Welcome Back: Canada Opens its Doors to Skilled Workers Once Again.

This month the new Federal Skilled Workers program quotas and job list were released by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The trend for the Skilled Worker prior to this announcement had been one of restriction and reduction. This uncertainty has caused me to recommend clients against applying to this program over the past few years. It came as somewhat of a surprise then that the Canadian government has thrown open the doors increasing the numbers of admissions as well as the number of jobs descriptions that qualify for entry to Canada as a permanent resident under the program. It is likely that this change of policy is inspired by the manageable reduction of backlog, problems so serious that they threaten the continuation of Canada’s temporary foreign worker program and recognition of Canada’s real need to fill skill shortages. In short the announcement is a golden opportunity for those who have been frustrated by long waiting times, quotas and restrictions to be selected on the basis of their potential to contribute to the Canadian economy and move to the front of the immigration queue.

The FSW program has long been Canada’s flagship immigration program. The idea of accepting permanent resident (PR) applicants with the skills our economy needs, and ability through those skills to become economically established is theoretically sound and appreciated by most Canadians. Public protests against long-term economic immigration programs has not existed in a serious context in Canada since the World War Two era. On average about 35% of all economic immigrants accepted into Canada since 2003 have been of this class, and this program has been the largest single source of new permanent residents yearly since the program was introduced in its point system format in 2002.[[1]](#endnote-1) In short it has been a highly successful program for both immigrants and for Canada.

Unfortunately the programs popularity with skilled workers abroad and the former Liberal government’s complete mismanagement of the processing phase led to a backlog of more than 600,000 applications[[2]](#endnote-2) and unworkable processing times of over 97 months for Filipino applicants.[[3]](#endnote-3)The eight year processing times obviously led to thousands and thousands of abandoned applications. In many cases unscrupulous immigration agents took advantage of the “openness” of the program submitting thousands of applications that simply gathered dust at the back of the line. Sadly, many local agencies failed to issue refunds on the processing fees they had collected for the now defunct applications.

When they came to power the Conservative government was responsible for the necessary cancelation of almost 300,000 applications in a desperate attempt to eliminate the backlog they had inherited. Since then yearly restrictions on the program have been enforced. In 2010 a quota system was implemented at 20,000 per annum which was lessened to only 5,000 by successive reductions. Only applicants with arranged job offers were allowed to surpass these fixed quotas.[[4]](#endnote-4) Further backlogs were not allowed to develop as excess applications were simply returned. Processing times for the Philippines were consequently reduced to a more reasonable 20 month period.[[5]](#endnote-5) Minister Jason Kenney (former Immigration now Employment Minister) has predicted this wait time to further reduce to about a year in total wait time.[[6]](#endnote-6) Under the Conservative government’s management Canada’s Federal Skilled Worker program has become once again workable.

This month Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) published a list of 50 qualifying occupations which is available on CIC’s website <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/skilled/apply-who-instructions.asp?expand=jobs#jobs>. If applicants have one year experience in the past ten years in one of these qualifying occupations they are eligible to apply. With the target of 25,000 applications set for this year (2014) it is very clear that Canada has opened its doors, and with the effective management of the program shown by Canada’s new conservative government this time they are very likely to stay open. I would now not hesitate to recommend proceeding with your application.

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1. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2012/permanent/03.asp> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-s-skilled-immigrants-backlog-to-be-eliminated-soon-1.1290847> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/times/perm/skilled-fed.asp> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/evaluation/fswp/section1.asp> [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/times/perm/skilled-fed.asp> [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-s-skilled-immigrants-backlog-to-be-eliminated-soon-1.1290847> [↑](#endnote-ref-6)