



A New Opportunity In Immigration

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For foreign nationals, including international students and foreign workers, there are new provincial nominee programs, in addition to the federal immigration programs, that offer further opportunities for becoming a permanent resident of Canada.

On June 3, 2015, the new Opportunities Ontario: Provincial Nominee Program ("OOPNP"): Ontario Human Capital Priorities Stream came into effect. It coincides with the Citizen and Immigration Canada Express Entry program that commenced on January 1, 2015. The Express Entry stream manages the application process for permanent residency under the Federal Skilled Worker Program, the Federal Skilled Trades Program, and the Canadian Experience Class by using the Comprehensive Ranking System ("CRS"), which assesses candidates based on a number of criteria. Only the top ranked candidates will be invited to apply for permanent residency. The new Ontario Human Capital Priorities Stream enables candidates with qualified education, work experience and language skills to apply for permanent residency through the Express Entry program with an additional 600 CRS points. The program focuses on candidates who have entered the Express Entry pool and have qualified for either or both of the Federal Skilled Worker Program and the Canadian Experience Class.

Consistent with the existing programs that encourage highly educated foreign nationals to stay in Ontario, the new provincial nominee program requires applicants to have an education that is equal to or higher than a bachelor's degree. In addition, a language level of Canadian Language Benchmark ("CLB") 7 or above in all language competencies (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) is another "must" to be eligible for this program. Last but not least, all candidates must achieve a minimum score of 400 CRS points.

As the most populated province in Canada, Ontario appreciates international students and skilled foreign

workers who manage to obtain a permanent job offer in Ontario. Updates were announced regarding nominees of foreign workers and international students with a job offer as well as employers who are to support the nominees in the PNP application. These updates took effect on the 25th of June, 2015.

A specific update, which supplements the existing application requirements of employers, is that employers in the Greater Toronto Area ("GTA") need to have five permanent full-time employees who are Canadian citizens or permanent residents before they offer a permanent full-time position to a foreign worker or an international student. Employers located outside the GTA must have three permanent full-time employees who are Canadian citizens or permanent residents.

The key element of this program is the job offer. Eligible employers must provide an international student or a foreign worker with a permanent full-time job in a skilled occupation of National Occupational Classification ("NOC") skill level 0 (management jobs), skill level A (professional jobs) or skill level B (technical jobs and skilled trades). The prevailing wage must be paid to foreign workers while international students must at least be offered an entry-level wage. Employers need to submit an Employer Pre-Screen Application for the position they are offering first, and then the foreign worker or international student can apply to OOPNP for the position, once it has been approved.

Unlike the new Ontario Human Capital Priorities Stream and despite the upcoming changes, the traditional provincial nominee program still concentrates on filling the Ontario labour market with foreign nationals who possess enough experience and skill to secure a permanent full-time job. Education and language levels are secondary for this program.

OOPNP provides an opportunity for those who either have an advanced education and high language levels or have excellent work experience and skills to stay in Ontario. Now that the new program finally links the Ontario Provincial



Nominee Program to Express Entry Program, six months after it has been launched. OOPNP will definitely attract more attention and interest from those who intend to stay in Ontario permanently.

** All policy related information is from Opportunities Ontario: Provincial Nominee Program.

About the Author **Susan Liu**

Susan Liu is a lawyer at SorbaraLaw and part of the immigration team, assisting corporate clients with temporary and permanent immigration applications and other complex immigration issues that can arise for companies doing business internationally.

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