

70. Improving the Express Entry System for International Student Graduates

Issue

The current Express Entry system discourages employers from hiring international students who graduate from Canadian postsecondary institutions.

Background

The Federal government is moving to make it easier for international students to become permanent residents once they have graduated from Canadian postsecondary institutions. Reforms are needed to sustain the growth of international students becoming permanent residents, where they can make a significant contribution in meeting the labour market needs of regional economies within Canada, (where an aging population is often most evident).

Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, John McCallum, said he intends to launch federal-provincial talks to reform the current Express Entry (EE) system, an electronic application management system for economic immigration programs.

Express Entry was implemented on January 1, 2015, as a new system to manage how international students and/or international workers (in Canada or in their home country) apply to immigrate to Canada under federal economic immigration programs. To be able to apply for permanent residence under Express Entry, applicants have to reach a certain number of points, with levels changing from month to month. Those with the highest points in any given month are more likely to be successful.

How the points for Express Entry work:

Express Entry: Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS) is a points-based system that is used to assess and score a candidate's profile to rank them in the Express Entry Pool.

#1: Under the CRS, the total possible score is 1200 points

#2: A maximum of 600 points can be awarded, dependent on age, level of education, language ability (English and/or French) and work experience.

#3: An additional 600 points are awarded for an offer of employment that has an approved Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) in specific occupational categories.

Under the present criteria for the Express Entry Program, college graduates will rarely accumulate enough points by using the criteria outlined in #2. University graduates generally receive more points than a college graduate due to program length and degree levels.

Further, to be successful in the EE program, and to be able to receive more points, criterion #3 above generally needs to be included in the applicant's profile. To get the additional 600 points, an employer seeking to hire an international student must apply for a Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA). It has been rare for an employer to submit an LMIA for entry level positions for a variety of reasons, including:

- Significant costs including the application fee, requirement for national advertisement of the position and proof that a Canadian cannot be found to fill the position;
- The process is very time consuming; and
- There is no obligation for the successful candidate to stay with the employer for a prescribed period.

Recommendations

That the federal government:

1. Exempt employers from the LMIA process where they have made a bona fide offer of full time permanent employment (in NOC 0, A or B skill type) to an international student graduate from a Canadian post-secondary Designated Learning Institution;
2. Award 600 additional points for Express Entry purposes to international students who are graduates from a Canadian post-secondary designated learning institution AND who have a bona fide offer of full time permanent employment (in NOC 0, A or B skill type);
3. Recognize, separately and distinctly, the completion of a Canadian post-secondary education credential at a designated learning institution with additional points (exclusive of the assessed foreign education); and
4. Ensure that any federal-provincial-territorial consultations initiated by the federal Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to invite input on changes be held across the country and concluded within a 2-3 month period so that subsequent reforms not be delayed.