

A Pragmatic Path for Ontario's Graduate Talent

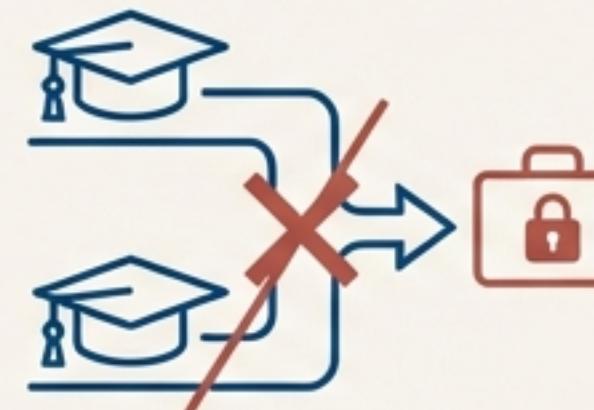
A Constructive Response to Proposal 25-MLITSD019

M.Eng. Student, Technology Innovation Management
Carleton University

The proposed changes weaken Ontario's competitiveness, increase graduate vulnerability, and break trust. There is a better way.

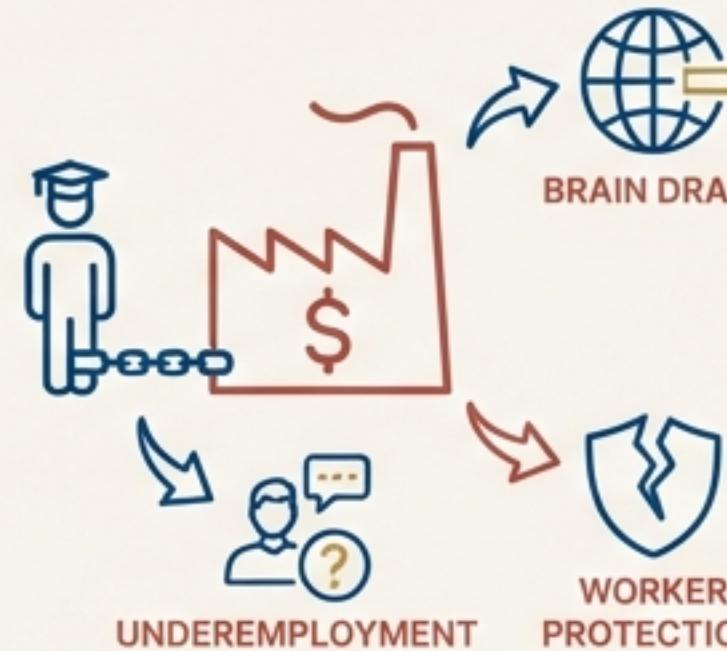
The Proposal

Proposal 25-MLITSD019 eliminates independent graduate immigration streams, folding them into an employer-dependent track.



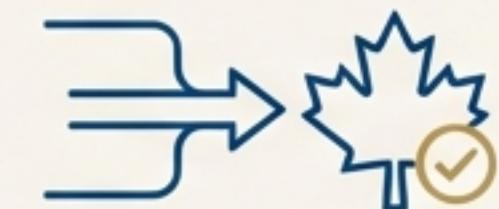
The Core Problem

This shift makes permanent residency entirely dependent on a single employer. It risks a “brain drain” of high-value talent, encourages underemployment, and is at odds with worker protection goals.



Our Key Requests

1. Preserve a clear, independent pathway for Ontario graduates.



2. Provide robust transitional protection (grandfathering) for current students.



3. Design new streams to include early-stage innovators and builders.



Ontario's Graduate Students are a Low-Risk, High-Return Strategic Asset

Retaining Ontario-trained graduates is a low-risk, high-return strategy that supports innovation, productivity, and long-term tax revenue.



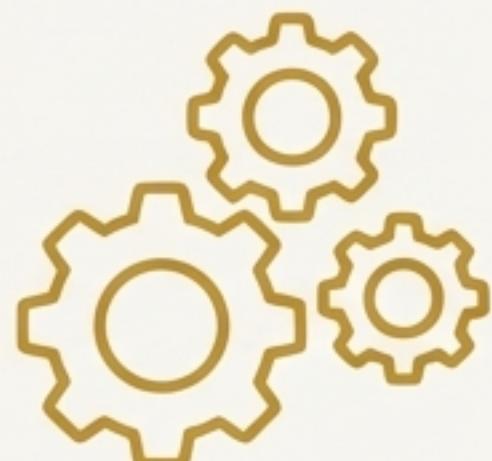
Pre-Vetted

Already screened for education, language proficiency, and cultural adaptability through rigorous university admission processes.



Invested

Have committed significant time, money, and personal sacrifice to pursue education and build connections in Ontario.



Integrated

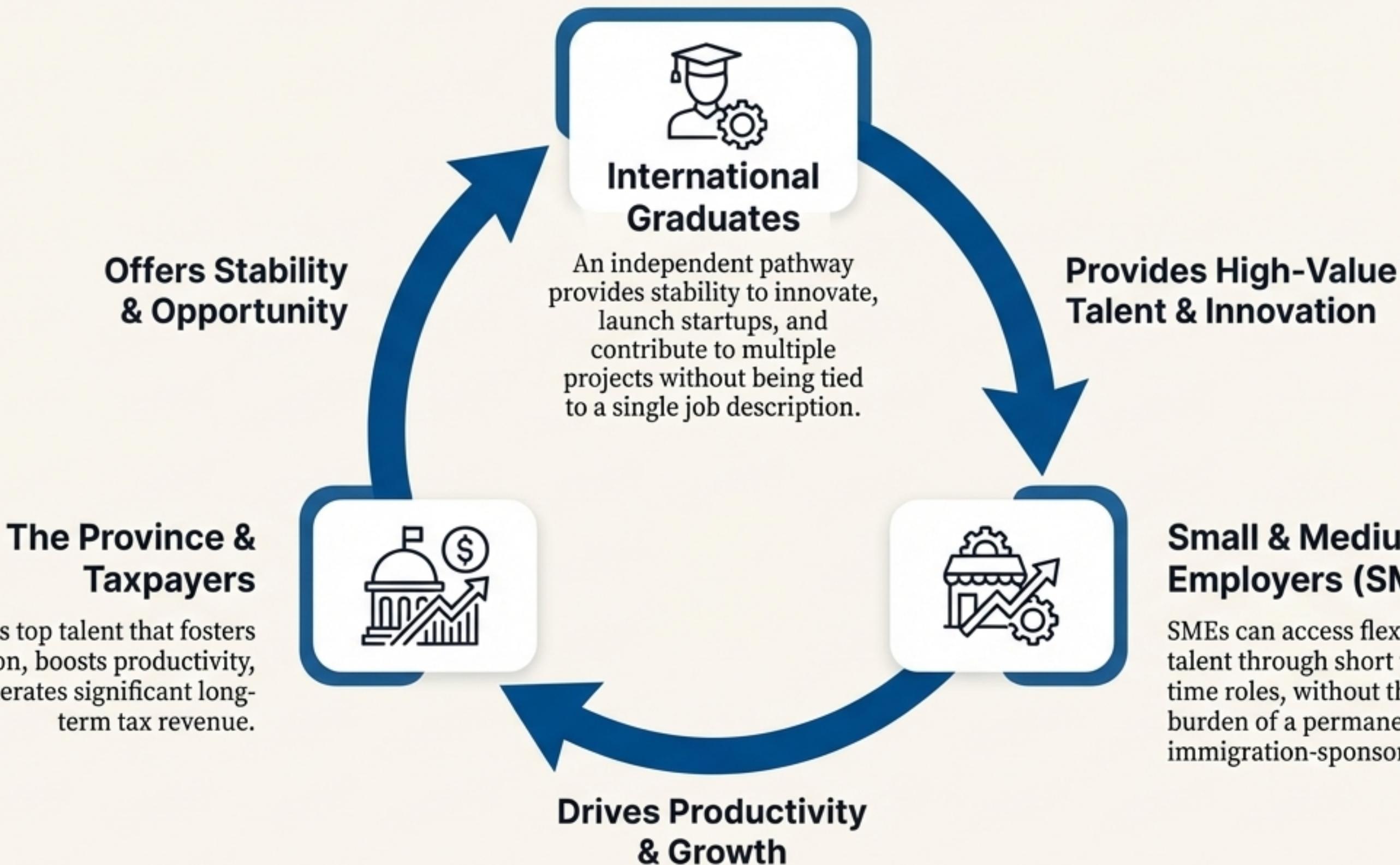
Already working with local SMEs on projects, internships, and part-time roles—sharing critical skills across communities.



Globally Sought-After

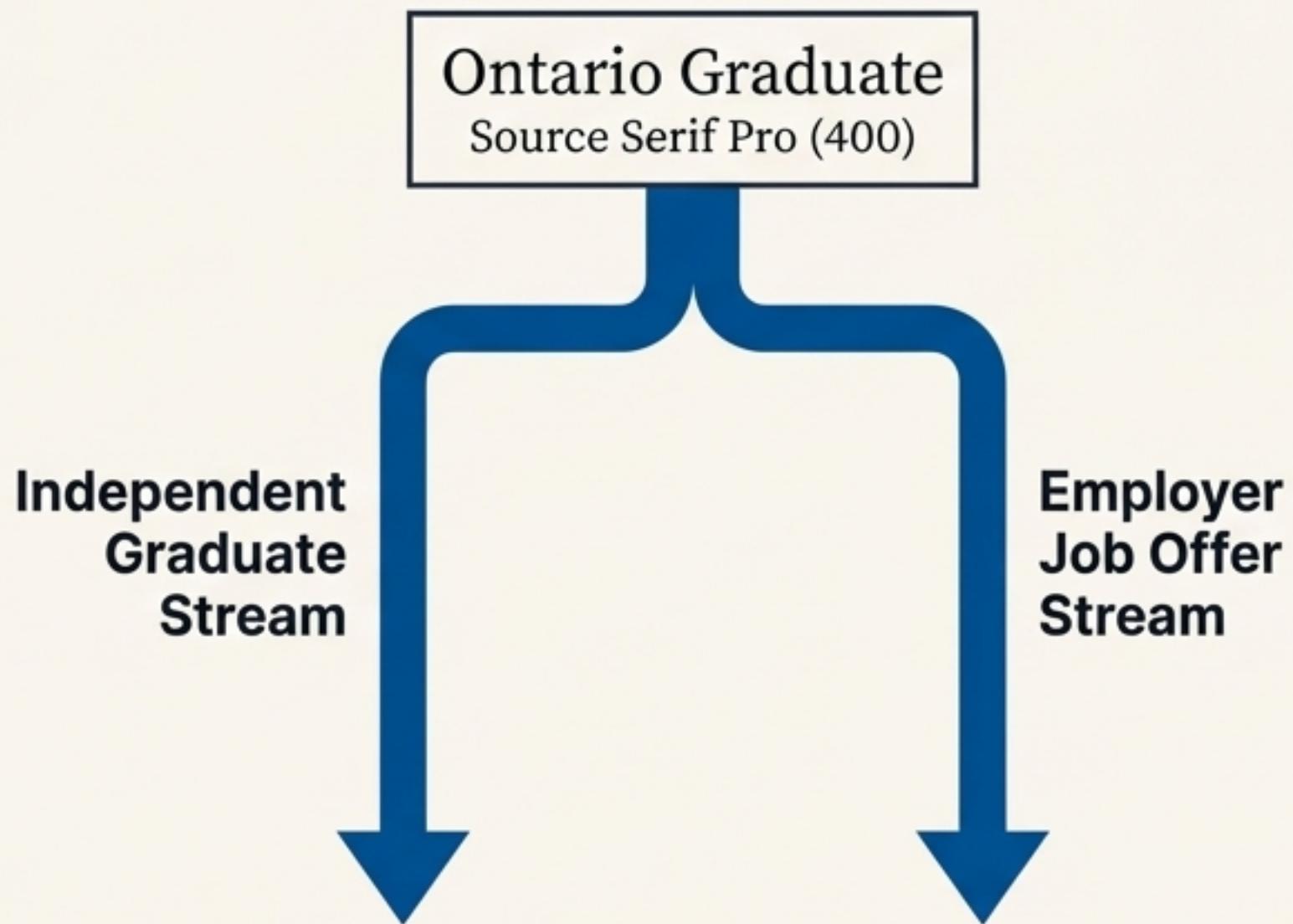
Highly mobile talent that other jurisdictions are actively recruiting. Fair pathways are critical to retention.

The Current System Creates a Win-Win for Ontario's Innovation Economy

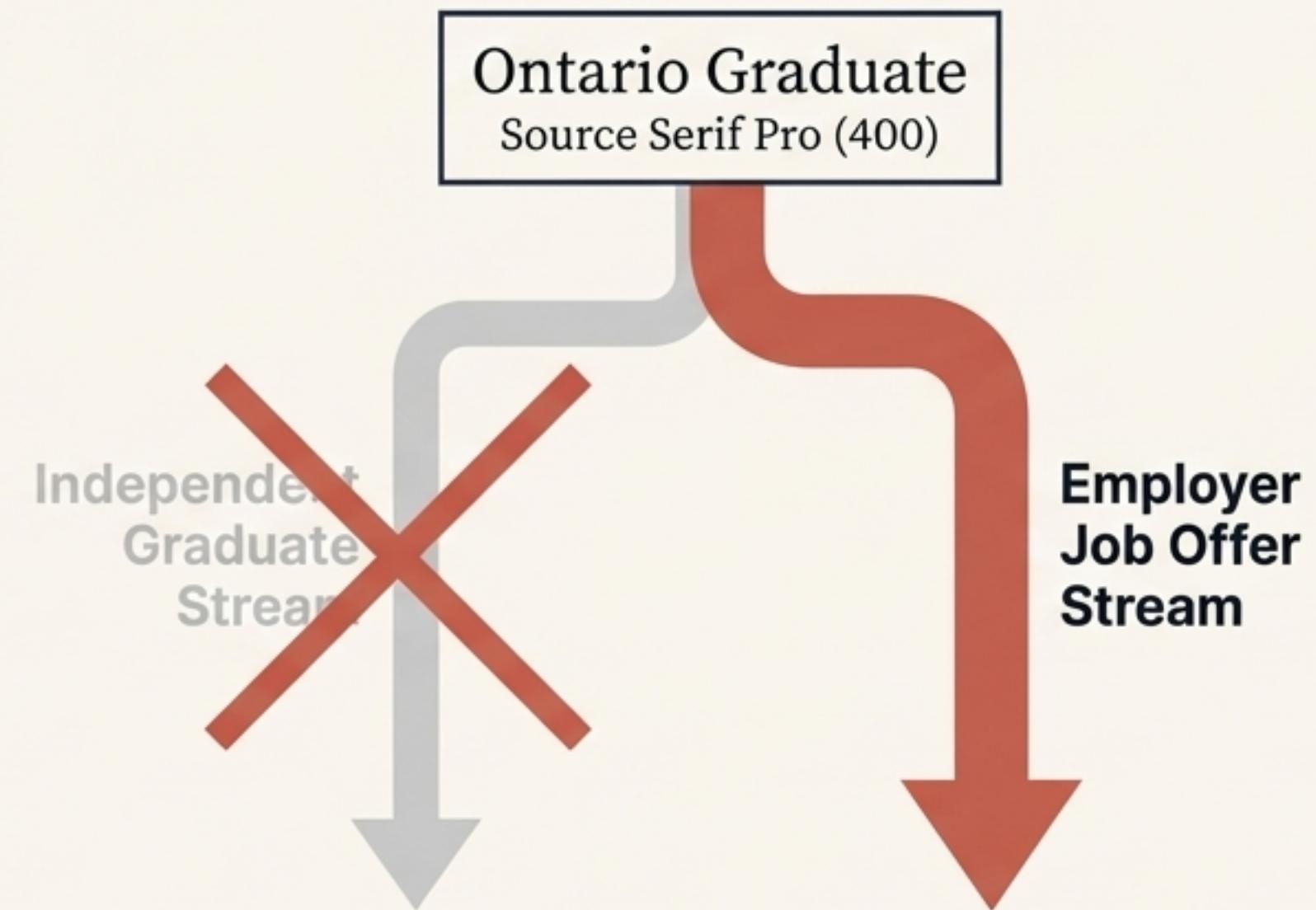


The Proposal Shifts the Model from Independence to Dependence

BEFORE (Current System)

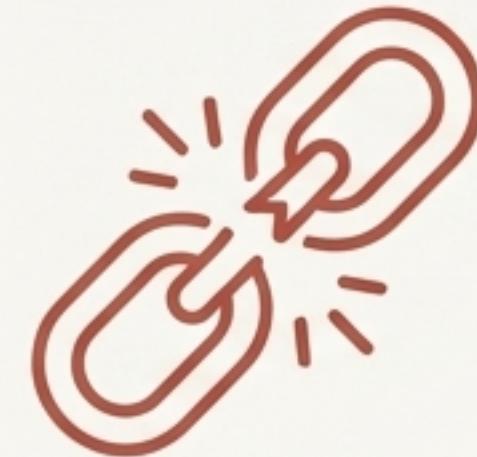


AFTER (Proposed System)



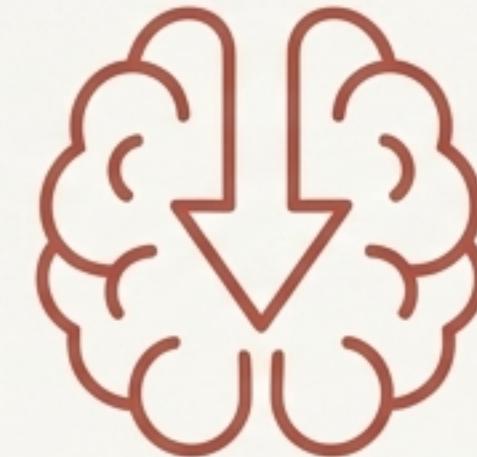
Key Insight: This structure assumes the only way graduates create value is through a single, stable job. It misunderstands how early-stage innovation happens: through contract work, startups, and research collaborations that don't map to a single employer.

Three Critical Flaws That Undermine the Proposal's Goals



Increased Worker Vulnerability

When immigration status depends entirely on one employer, graduates are less likely to leave bad jobs or negotiate fairly. This is directly at odds with the Ministry's worker protection goals.



The "Brain Waste" Signal

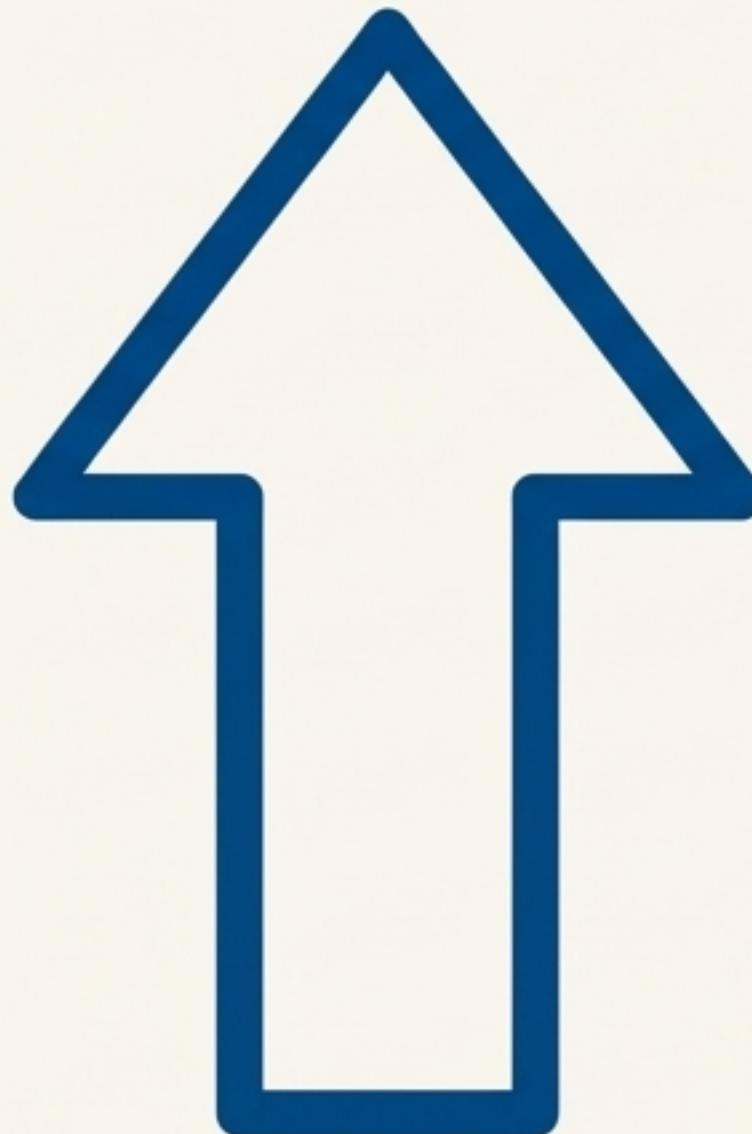
Allowing low-wage job offers for Master's and PhD holders encourages underemployment. It creates incentives for employers to offer low-wage roles as an "immigration ticket" rather than investing in talent.



Inadequate Replacements

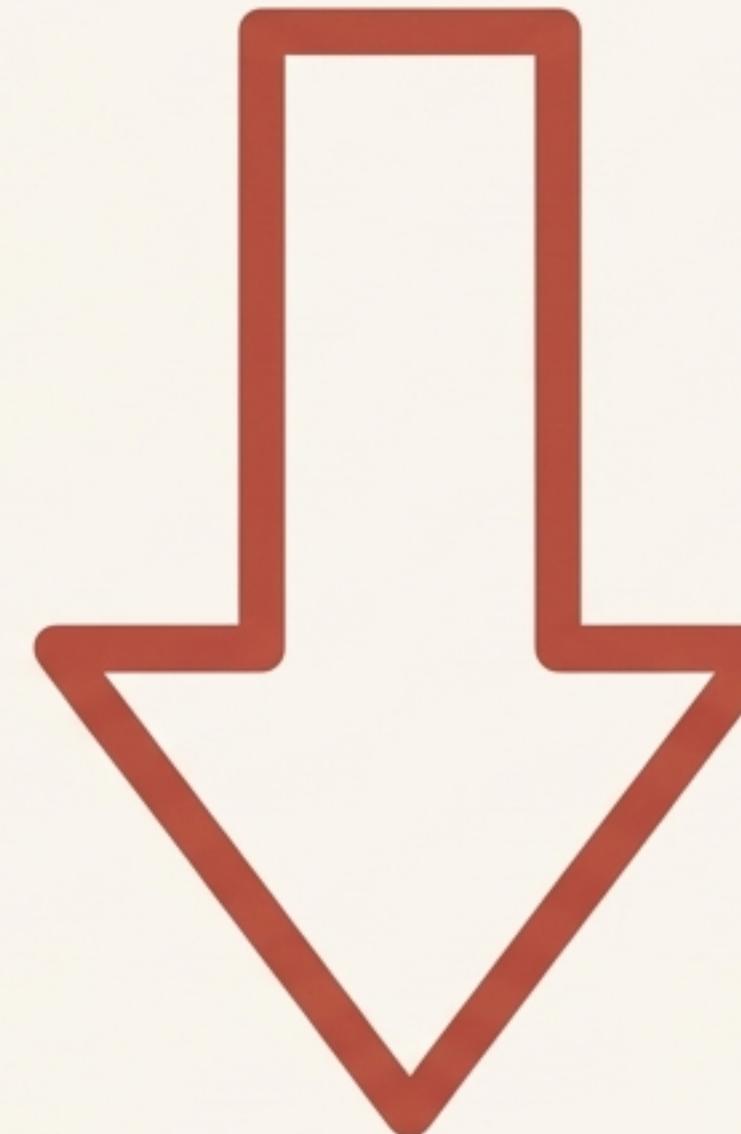
The proposed "Exceptional Talent" and "Entrepreneur" streams are designed for established figures with major awards or existing businesses, excluding the vast majority of early-stage builders.

Ontario's Proposal Moves in the Opposite Direction of Federal Policy



Federal Direction

Ottawa is exempting Master's and PhD students from study permit caps, recognizing them as a priority group for Canada's economic growth and innovation.



Proposed Ontario Direction

Ontario is proposing to remove the main provincial pathway designed specifically for this exact priority group.

Supporting Quote from Business Leaders: *National policy discussions, such as the 'Recognize Commitment to Canada in Immigration' proposal by Shopify CEO Tobi Lütke, argue that immigrants should be rewarded for ongoing contributions, including Canadian education.*

Changing the Rules Mid-Game is a Breach of Trust

Many students chose Ontario based on the reasonable expectation that the Masters Graduate Stream would exist upon graduation. Removing it without transitional measures is fundamentally unfair.



****The Impact:****

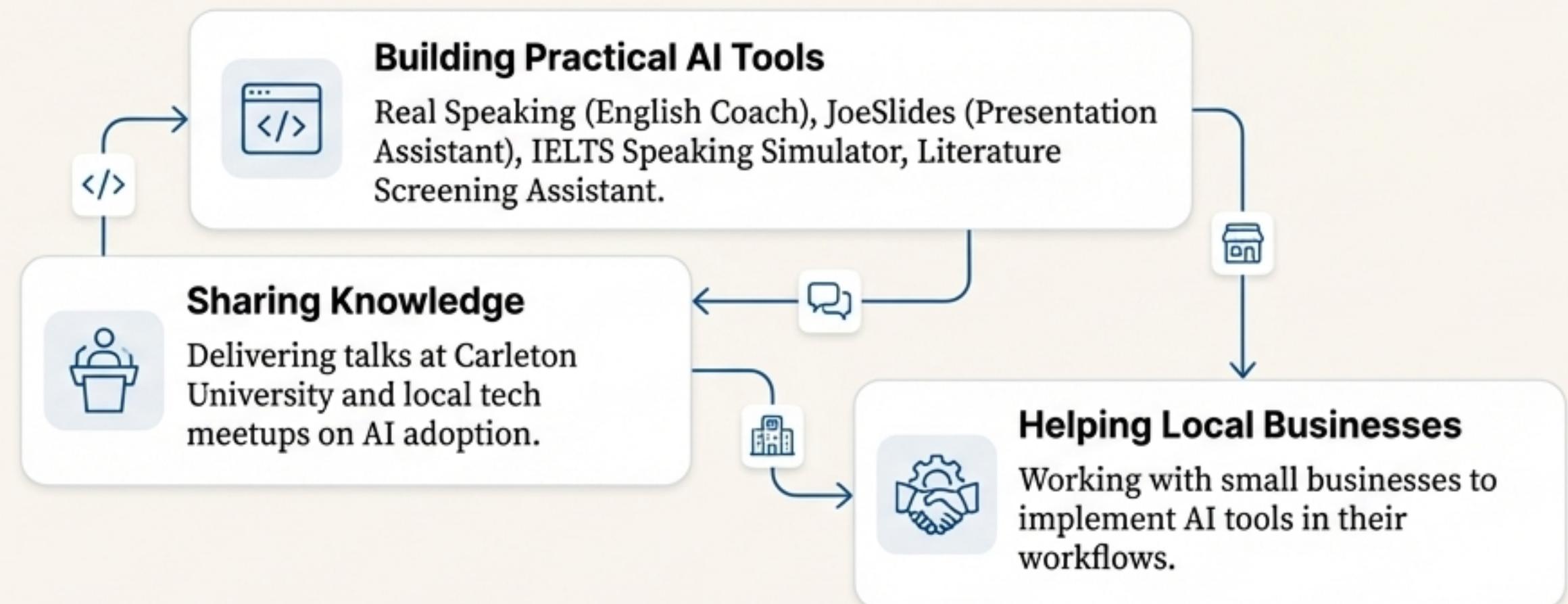
This damages Ontario's reputation as a predictable and trustworthy destination for global talent, making it harder to attract the best students in the future.

A Case Study: How Early-Stage Innovators Contribute

Profile

Master of Engineering, Technology Innovation Management, Carleton University.

Contributions to Ontario's Ecosystem



The Crucial Point: This work happens **across multiple organizations**: startups, university labs, small businesses, community groups. It does not fit neatly into a single employer relationship. The current graduate stream provides the stability to pursue this high-impact work.

Our Recommendations: A Pragmatic Path Forward

We propose three pragmatic adjustments to strengthen the policy, align it with Ontario's economic goals, and secure the province's talent pipeline.

1. Preserve an Independent Pathway

Maintain a clear, accessible route for Ontario graduates that recognizes their investment and diverse contributions.

2. Ensure a Fair Transition

Implement robust 'grandfathering' provisions for all students who are currently enrolled.

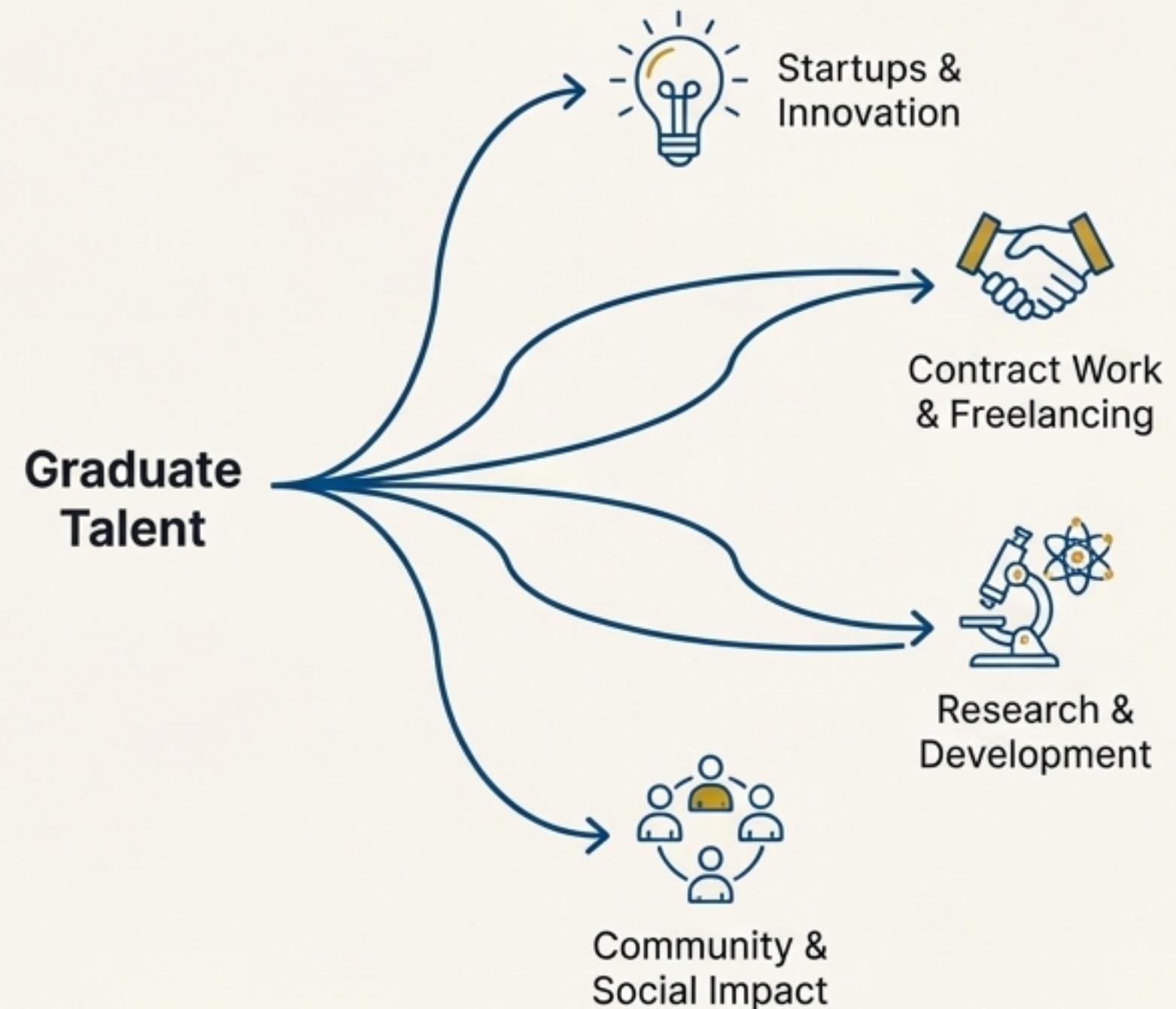
3. Design Smarter Streams

Calibrate the new 'Entrepreneur' and 'Exceptional Talent' streams for early-stage builders, not just established figures.

Recommendation #1: Preserve a Clear, Independent Pathway for Graduates

The Core Request: Do not tie all graduate talent to a single employer relationship.

- **Recognizes Modern Work:** Acknowledges that value is created through startups, contract work, and research collaborations—not just one job.
- **Reduces Vulnerability:** Supports the Ministry's worker protection goals by giving graduates the freedom to leave bad jobs or negotiate fairly.
- **Aligns with the Innovation Economy:** Provides the flexibility needed for graduates to contribute their skills widely across multiple SMEs and projects.



Recommendation #2: Provide Robust Transitional Protection

The Core Request: Honor the commitment made to current students.

- Upholds fairness and protects Ontario's global reputation as a predictable and trustworthy place to study and build a life.
- Prevents immediate, unfair disruption for thousands of students who chose Ontario in good faith.

Specific Action

'Grandfather' all Master's and PhD students who started their programs before the proposal's announcement date, allowing them to remain eligible for the existing graduate streams.



Recommendation #3: Design New Streams for Early-Stage Builders

Core Insight: The next great innovators are not always famous yet. The criteria must capture potential, not just past accolades.



For the Entrepreneur Stream, Recognize:

- Participation in recognized incubators or accelerators.
- Evidence of real traction, such as pilots with Ontario businesses or early revenue.

For the Exceptional Talent Stream, Recognize:

- Leadership of meaningful projects in AI and technology, even without major international awards.
- Demonstrated impact at the local or provincial level, such as helping Ontario firms adopt new technologies.

A Summary of Our Requests

We respectfully ask that the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development:

-  **Preserve an independent pathway** to permanent residence for Ontario's Master's and PhD graduates.
-  **Commit to robust transitional protection (grandfathering)** for all current students who began their programs under the existing framework.
-  **Publish a detailed impact analysis** of these changes and commit to a transparent, formal review of the new system within 2 to 3 years.