

Policy Position

May 2015

Enhancing the Immigration System

Background

The province's booming economy has created a strong demand for labour which has in many cases exceeded the supply of available workers and created labour shortages. As a result, businesses across the province are struggling to find qualified people. Also, the growing provincial economy, coupled with rising retirement rates and a lower birth rate, means this problem will continue to be exacerbated in the future.

International immigration will have to play a major role in solving Saskatchewan's labour shortage. For 2015-2016, 5,500 immigrants are projected to arrive in the province through the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (SINP) and this number needs to continue to grow.

The immigration system in Canada is currently plagued by a patchwork of regulations at the federal and provincial levels and these systems have proven to be difficult, time consuming, and expensive for employers to navigate.

Issue

The Government of Canada plays a vital role in the immigration process, but because of its pan-Canadian approach, the federal government typically overlooks the specific immigration needs of smaller provinces like Saskatchewan.

The abundance of employment opportunities in the province has made Saskatchewan a more attractive destination for people that might have otherwise settled in another jurisdiction. Additionally, the Government of Saskatchewan has become increasingly competent at doing immigration processing and settlement, so there are now resources within the provincial government that can be better used to simplify the system for both employers and potential immigrants.

Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce Recommendations

- 1) That the Government of Canada increase the national range of potential immigration to 300,000 people per year in order to accommodate growth. (The current level for 2015 is between 260,000 and 285,000 people per year.)
- 2) That the Government of Canada increase the existing cap on the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (SINP) from 5,500 per year to 6,000 people per year.

- 3) That the Government of Canada ensure that Service Canada adhere to a clearly defined service standard when processing Labour Market Impact Assessments related to applications made through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program.
- 4) That the Government of Canada transfer administrative responsibility for settlement and integration programs to Saskatchewan. This would result in more effective programming and potential lower costs to the Government of Canada.
- 5) That the Government of Canada significantly reduce the in-Canada processing times for spousal sponsorships to further the goal of family unification without impeding the ability of foreign spouses in Saskatchewan from working.
- 6) That the Government of Saskatchewan revise the category allocations within the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program to better meet demand. The International Skilled Workers–Occupations in Demand category reached its 500 application quota in one day in 2015. The Entrepreneur category has traditionally been over-subscribed compared to its application quota. After being closed from 2013 until March, 2015 the high demand for the Entrepreneur category is not expected to alleviate.
- 7) That the Government of Canada exempt employers with fewer than 10 employees nationally from the \$1,000 Labour Market Impact Assessment processing fee and the \$230 Employer Compliance fee for LMIA-Exempt Workers or provide a reduction to these fees.
- 8) That the Government of Saskatchewan exempt persons who find or attempt to find employment in Saskatchewan for a foreign national, without directly receiving a fee or compensation, from the licensing provisions of *The Foreign Worker Recruitment and Immigration Services Act*. Putting good people together for the benefit of Saskatchewan businesses is a benefit to the province.
- 9) That the Government of Saskatchewan and the federal government work together to ensure that provincial nominees for permanent residence benefit the province of Saskatchewan long-term and particularly after obtaining their permanent residency.