Québec rolls out new immigration plan and increases French language requirements

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The Government of Québec submitted their Québec Immigration Plan and the Multi-Year Immigration Plan for 2024-2025 (hereinafter "the Plan") to the *Assemblée nationale du Québec* on November 1, 2023. After lengthy public consultations, the Plan maintains immigration levels at 50,000 admissions per year for 2024 and 2025, in addition to continued admissions of graduates selected under the Québec Experience Program (PEQ), and excludes temporary foreign workers.

This article focuses on significant changes to French language requirements for access to permanent and temporary economic immigration programs.

The Québec Experience Program (*Programme de l'expérience québécoise* / PEQ) - Permanent Immigration

PEQ's "Québec Graduates" Stream

Since November 23, 2023, students eligible for the "Québec Graduate" Stream of the Québec Experience Program (*PEQ*) no longer have to demonstrate work experience in Québec to apply for this stream, allowing them to benefit from a preferred pathway to permanent residence and expedite their permanent selection upon graduation. However, the Plan introduces the requirement for oral French proficiency level 7 or higher on the Documents de référence pour les partenaires de Francisation Québec | Gouvernement du Québec (Québec.ca), as well as written French proficiency level 5 or higher.

Note that as of November 2024, to be eligible to participate in the 'Québec Graduates' Stream, international students will also need to meet one of the following requirements:

- have completed their studies in Québec in French (*i.e.*, a program in which 75 per cent of courses or credits were conducted in French) in Québec, or failing that; demonstrate that they have

- completed at least three (3) years of full-time French secondary or post-secondary education.

PEQ's "Temporary Foreign Worker" Stream

Also since November 23, 2023, and just like the "Québec Graduates" Stream, the "Temporary Foreign Worker" Stream requires oral French proficiency level 7 or higher on the Québec French proficiency level scale. On the other hand, there is currently no minimum standard for written French.

For more information on the French tests and diplomas accepted by the MIFI to demonstrate knowledge of French in the framework of the PEQ, please consult the following page:

- Knowledge of French for the Québec Experience Program | Gouvernement du Québec (Québec.ca).

The Skilled Worker Selection Program (*Programme de sélection des travailleurs qualifiés* / PSTQ) - *Permanent Immigration*

The PSTQ is a new program that will replace the Regular Skilled Worker Program (RSWP). The RSWP's (*Programme régulier des travailleurs qualifiés / PRTQ*) selection grid, which awarded points based on criteria based on nine (9) factors, will no longer be used by the MIFI. The PSTQ has four streams that aim to select skilled workers based on their level of competence, field of activity, regulated profession or exceptional talent:

1. High qualification and specialized skills
2. Intermediate and manual skills
3. Regulated professions
4. Outstanding Talent

When an applicant for the PSTQ is employed in a profession in a TEER 0, 1 or 2 category, he or she must demonstrate proficiency in French at oral level 7 or higher and in writing level 5 or higher according to the Québec French proficiency level scale. For an applicant in a TEER 3, 4 or 5 occupation, he or she will have to demonstrate oral French proficiency level 5 or higher. As for the accompanying spouses of applicants under streams 1,2 or 3 of the PSTQ, they will need to prove that they possess at least a level 4 at oral French proficiency.

The PSTQ will come into force on November 29, 2024.

The Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) - *Temporary Immigration*

The Plan intends to introduce a level 4 or higher oral French language proficiency requirement on the Québec French language proficiency scale for all temporary foreign workers (except agricultural workers) applying for a Work Permit under the TFWP.

Thus, when the *Certificat d'acceptation du Québec* (CAQ) is renewed and after having accumulated temporary residence of more than three (3) years in Québec, the temporary foreign worker will have to demonstrate that he or she meets the new criterion of oral knowledge of French.

At this time, *the ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration* (MIFI) has not yet announced an effective date.

The MIFI also plans to seek an undertaking from employers using the TFWP to support francization efforts of temporary foreign workers at their jobs.

It should be noted that at the request of the MIFI, the Federal Government is open to considering a French language requirement in Québec three years after the arrival of the temporary foreign worker admitted to Québec through the International Mobility Program (IMP), a process that is exempt from obtaining a Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) and a CAQ. However, no formal announcement or commitment has yet been made by the Federal Government to this effect.

Other Programs - *Permanent Immigration*

The Plan also includes changes to Business Programs, which include Investors, Entrepreneurs and the Self-employed. These Programs are intended to attract people who contribute to Québec's economic development through their investments, business projects or professional activities.

The Plan provides for the introduction of a French language requirement for these Programs, which will vary according to the type of program and the profile of the applicant.

The Plan also provides for the sustainable establishment and entrepreneurial succession of business people in Québec. Finally, it proposes changes to family reunification, which allows permanent residents and Canadian citizens to sponsor their loved ones to settle in Québec.

Conclusion

The changes and novelties put forward by the Plan correspond to the objective of the MIFI to foster francophone economic immigration for Québec. The Government of Québec specifies that the Québec Immigration Plan and the 2024-2025 Multi-Year Immigration Plan aim to meet the labour market needs, support economic development and strengthen the vitality of the French language.

The Québec government has also indicated that the Plan is the result of a consultation process and that it is a living document, which will be adjusted according to the evolution of Québec's economic, social and linguistic situation.

Reference

- Québec Immigration Planning for 2024 and 2025 - New immigration thresholds that meet the linguistic and economic objectives of the Government of Québec Gouvernement du Québec
- Knowledge of French under the Québec Experience Program | Government of Québec
- Selection conditions for the Québec Graduates component of the Québec Experience Program | Government of Québec
- Immigration program reform and application intake rules 2023-2024 come into force for the Gouvernement du Québec pilot programs

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