



THE CANADIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

LA CHAMBRE DE COMMERCE DU CANADA



Canadian Experience Class (CEC)

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) Consultations



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The Voice of Canadian Business™
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Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) Consultations on the New Immigration Program – the “Canadian Experience Class” (CEC)

Introduction

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce is Canada’s largest and most representative business organization – a diverse network of 175,000 organizations, including chambers of commerce, boards of trade, business associations and businesses of all sizes, from all sectors of the economy and all regions of Canada. We are the national leader in public policy advocacy on business issues and *the Voice of Canadian Business*TM.

Many of our members are experiencing severe labour shortages in both skilled and non-skilled professions. The latest Bank of Canada *Business Outlook Survey* indicated that 41 per cent of firms in Canada reported labour shortages that restrict their ability to meet demand.

The Conference Board of Canada predicts that by 2020, Canada will experience a labour shortage of nearly one million people. Quebec could face a shortfall of 292,000 workers by 2025, rising to 363,000 by 2030. Alberta could be short of 332,000 workers by 2025. Ontario could be short of 360,000 workers by 2025 and over 564,000 by 2030.

Immigration plays a key role in addressing these short- and long-term labour market needs. Between 2011 and 2016, growth in Canada’s working-age population will virtually stagnate and post 2016 it will decline. At the same time, baby boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) will begin reaching retirement. Innovative responses are needed so that Canada can attract people from around the world with the right mix of skills and talents to support economic growth now and in the future and meet global competition head-on. Other industrialized countries are confronted with similar challenges and will be increasingly competing with Canada for this global pool of skilled workers. We must remain ahead of the competition.

The federal government has taken positive steps to ensure that Canada’s immigration policies are more closely aligned with the needs of the labour market and newcomers are able to more quickly find employment that uses their talents, skills and experience. Improvements have been made to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program to help employers meet immediate skill requirements when qualified Canadian workers cannot be found. The Foreign Credential Referral Office has been created to provide immigrants with information about the Canadian labour market and credential assessment and recognition requirements as well as with pathfinding and referral services to identify and connect with the appropriate assessment bodies. The government has also provided funding to enhance settlement and integration programs for newcomers.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce welcomes these initiatives. It also welcomes the creation of the Canadian Experience Class (CEC). The CEC adds to other initiatives by addressing labour market needs and helping in the successful integration of newcomers.



The Canadian Experience Class (CEC)

The CEC will facilitate the transition from temporary status to permanent residence for:

1. International students with at least two years of Canadian post secondary education and who have attained one year of recent (i.e. within two years preceding the application for CEC) full-time Canadian skilled work experience in management, professional, and skilled and technical occupations as defined by the National Occupation Classification (NOC) levels 0, A or B; and
2. Temporary foreign workers who hold a secondary school diploma, trade certificate or apprenticeship and have a least two years of recent (i.e. within three years preceding the application for CEC) full-time Canadian skilled work experience at NOC 0, A or B.

Selection will be based on a pass/fail system. Applicants will be selected if they meet the parameters noted above, have legally come to Canada to work or study, have valid temporary status in Canada at the time of application, and have moderate official language proficiency.

There Are A Number Of Positive Aspects To The CEC

- Citizenship and Immigration Canada's goal for 2008 is to admit between 10,000 and 12,000 under the new CEC category of immigration. According to the Canadian Bureau of International Education, Canada's current international student talent pool has the potential to add up to 30,000 skilled immigrants every year.
- Foreign students and Temporary Foreign Workers with Canadian work experience are well positioned to make a rapid transition to the Canadian workplace having already settled into Canadian society and the Canadian labour force. There is also less need for the government to provide settlement and integration services to these individuals.
- Applicants will have the choice to receive Permanent Residence status at either a port of entry (by going around the flagpole) or a CIC local office. Thus, they do not have to leave the country to apply and come back in.
- The CEC represents a shift from Canada's points-based system which attempts to predict the employability of an intending immigrant, to a system that relies on actual Canadian employability.

..... As Well As Some Areas of Concern

- CEC applications will be processed in CIC's Buffalo mission with higher priority than the Federal Skilled Workers category but not superseding Quebec cases (i.e. Quebec Skilled Workers and Quebec Business Immigrants categories) and cases under the Provincial Nominee Program. In the event that applicants will need to go for an interview, they will have to do so outside of Canada in Buffalo.



- CEC immigration levels will be accommodated within current immigration levels. Surprisingly, those most negatively affected will be professionals who apply under the Skilled Workers category. They will see their numbers drop from an estimated 116,000 in 2007 to as few as 92,000 in 2008 as the federal government makes room for the CEC.
- Lower skilled workers (NOC C and D) will not qualify. Canada is also facing labour skill shortages in the lower skilled jobs. Consideration should be given to expanding the CEC for these individuals.
- Requirements for foreign students are quite stringent. Australia, for example, allows foreign students who have graduated from certain programs (for example, Information and Communications Technology) to apply for permanent residence from within the country. Furthermore, there is no work experience requirement for these occupations. Procedures were also simplified (internet application) to encourage prospective candidates. Overall, this reduced application processing times and costs to the government.

Conclusion

In recent years, the existence of labour shortages resulted in the development of new migration initiatives in many industrialized economies whereby individuals enter a country to study or work on a temporary basis. Further to this, countries, like Canada, have realized the value of such skilled individuals and have amended immigration policies to provide them easier access to permanent residence status.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce welcomes the creation of the new CEC and believes it complements other federal and provincial programs designed to attract and retain skilled workers that are so vital to our country's productivity, competitiveness and long-term economic growth. While we support this initiative, we would like to see amendments made to the proposal to address the areas of concern to the Canadian business community.

