Express Entry is NOT For Everyone:

NOTICE: THIS TEN MINUTES COULD SAVE YOU YEARS OF WAITING AND THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS.

There has been a lot of hoopla about Canada’s new Express Entry system (EE), and a lot of people are in a rush to sign up, get their name in the database in the hopes of selection. With the ability to be selected by individual provinces, the Federal government, and directly by employers the chances of receiving the “call to Canada” sound too good to be true! Isn’t this the opportunity of a lifetime?

I have talked to dozens of people in the past few weeks who have signed up for Express Entry paying cash in advance of up to 50,000 pesos plus expenses (IELTS 8,900 p) and WES educational credential assessment (12,000P with courier) with just such ambition in mind. What bothers me as a licensed immigration professional is that client intake for Express Entry is in some cases being done irresponsibly. Creating false hope, through false promises is not only bad for the client, it is bad for the profession and it also creates unfavorable impressions of the Canadian immigration system, something the Express Entry system itself is designed to counteract and improve.

The following is an outline of problems I have encountered when speaking with local Cebuano’s about their Express Entry experiences so far. Hopefully it provides valuable lessons for the rest of you who may be considering Express Entry as an option.

Lesson #1) Client’s should never pay anything unless you know you qualify. DO YOUR IELTS FIRST

Express Entry is NOT a new immigration program, it is simply a new way of managing Canada’s existing streams of economic immigration. This means NO ONE is applying under Express Entry you are either applying under

1) The Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSW)

2) The Federals Skilled Trades Program (FST)

3) The Canadian Experience Class.

If you have never been to Canada you can eliminate #3 altogether, as you require at least one year full time work experience in Canada a skilled occupation within the last three years.

The majority of candidates I talk to would be applying under the Federal Skilled Worker program. To qualify for this program along with the basic requirement of requiring one full year of work experience in the last ten years in a skilled occupation (NOC CODE 0,A,B) you also need to score 67 points on an assessment of your human capitol. 67 points can be hard to reach due to age (if over 35), education (if holding less than a four year degree –usually not a big problem in the Philippines), less than advanced English capabilities, or having less than 6 years work experience in your qualifying occupation. Make sure you know your score before you pay any money, in this market refunds are often hard to come by. So often achieving the necessary 67 points depends on your IELTS results. My advice, which really should be obvious, GET YOUR IELTS RESULTS FIRST there is no reason to pay for Express Entry before you are certain you can qualify. Accepting clients without IELTS, or without first administering the FSW 67 point test, unless you have an excellent refund policy, borders on unethical.

Lesson #2) Your Occupation Qualifies, but will you get selected once in the database?

Under the pre-Express Entry Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSW) the list of qualifying occupations was extremely limited -25 occupations to be exact. This was done to help with file management and processing times at the Central Intake office. Under Express Entry file management system there is no longer a pile of paper applications to deal with one by one, thus the short list of occupations has been eliminated and now all occupations that fall under NOC code 0, A or B skill levels technically qualify. This is well over 300 occupations in total, basically any occupation that requires more than on the job training. Qualifying now for FSW under Express Entry are job titles such as Administrative staff, Teachers, Welders, Computer Technicians, Nurses, Doctors, Med Techs and so on….

The first thing you should know is that the primary purpose of Express Entry from the point of view of the Canadian government is to provide a solution to Canada’s long term labour shortage. In fact Express Entry was announced to coincide with major restrictions of Canada’s temporary foreign worker program. By offering you Permanent Residency (PR) through the FSW (via EE), Canada believes it can attract workers long term. Canada’s desperate need for skilled labour is at such a critical stage; we no longer need a band-aid we need a cure. But this is the crux of the matter you had best draw your attention to. Canada is NOT looking for people with skills we are looking for people who can do jobs (now). If you are a Filipino nurse you are NOT going to get a job offer via Express Entry, neither is a doctor, or a med tech. Jobs like this require certification (in Canada and licensing in Canada) no employer is going to offer you a job , pay you, and wait years for you to accomplish these requirements.

This is true with most licensed or regulated occupations that require certification, some exceptions apply where you can work as understudies immediately welders, electricians for example. Provinces are also unlikely to take the risk of nominating such occupations , due to the same uncertainty, and due to the fact that the numbers of provincial nomination spots available to each province under Express Entry is EXREEEMLY limited. Provinces don’t want to waste their picks on the hopes that someone MAY in years get the required certification to work in Canada, they want productive workers now.

The counter argument to this point (which is naïve if not misleading) is that “you don’t need a job offer to be selected under Express Entry” applicants are chosen by score with the highest ranked being pulled from the pool each time. For clarification the EE point system (which applies to FSW applicants only if you first meet the FSW point system 67 point requirement) is divided into two parts 600 points for you human capitol (age, experience, language so on..) and 600 points bonus for either a job offer or a provincial nomination. While technically it is true that you could be selected without the 600 point bonus let’s review what has happened so far.

There have been three “draws” from the Express Entry pool so far, in each case 779 people were invited to apply for PR based on their overall score. The first draw (January 31) the minimum score required to be selected was 886. The second draw (February 07) the minimum score to be selected was 818. The third draw (February 20) the minimum score selected was 808. In each of these cases EVERY SINGLE PERSON pulled from the EE database HAD A JOB OFFER OR A PROVINCIAL NOMINATION. If you are thinking the reduction in the minimum points (886 first draw to 808 third draw)is a good sign, think again! Most people/agencies have been waiting to enter EE profiles into the database have not done so as they are still waiting for the required IELTS results and WES assessments to come back- which can take months, expect a flood of new applicants in the coming months. This phenomenon (globally) should move the required scores back up instead of further down. As it stands now (and in the foreseeable future YOU DO NEED A JOB OFFER or a provincial nomination to get pulled from the system). Marketing Express Entry as a system whereby anyone has a good chance of selection based on bio data rather than direct employability is grossly misleading.

LESSON #3) Know What Restrictions Affect Job Offers:  
Ok so you are a nurse and you are likely NOT going to get a job offer or a provincial nomination from Express Entry as a nurse- but you might find an employer who WILL offer you a job as a nurses aid or as a personal support worker in advanced care (neither of which requires licensing or examinations in most cases). The job will still pay much more than you earn here, so why not enter EE to get a job offer for that lesser position?

Despite what you may hear, THIS WON’T WORK. Employers have to offer you a job based on the FSW Occupation Code under which you are classified in the system. Lesser jobs like nurses aids or personal support workers are NOC C level positions and job offers for these positions cannot be made under the EE database rules. This means if you are a nurse in the system, your job offer must be legitimately made to you as a nurse. I have already explained why this is very unlikely to happen.

Further affecting job offers, in order to successfully qualify as legitimate, the job offer must go through the scrutiny of something called a labour market impact assessment (LMIA) if your occupation is below the average working wage (not minimum wage, rather the MEDIAN working wage- which can be very high) in the province where your prospective employer is located, there are enormous restrictions on obtaining an LMIA. You need to know how much your occupation earns, and if this will affect you. The inability of some occupations to qualify for a positive LMIA affects hundreds of the “qualifying” occupations under Express Entry (depending on the region the job offer originates from).

Marketing Express Entry, in a general sense, as a gateway to employment for all qualifying occupations represents a fundamentally naive approach to client management. .

I would encourage anyone who is considering Express Entry to seek a professional evaluation of the likelihood of their success before they start handing out large amounts of pesos, this includes taking the IELTS ordering WES assessments and most importantly paying large retainer or initiation fees to agencies. I would also encourage all applicants who require assistance to seek the advice of a licensed immigration representative to DIRECTLY handle your application (rather than unlicensed office staff) , members of a Canadian Bar Association or members of the Immigration Consultants of Canada Regulatory Council (ICCRC) are the only ones legally allowed to provide you with immigration advice or services, this applies from client intake to application submission. This above all is for your protection.

Feel free to contact our office for more information about pre-assessment for Express Entry and to see if it is right for you. I hope this has been helpful.

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