction
- While ALL does not provide housing services, their impression is that affordable housing is a major concern, that there exists overcrowding and some exploitation of international students (as well as of newcomers)
- Employment is very important to international students, both part-time employment while they are studying, as well as post-graduation employment, as a means of accessing permanent residency; some employers are receptive to hiring international students for part-time jobs, some are not (these are jobs primarily in accommodation and food services, as well as retail trade); St. Clair College has organized job fairs, however, the nature of their employment services have changed – they used to be an Employment Ontario-funded employment services provider, but with the transition to a Service System manager model, they no longer are, so that the range of what they can provide may be more limited
- The degree to which international students would stay in Chatham-Kent after graduation is heavily dependent on their ability to secure employment
- What is also important is creating a sense of belonging and feeling connected to the community, which helps overcome a sense of social isolation, but which also engenders social networks and generates greater knowledge about available services and job opportunities
- At a broader policy level, there is need to make international students eligible for more services as well as provide support for them to navigate the pathway to permanent residency

From an immigration consultant perspective, a further number of insights:

- Increasingly, the contrast between housing availability and affordability in Chatham-Kent versus Windsor and the GTA is resulting in more international students choosing Chatham-Kent
- This would also be one important factor in their decision to remain in Chatham-Kent after graduation, but what is also critical are their employment opportunities
- There certainly has been an increasing trend of more international students enrolling in health care

programs, and these provide pathways to local jobs (the fact that one will be able to do the registered nurse program at the Chatham campus will be a big plus); for other professional and technical skills occupations, there tend to be fewer such jobs in Chatham-Kent, and those graduates are more likely to move elsewhere

- In terms of pathways to permanent residency, this is a somewhat opaque and ever-changing landscape, for example:
 - It appears that permanent residency is more likely if one is somewhat older and have prior work experience before coming to Canada
 - Once one has the status to work, most employers are eager to hire
 - For other paths, such as Express Entry, one gets additional points for having studied in Canada
 - Recent pandemic recovery measures opened the door to longer post-graduation work permits for personal support workers
- If longer duration work permits come to an end, then those who are in customer service jobs may see their chances of getting permanent residency drop

As further insight to what international students may be experiencing in the arrival and stay in Chatham-Kent, the reports of the Chatham-Kent Local Immigration Partnership are useful.²⁸ Their findings include:

- Most newcomers find Chatham-Kent to be a welcoming community
- Immigrants struggle to find meaningful employment and they are not always aware of the services that are available
- Transportation is a big challenge
- Immigrants would like to see more activities and events which stimulate social connections and networking



²⁸ In particular, the 2020 Chatham-Kent Immigration Survey and the Chatham-Kent Local Immigration Partnership Recommendations for Future Practice.

Views from international students

While there were challenges engaging with a broader number of Chatham-Kent international students, there was a high amount of consistency in their views. Despite the challenges, the students who offered their insight said they reflected the views of many of their peers. Almost all the students consulted were enrolled at St. Clair College Chatham campus.

Most individuals were enrolled in programs relating to health care or social services, and their choice to come to the Chatham campus was often a function of where there were openings for their desired program. Where they had to choose between colleges, the allure of a community that was smaller was part of the calculus behind their decision. As one student pointed out, many international students come from small communities and, because of that, many prefer to live in a small community.

For the most part, much of the help they received on their initial arrival came from family and friends, although some also mentioned help from a cultural, social, or religious organization, a settlement service and an immigration consultant. A small number said they had help from no one. This was especially the case when it came to finding housing; many said that it was hard to find appropriate and affordable housing, and most said that family or friends helped. For example, one student had a friend living elsewhere in Ontario who rented an apartment in Chatham to sublet to her. Not having a credit history in Canada posed this student difficulties when it came to qualifying for a lease.

Other students said they had little difficulty finding accommodation which turned out to be a consequence of belonging to a larger cultural community. Many Indian students in Chatham subscribe to an informal WhatsApp chat group where they exchange information about available housing and jobs, and more. Subscribers to this chat group announce when they will vacate their accommodations so that another subscriber who needs accommodation can move in. The chat group also has subscribers from the local Indian community. Indian business owners in the group advertise and fill job openings using that platform when they can. Not all Indian international students seem to be on the platform. A newly arrived international student in their third month of studies said that neither they nor their cohort knew of the group. Clearly, there is no organized outreach to new Indian students informing them about this platform. Also, it was clear from students belonging to other nationalities that they had no similar platforms to join.

The students appreciated the assistance they received from their college, but some of them said they lacked awareness about all the services that were available. But when describing the services they were aware of, they listed all available college services: they noted that the college helped them get placements for their courses, and some cited the availability of assistance with resume writing and connecting with employers. They also acknowledged the availability of health and mental health services, as well as financial aid assistance. In general, they found college staff very approachable, although sometimes they had to be referred to staff in Windsor to get the support they sought.

Overall, the students generally liked living in Chatham-Kent; they characterized the community as “peaceful” and “nice,” and said the people were welcoming and helpful. The most common drawback cited was the limited public transportation, as well as the fact that there was little to do in the way entertainment or social events. For those with children, obtaining childcare was a challenge, as well as securing health insurance for them.

After graduation, all of them wished to seek permanent residency. In choosing where to live after graduation, three considerations received the highest priority: access to affordable housing, working in a job in their field

of study and access to public transportation. After that came finding any job, and then closely behind were having cultural and/or community connections and living in a quieter, less hectic community.

These students had formed opinions about how the different programs offered through the Chatham campus facilitated paths to these goals. Several who were in the practical nursing program felt confident about their ability to find a job and stay in Chatham-Kent. Indeed, many hoped to later pursue their degree in nursing, and were very pleased that a nursing program was now available at the Chatham campus. These individuals felt more confident that they would be able to secure permanent residency. Others commented that for those interested in IT occupations, there were not as many jobs in this field in Chatham-Kent. The view was also expressed that the Business program resulted in fewer opportunities, and that many graduates from this program moved out of Chatham-Kent to seek employment elsewhere.

Most students would prefer to stay in Chatham-Kent after graduation if they found work, as they liked the community, and felt it was a quiet, polite, family-friendly place to live, and housing costs were more reasonable. Some students indicated that they want to pursue further education after graduating but did not indicate if they want to study in Chatham or elsewhere.

When asked what further help they would need to pursue their goals, the most common response was help in finding employment. Other items mentioned included help with securing permanent residency, help for the spouse, and one mentioned help with mental stability, highlighting the on-going stress of their circumstance. In thinking of their trajectory, one student commented that they wished there could have been a way to connect with previous international students who could have provided insights on their experiences as a way to learn about how to adapt.



Changes in international student visa policies

Federal government policy changes

On January 22, 2024, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada announced the following policy changes related to international students:²⁹

- For 2024, a cap of approximately 360,000 new study permits was set, a decrease of 35% from 2023
- This cap would be distributed by province and territory, weighted by population; as a consequence, Ontario would see a reduction of 50% in the number of new study permits
- As part of the process of implementing the cap, provinces and territories would have to provide an attestation letter which, together with the letter of acceptance from the designated learning institution, would need to accompany the request for a study permit
- These measures would be in place for two years, while the government worked with stakeholders to revise the framework for the issuance of study permits
- The number of new student permits to be issued in 2025 would be assessed at the end of 2024
- Starting in September 2024, international students beginning their studies at a public-private partnership campus would no longer be eligible for a post-graduation work permit after graduation

Likely consequences of these changes

Impact on Ontario colleges. While it remains to be seen how the Ontario government intends to distribute these cuts in the number of new study permits, it is very likely that, with the removal of access to post-graduate work permits for students of public-private partnership campuses, the first cut will certainly be visas for these campuses, as one can expect that international students will not choose a path which does not result in a post-graduate work permit (an important factor in obtaining permanent residency). In essence, public-private partnerships have been eliminated as an option.

One can also expect reduced numbers because of application processing delays. The new rules will require that provinces set up systems to affirm provincial attestation after a student has received a letter of acceptance from their post-secondary school. As these new rules and processes come into play, this will cause confusion and delay, which are certain to reduce the eventual number of international students arriving in Canada, including Ontario.

This drop in international students will greatly affect Ontario colleges financially in two ways:

1. They will no longer receive the proceeds from the public-private partnerships they are involved in (the net amount they receive for the tuition from these students minus what they subcontract the private college partner for delivering the curriculum)
2. They will also likely host a smaller number of international students at their own campuses and will experience a drop in the far higher tuition fees they receive from those students

²⁹ IRCC, "Canada to stabilize growth and decrease number of new international student permits issued to approximately 360,000 for 2024," January 22, 2024. Marieke Walsh and Marie Woolf, "Ottawa announces two-year cap on international student visas," *Globe and Mail*, January 22, 2024.

Impact on St. Clair College. In an interview with CBC Windsor,³⁰ St. Clair College's vice president of international relations predicted that as many as 50% fewer international students would be attending the college in the second year of the temporary cap (this figure would include those students attending the college's public-private partnerships in the GTA). Consequently, the college was forecasting a loss of \$40 million in revenue for the 2025-26 fiscal year. However, in recent years the college has experienced significant surpluses in its budget, and it has the financial reserves to weather this downturn for the next two years.

Impact on Chatham campus. It is hard to imagine that the number of international students attending Chatham campus could increase after these changes. Indeed, there is a good chance that the numbers will decrease, for the following reasons:

- With a reduction by half in the study visas available for Ontario, there will be increased competition for the smaller number of international students, and each institution will be vying to secure as many international students as possible
- Within St. Clair College itself, it may be less likely that courses will be filled at its Windsor campuses, and so there may be less reason for some students to be relegated to the Chatham campus



³⁰ Bob Becken, "St. Clair College doesn't expect layoffs or domestic tuition hike with international student cap," CBC Windsor, January 29, 2024.

Findings and recommendations

The goal of this assignment was to gain an understanding of how international student talent can better connect with local employers for long-term employment. This task required learning about the context of international students in Chatham-Kent, the Chatham-Kent labour market and workforce needs, and the needs and perspectives of international students themselves.

What was learned was that although most international students studying in Chatham-Kent find themselves in the community by chance, there is an interest in remaining in the community and working after graduation. The right kind of work will lead to permanent residency and students will need assistance in developing opportunities with local employers. Depending on the labour market sector in which they work, there is interest in remaining for the long run and raising their families in the community. And, employers are interested in hiring international students, who have a reputation for being skilled and hardworking.

Effective interventions need to be developed to encourage more international students to permanently settle in the community. Upon arriving as students, they are faced with many challenges and barriers caused by the fact that they have left behind a culture with which they are familiar, their personal networks, and families and communities that care. While international students essentially receive the same supports as domestic students in school, they would need more bridging efforts by the school and community, including employers, to address barriers such as language, knowledge of cultural norms and expectations, networking with local employers, initially finding part-time work, access to housing and transportation solutions to set the stage for long-term settlement. Most importantly, they will need a full-time position post-graduation in their field of study.

Finally, with the announcement of changes to the international student visa program, the number of international students arriving to Ontario will fall dramatically, possibly creating a more competitive environment for international students among Colleges and Universities. Because of this, attracting international students to study in Chatham-Kent (or ensuring that Chatham-Kent receives an adequate allocation of international students) could benefit from becoming a community effort.

Summary of Findings

There was a great deal of commonality between what local international students shared and what the various key informants relayed about their impressions of the experiences of international students.

In many respects, the circumstances relating to international students in Chatham-Kent are very similar to the experiences of international students generally:

- The number of international students has increased significantly in recent years; in the Fall 2018 term, international students represented 13.6% of student enrollment at the St. Clair College Chatham campus; by the Winter 2024 term they made up 39.1% of the student body
- The desires, concerns and challenges of international students in Chatham-Kent echo what the literature tells us about international students across Canada:
 - A keen desire to acquire permanent residency

- Difficulties accessing suitable and affordable housing
- Some English language skills challenges affecting academic performance and employability
- Lacking eligibility to access certain community services
- In want of more services
- Place high priority on finding employment, both for immediate financial need as well as to bolster their chances of obtaining permanent residency
- Mental health issues related to stress and/or feeling isolated

From the review of the local labour market, there are several sectors which could be priority areas for linking international students to employment:

- By far, the most obvious and the one where there already is considerable engagement with international students is in both the Health Care and Social Assistance/Social Services sectors
- Manufacturing is also an attractive target, because of the size of its employment and the continuing growth in the number of establishments, albeit labour demand appears to have been flat
- Construction combines growth in employment and growth in establishments
- There is a case to be made that Business, Finance & Administration Occupations warrant attention

It was also evident that those Chatham campus programs with placement opportunities are particularly successful in helping students access local jobs after graduation. These were primarily found in the Health Care and Social Services sectors. Among other college programs, there was limited evidence of student employment outcomes, and anecdotally it appeared that international students graduating from these other programs were more likely to leave Chatham-Kent.

Once again, there exists a confluence of interests: international students studying in Chatham-Kent would generally like to remain in Chatham-Kent, while employers wish to hire them. Ensuring that this can happen more often is the focus of the recommendations of this report.

Recommendations

There are four categories of recommendations:

- Coordination
- Information
- Engagement
- Enhancement

Coordination

As stated above, the issues facing international students are not the domain of one organization, nor can they be solved in isolation. Moreover, because in many instances, organizations have neither the mandate nor the funding to serve international students, what is needed is the ability to piggy-back on other activities (for example, a general job fair can have coached international students invited to attend), to develop an initiative which can be cobbled together from in-kind contributions from several sources, and generally to seek the synergy which develops from multiple stakeholders collaborating to achieve the same goals.

Recommendation #1: Create a Working Committee on International Students in Chatham-Kent to serve as a platform for information sharing, identification of issues and development of responses. While there is no limit on who should participate, some natural members of this working group would include: Chatham-Kent Workforce Planning Board, Chatham-Kent Local Immigration Partnership, St. Clair College – Chatham, University of Guelph – Ridgetown, Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce, Adult Language and Learning, and representatives from employment services. Consideration should also be given to how to include representation from international students living in Chatham-Kent.

Information

While much information is directed at international students, particularly about available services, it is also apparent that many international students are unclear about what is available and how it can be accessed.

Recommendation #2: International students should receive more realistic information about what to expect in Canada. This should include pre-departure emotional and mental preparation as part of their pre-departure orientation, including hearing from international students already in Chatham. They also need to receive regular reminders about services, especially since the initial flood of information can be overwhelming. Given that St. Clair College is the primary point of contact for international students, they should take the lead on this item but also should consider inviting representatives from the municipality to participate.

Recommendation #3: The Municipality of Chatham-Kent should update its International Students webpage to include those local economic sectors in need of workers as a way to attract international students (both those considering studying in Chatham-Kent before arriving in Canada or those moving to study in Chatham-Kent from other locations within Canada). The Municipality should increase traffic to the webpage through posts to International Student Canada groups on platforms such as Facebook or for the Workforce Planning Board and other Municipal staff to share over LinkedIn. Creating shorts for YouTube or TikTok videos could be another way to attract international students to study in Chatham-Kent.

Employers also need to be aware of the opportunity to hire international students, including what is involved in hiring an international student. This could be done online, by distributing flyers, or by delivering webinars, which could include best practices.

Recommendation #4: An awareness campaign should be undertaken to familiarize local employers with the availability of international students for employment and to explain the rules and best practices that apply. This could involve the Chatham-Kent Workforce Planning Board, the Municipality of Chatham-Kent's Community Attraction and Promotion division, and/or the various chambers of commerce in Chatham-Kent. Such a campaign could also be combined with a focus on newcomers in Chatham-Kent and/or a broader focus on non-traditional sources for labour force recruitment (international students, newcomers, persons with disabilities, older adults).

Engagement

Communication must be more than one-way: a real understanding of the issues and promising solutions arise when there is a two-way engagement. In this respect, there are two populations where this engagement is especially necessary.

Recommendation #5: There needs to be on-going open dialogue with international students about their concerns and challenges, both academically and personally. A check-in could either be done from time-to-time

in the classroom with a municipal representative also present or through a separate monthly meeting on or off campus with college and municipal representatives present. The point is to understand what is happening in real time and to try to find practical and workable solutions.

This engagement with international students could have a data gathering component with their permission to track some outcomes, including after graduation. Gathering some data is important for two reasons:

1. There is currently no quantitative data available about how international students are doing, including who is succeeding and who is not, which prevents the development of systemic solutions;
2. With the changes in student visa policy, there will be increased competition among education institutions for international students admitted to Ontario, and having positive outcome quantitative data could help with the recruitment process.

Recommendation #6: A mechanism should be put in place to track outcomes for Chatham international students. These indicators could include measurements which reflect their experience in school as well as what occurs six months after graduation, as is done for domestic students.

Another group that can be invited to support the international student community are employers from priority sectors in Chatham-Kent. Employers from the following areas could be approached to engage with international students as part of their programs:

- **Health Care and Social Assistance:** As noted previously, this is an area where there has been success in providing work experience and employment for international students. Direct informal (social) engagement with employers at the college would allow employers and students to get to know one another even before the employer has job openings. The employer would benefit by building a pipeline of people they know personally and whose name they can put a face to. The students would benefit by developing a network and become familiar on an individual level and not just be only a resume to potential employers while applying for work. Informal engagement with employers would also help students learn more about the current trends and needs of the job market.
- **Manufacturing:** Given the importance of this sector to the Chatham-Kent economy, it would be advisable to invite manufacturers to informally engage with students exploring their skill needs, as an aging workforce and technological changes means there will be a need for properly skilled new employees. It would also be helpful to invite employers to meet with international (and domestic) students from the Electrical Engineering Technician program.
- **Business, Finance & Administration Occupations:** These occupations represent a broad array of clerical and administrative jobs that span many industry sectors, from professional firms to public administration to non-profit organizations and health facilities, as well as the many office jobs in the private sector. Employers from various businesses and organizations could be invited on a rotating basis to meet with both domestic and international students.
- **Skilled trades:** Given the needs of the Manufacturing and Construction industries, and the perennial shortage of skilled tradespersons, it would be worthwhile to explore whether apprenticeships for international students is a viable option. In this case, employers could be invited to meet with apprenticeship program students on other campuses on occasions where Chatham does not have those programs available locally. Sending out employers from Chatham to engage with a possible workforce pipeline could have the effect of promoting international and domestic apprenticeship students to do their apprenticeships in Chatham-Kent.

Recommendation #7: Create sector-specific Employer Advisory Groups at St. Clair College Chatham campus to socialize and engage with international students and so they can become acquainted with them before they start filling positions, and to have students learn more about relevant companies and organizations in Chatham-Kent, as well as potential employers. The engagement could include brief presentations by employers, a Q&A, introductions to students, (some refreshments!) with students being prepared to deliver a 30-second elevator pitch about themselves during a social afterward. The sectors should include: Health Care & Social Assistance, Manufacturing; and Business, Finance & Administration Occupations; and Skilled Trades.

Enhancement

There are several areas where support for international students can be improved in a systemic way. These items would benefit from deliberation on the part of the Working Committee on International Students in Chatham-Kent, to prioritize issues and the best ways to proceed on each, which might include further background studies, engagement with other stakeholders, and/or preparing applications for funding to support an initiative. These areas often already have activities underway, but there is a need to expand their reach and effectiveness. The topics are:

- **Linkages to employment:** This could include coordination with respect to job fairs, workshops explaining the Canadian labour market and expectations of employers, career talks at the college, networking events with employers (as described above), more work-integrated learning opportunities, job shadowing and similar activities; one pressing need is to dedicate job developers for the student college population, including international students
- **Promoting more social networking:** Creating more opportunities for international students to engage with others and to provide social activities to reduce isolation, both on- and off-campus; this includes engaging with local cultural groups representing the various immigrant communities to involve them in these activities. Also, it was noted that some local festivities require the use of vehicles, which most international students don't have. Any social activities would need to include organizing transportation to those activities when public transportation is inadequate.
- **General Transportation:** Exploring options for improving transportation, in particular in support of employment (this would apply to more populations than only international students). This could include organizing carpooling or organizing discounted group means of transportation (i.e. included in the tuition would be to make vans with drivers available to students).
- **Housing:** Many international students maintain that access to suitable and affordable housing is a challenge; a review should be undertaken of how well the current housing support services are meeting the needs of these students and what options are available for them
- **ESL assessment and instruction:** Identifying gaps in English language skills and providing ESL support (this would be a function that should be undertaken by the college); create sector (jargon!) specific English oral communication practice clubs on campus for international students and newcomers alike
- **Paths to permanent residency:** Given that this is a highly sought-after goal for international students and given that the surest way to secure this future workforce for Chatham-Kent is through their deciding to settle in the community, it would be beneficial to provide resources and assistance to these students in this pursuit. This could include information sessions and assistance with applications.

Recommendation #8: These are a set of issues which require additional attention. The Working Committee on International Students in Chatham-Kent should prioritize these items and develop approaches on how best to improve what is currently available to enhance outcomes for international students. These issues are linkages to employment; promoting more social networking; transportation; housing; English language

assessment, practice and instruction; pathways to permanent residency.

In addition, there are some further suggestions for the Chatham-Kent Workforce Planning Board:

- Given the uncertain international students climate at the moment, continue recruitment efforts among newcomers through in-person and virtual job fairs in the GTA, Waterloo, Windsor, Sarnia, and London. Chatham-Kent stakeholders should also continue to partner with Bridging programs to attract talent to Chatham-Kent and build awareness about Chatham-Kent opportunities for international student graduates and newcomers
- Focus more on attracting families instead of individuals: it is more likely that families will remain in Chatham-Kent longer while children are going through school. The municipality can build on the perception that Chatham-Kent is a family-friendly environment with opportunities in the workforce
- Establish a formal relationship with Lambton College because the college places international students/graduates in jobs in Chatham-Kent; those students are likely to remain in their positions until they receive their permanent residency and are another source for meeting labour market needs



APPENDIX: Number of individuals by migrant category

Table A1: Number of individuals by migrant category, Chatham-Kent, 2015-2023 (up to October only)

		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023*
Agricultural Workers	Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program	10	15	15	195	235	580	230	265	240
	Agricultural Stream	270	280	360	575	690	745	920	1,135	1,405
	Total	280	290	370	765	925	1,320	1,145	1,395	1,640
Other Temporary Foreign Workers with LMIA		15	25	15	15	20	25	45	65	150
International Mobility Program Participants		125	165	205	200	255	305	390	420	560
TOTAL WORK PERMIT HOLDERS		425	480	595	980	1,200	1,650	1,575	1,875	2,335
New Permanent Residents		115	150	120	120	170	90	240	270	280
New Study Permit Holders		35	75	85	115	105	45	145	150	190
Net Ontario Migrants		-109	81	359	295	411	661	971		

Sources:

Work permit holders	IRCC – Work Permit Holders with a Valid Permit by Census Division of Destination and Program, 2015 – October 2023
Study permit holders	IRCC – Study Permit Holders by Census Division of Destination, Age Group, and Year in which Permit(s) became effective, 2015 – October 2023
New permanent residents	IRCC - Admissions of Permanent Residents by Province/Territory, Census Division and Census Subdivision of the Intended Destination (2022 ranking), January 2015 - October 2023
Net Ontario migrants	Statistics Canada, Income and Financial Data of Individuals, Preliminary T1 Family File, 2017-2021 (Tax filer data) (2021 is latest year for which data is available)

The Chatham-Kent Workforce Planning Board thanks all stakeholders whose insights informed the contents of this report. We invite your feedback on all publications produced by the Chatham-Kent Workforce Planning Board

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