

GMS Flash Alert



Immigration Edition

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Canada - Express Entry and Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program Updates

The government of Canada continues to focus its efforts on facilitating permanent residence opportunities for foreign nationals who are already in Canada, with Immigration Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) conducting unprecedented draws through the Express Entry system.¹

In addition, the Province of Ontario recently announced that it will change the registration system of five of its economic-class immigration streams in the coming weeks. The new intake system aims to increase the efficiency and fairness of the most in-demand streams, particularly for international students and skilled workers.²

WHY THIS MATTERS

Canada's government is aiming to attract and retain skilled immigrants as it confronts the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and makes plans for the country's economic recovery. The recent Express Entry draws at the federal level suggest that IRCC is intending to issue as many invitations as it can at the beginning of 2021 to allow applicants to complete their permanent residence process this year.

Companies are encouraged to begin designing and implementing a proactive but flexible immigration strategy. Below are specific factors for employers and temporary foreign workers seeking permanent resident status to consider.

Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP) Moving to Expression of Interest System

The OINP will implement an Expression of Interest (EOI) system, which supports immigration for skilled workers and international students. This will replace a previously challenging "first come, first serve" application intake system that often filled up in a matter of hours.

The EOI system is a points-based system that will rank skilled economic candidates based on human capital and labour market factors.

KPMG NOTE

The new system is expected to help the Ontario government strategically manage intake, increase the OINP's labour market responsiveness, and better respond to regional labour market needs. It is also expected that the OINP office will try to gradually work toward having "year-round" availability of their in-demand streams.

The new EOI system will apply to the following OINP streams:

- Employer Job Offer Category Streams including the Foreign Worker with a Job Offer, International Student with a Job Offer, and Employer Job Offer: In-Demand Skills streams;
- Masters Graduate Stream; and
- PhD Graduate Stream.

These streams are expected to re-open when the EOI system launches in the coming weeks. Individuals who receive an invitation to apply through the EOI system can apply to the OINP.

KPMG NOTE

It is not yet known when the first draw will occur or how the new ranking points will be calculated. Language testing may be a significant factor that may give some candidates an advantage and could lead to an earlier invitation.

The five specific streams are not associated with Express Entry. Once approved for provincial nomination, successful candidates are required to submit their permanent residence application to IRCC by mail or courier within six months. The processing times at the federal level have traditionally been longer than those of the online Express Entry system.

More information relating to the new system will be available in the coming weeks.

Express Entry Update

After the high-volume Express Entry draw on February 13, 2021, there was a pause in Canadian Experience Class (CEC) draws. Another 5,000 invitations to apply were issued to CEC candidates on March 18, 2021, with the Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS) score of the lowest ranked candidate being 449.

KPMG NOTE

This draw was more in line with the trend of CEC and Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) draws that were seen prior to the February 13 draw. It is believed that the pause between CEC draws in February and March may have been due to technical issues caused by the higher-than-average traffic on IRCC sites caused by the February 13 draw.

On March 8 and March 17, Canada invited 671 and 183 candidates, respectively, who qualified under the PNP. Candidates in this round had a minimum CRS score of 682. Express Entry candidates who receive an “enhanced” provincial nomination through very specific Express Entry PNP sub-streams are automatically given 600 points in addition to their original human capital score.

KPMG NOTE

The recent draws demonstrate that IRCC remains committed to considering different pathways that achieve the current goals without encouraging international travel. This is in line with Canada’s goal of welcoming 401,000 immigrants in Canada; however, there remains uncertainty about when competitive Federal Skilled Worker (FSW) candidates can expect to be considered for invitations again.

KPMG NOTE

Key Considerations for Employers & Express Entry Candidates

- Potential OINP candidates should consider which of the five EOI streams would be appropriate for them and proactively plan their expression of interest. For example, scheduling a language test might be something to consider.
- The recent Express Entry draws seem to suggest that Canada’s government is moving assertively with specific measures to achieve its immigration targets. It is possible that IRCC may repeat another large draw, but there are limitations to how much traffic can go through the IRCC website. As such, eligible individuals, particularly those in Canada, could consider entering the pool of candidates as soon as possible to potentially benefit from a future “generous” CEC draw.
- Given the increased number of invitations being received this year, IRCC may face significant resourcing challenges when processing applications. Applicants should plan for potential processing delays and seek assistance so that their applications are properly prepared, reviewed and submitted to avoid delays or prevent applications from being returned as incomplete.
- Canadian employers seeking to transition their foreign workforce to permanent residence status are encouraged to introduce appropriate communications, and policies and processes to avail of Canada’s immigration plans.
- Foreign nationals outside of Canada who are seeking to apply for permanent residence in Canada may have opportunities to qualify in the long term and should continue to monitor IRCC’s evolving programs.
- Planning ahead continues to be extremely important. Candidates who are outside of Canada should explore temporary work permit options in order to move to Canada in the short term and subsequently take steps to apply for permanent residence status later on.
- Although Express Entry remains the first choice as far as processing times, the 2021 invitation trends are not as consistent as in previous years. Provincial Nominee Programs such as the OINP may turn out to be a useful alternative to permanent residence candidates who have no Canadian work experience and have so far been excluded from the Express Entry draws at the federal level this year.

KPMG NOTE continued:

- Immigration processing trends remain uncertain due to COVID-19. Temporary foreign workers who are inside Canada are encouraged to continue to maintain their temporary residence status while they wait for permanent residence.

The timing and parameters of Express Entry draws in 2021 have been more unpredictable than in previous years. Foreign nationals who have concerns about their permanent residence applications and next steps are encouraged to contact their employers, immigration advisers or KPMG Law LLP (see the Contact Us section for further guidance).

FOOTNOTES:

1 See government notice "[Thousands of skilled workers in Canada invited to stay permanently](#)," February 13, 2021. For background, see: IRCC's "[Government of Canada announces plan to support economic recovery through immigration](#)."

2 For news coverage, see S. Thevenot, "Ontario to introduce Expression of Interest system for 5 immigration streams" (March 16, 2021), CIC News (online) by clicking [here](#). (Note that this is a 3rd party (non-governmental, non-KPMG) website. Providing this link does not represent an endorsement of this website by KPMG.)

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Contact us

For additional information or assistance, please contact your local GMS or People Services professional* or one of the following professionals with the KPMG International member firm in Canada:



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