

# The Alberta Government's Provincial Nominee Program - Employer Advantage

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The Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) is a valuable alternative to the Federal Skilled Worker program for the immigration of foreign workers. In the PNP an employer is a key participant in the expedited immigration process to permanently fill a critical skill shortage occupation. A vital benefit of the PNP is shorter processing time—ranging from 6-12 months for a 'nominee' to be granted permanent resident status. In the Federal Skilled Worker program, an employer may target an employee, but then must wait from 24-50 months, depending upon the complexity of the application and the immigration centre processing the application, for the worker to gain permanent resident status in Canada.

The PNP is a pilot program operated by the Alberta government in conjunction with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). Alberta employers have facilitated the nomination of over 400 nominees working in the trades, health care, engineering, auto industry, agriculture and other industries since the inception of the PNP in March 2002. The PNP pilot has been extended to March 2006 while a permanent PNP is established.

There are three distinct stages in the PNP process. First, an employer submits a detailed Occupation Business Case to a sector-specialist in one of PNP's partner Ministries (Alberta Economic Development; Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development; Alberta Innovation and Science; or Alberta Health and Wellness) to substantiate its need for a specific occupation and its inability to fill that position with a qualified Canadian. The PNP is an essential tool for employers requiring workers for positions not desirable to Canadians, for example long-haul truckers and chefs, or for employers needing to fill many positions at a time. The Ministry reviews the Business Case and recommends that the PNP approve or decline the employer. An approved employer may offer permanent employment to a Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) to retain the worker, or recruit a foreign worker to fill the position. For trades deemed compulsory for provincial licensing, a candidate will be required to come in as a TFW to allow Alberta Advanced Education Apprenticeship and Industry Training to assess the candidate's skills, knowledge and foreign certification, and grant Alberta certification. Employers generally should bring all candidates in as TFW's to assess the suitability of the candidate to the occupation, build a relationship with the candidate and not risk the candidate using the employer to secure permanent resident status and renege on employment obligations. In fact, 95% of nominees to date were Temporary Foreign Workers before entering the PNP.

Second, the approved employer presents its candidate to the PNP, which assesses a candidate on meeting the occupational requirements of the employer and provincial licensing if appropriate, and on his or her ability to adapt, settle, and contribute socially and economically to Alberta. The PNP then 'nominates' the candidate to CIC.

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Third, CIC assesses the admissibility of the nominee as a permanent resident by conducting criminal, security, and health screening. Once cleared, the nominee is granted permanent resident status.

Through the PNP, an employer has more control in hiring foreign workers permanently for specific positions and/or to fill many positions at the same time in short processing times. The PNP balances these advantages with the disadvantage of the initial cost to the employer to participate in the process. This cost burden though, is subsequently alleviated by the benefits of the PNP—the expedited accessibility of a critically needed employee and the consequent increase in business productivity and profitability.

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