



FACT SHEET: Temporary Foreign Worker Program

Overview

The Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) allows Canadian employers to hire foreign nationals to fill temporary labour and skill shortages when qualified Canadian citizens or permanent residents are not available.

Advantages to Employers

For employers who have been unable to recruit Canadian citizens or permanent residents for job openings, the TFWP makes it possible to hire workers from abroad. Employers might also find a qualified foreign worker already in Canada, such as a foreign worker who is about to complete a job contract with another employer or a foreign national holding an open work permit that allows the employee to work for any employer in Canada.

While most temporary foreign workers will be hired to address a specific, short-term labour need, some temporary foreign workers who initially came to fill a temporary vacancy can transition to permanent residence if they meet certain requirements. For example, the Canadian Experience Class is open to foreign nationals who have been working full-time in Canada as trades people or in managerial or professional occupations and meet certain other requirements. Other foreign workers may qualify through the Provincial Nominee Program for permanent residence in Canada. These routes exist to ensure that workers who have shown that their skills are in continuing demand and that they have already adapted well to life in Canada can build a future here.

How It Works

The TFWP is jointly managed by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) and CIC.

Employers often require a labour market opinion (LMO) from HRSDC to hire a foreign worker. A positive LMO means that the employer has tried but has been unable to find a Canadian or permanent resident for the job, that the job offer is genuine, and that the employer has met job offer commitments to temporary foreign workers they have hired in the past.



Some jobs do not require HRSDC authorization in order to hire a foreign worker. Certain categories of workers may be exempt from the LMO requirement due to an international trade agreement, such as NAFTA, or an agreement between the federal government and a provincial or territorial government. Employers who are unsure if they require an LMO should contact a CIC Temporary Foreign Worker Unit. For a list of offices, see our website at www.cic.gc.ca/english/work/employers/tfw-units.asp.

The TFW Unit will provide advice on whether an LMO is required and offer additional information about the TFWP. TFW units may also advise employers on any active pilot projects in effect in their province that may help attract workers in particular occupations or with particular skills.

After obtaining an LMO, or if an LMO is not required, the worker needs to apply to CIC for a work permit. If an LMO is required, the employer must provide a copy of the positive LMO from HRSDC for inclusion with the worker's application. Processing times for work permits vary depending on where and how the application is made. Details are available on our website at www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/times/temp.asp.

The employer is responsible for arranging the employee's Worker's Compensation benefits and medical coverage, verifying that the employee has a Social Insurance Number, and ensuring that the conditions and time limits on the work permit are respected.

As the TFWP is designed to help employers fill short-term gaps in Canada's labour market, most temporary foreign workers are limited to working in Canada for four years before having to return to their home country. Most TFWs have the opportunity to apply for permanent residence if that is their desire, and limiting the amount of time they may work in Canada with a temporary status encourages them to do so.

Facts and Figures

- Almost 183,000 temporary foreign workers entered Canada in 2010. The overall total includes about 73,000 foreign workers whose employer required an LMO from HRSDC and close to 110,000 who did not require an LMO.
- In 2010, nearly 32,000 temporary foreign workers made the transition to permanent status.

For more information, see the CIC website at www.cic.gc.ca.

Last updated: February 23, 2012