

Canadian Employee Relocation Council Response to Citizenship and Immigration Canada – Consultations on a Business Skills Immigration Pilot Program

INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Employee Relocation Council (CERC) welcomes this opportunity to comment on the potential Business Skills Immigration Pilot Program.

We are pleased to see that the government of Canada is actively considering the development of a business skills immigration pilot program to foster innovation and entrepreneurship.

Canadian companies of all sizes are operating at a global level and need access to global talent to remain competitive and expand markets beyond Canada's borders. We recommend that any pilot program be available to large and small to medium size enterprises.

We further recommend that an expedited application process is vitally important to the program's success, since the individuals Canada is seeking to attract through such a program are also being sought after by many other countries.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Business Skills Needed

We are in general agreement with the business profiles and skills listed in the discussion paper. Particularly important are those individuals with skills and education in science, technology, engineering and math. According to a report from the Conference Board of Canada¹ Canada gets awarded a "C" and ranks 12th out of 16 peer countries. In 2010, Canada's proportion of overall graduates emerging from science, math, computer science, and engineering disciplines was 21.2 per cent, the third year of decline.

¹ The Conference Board of Canada: How Canada Performs: 2014

In a report published by the Conference Board Inc. certain STEM fields including mathematical science, information security, and civil, environmental, biomedical and agricultural engineering will face significant shortages in the future.²

A pilot program should be geared toward attracting individuals with these skill sets.

The pilot should also consider collaboration with academic institutions across Canada that foster innovation and research. For example the University of Toronto, with almost 1,000 invention disclosures filed between 2007 and 2010, U of T is far ahead of any Canadian institution and third among public universities in North America. In 2011 alone, University of Toronto students and faculty generated 25 spin-out companies.

We would also emphasize the skills needed should also include the proven ability to manage / lead globally diverse enterprises (i.e. intercultural skills) given the growth in the globalization of trade and services, this will be vitally important to Canada's future success.

Together with these required skills proven leadership, communication should be demonstrated and a determined level of financial security must also be met.

Determining a pathway to permanent residence

Steps should be taken to expedite the pathway to permanent residence to those immigrants admitted under this program. That pathway should also extend to immediate family members (spouse and dependent children) to facilitate resettlement as quickly as possible.

Canada should also consider financial incentives to encourage permanent settlement. For example when Canadians move for employment purposes, under Canadian tax regulations certain relocation related expenses are tax deductible. We propose that similar treatment for the relocation expenses of individuals admitted under the business skills pilot program could go a long way to encouraging in-demand skills that can foster innovation and entrepreneurship.

The program should consider admitting individuals pursuing cultural activities, athletics and purchasing/managing a farm – provided they are able to demonstrate the necessary business profiles, and communication skills as defined above.

We are in further agreement that within the pilot program, the requirement for the self-employed innovator and entrepreneur (financially self-secure) who does not need support from a designated third party, should also be considered.

Designing selection criteria

The discussion paper poses two questions in distinguishing between (i) skills which will further the national economy and (ii) skills that are better suited for local business creation.

Skills that will benefit the national economy in our view would be individuals with senior management experience. These individual may not always possess post-secondary education, but they must have a proven track record in managing large diverse enterprises with success, and have a commitment to

² The Conference Board Inc. Growing Labour Shortages on the Horizon in Mature Economies September 2014

growing Canada's economy. The Australian Business Talent (Business Innovation and Investment Programme) is a model upon which this pilot could be based³

In selecting individuals with skills better suited for local (i.e. small business creation – construction/trades contractors and the like) a determined amount of capital, together with requisite business acumen and experience must be required to consider entry.

About the Canadian Employee Relocation Council

The Canadian Employee Relocation Council (CERC) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to removing barriers that restrict mobility and deployment of human capital, which are vitally important to Canada's future prosperity. Established in 1982, the Council represents the interests of its members on workforce mobility matters. Many of the Council's members are listed in Canada's Financial Post Top 500.

³ Australian Government Department of immigration and Border Protection Business Migration