New category-based selection in Canada's Express Entry program addresses labour needs and targets French speakers

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The Government of Canada recently introduced category-based selection (CBS) as part of its Express Entry program to better address Canada's economic and immigration needs. CBS in 2023 will focus on filling labour shortages in certain sectors and occupations, as well as encouraging Francophone immigration to reaffirm Canada's commitment to bilingualism and the importance of the French language in Canada.

The Express Entry program

Canada's Express Entry program was introduced on January 1, 2015, as Canada's flagship economic immigration management system. Since its inception, Express Entry has been the cornerstone of Canada's immigration strategy, as it allows the entry of highly skilled candidates who can augment the Canadian economy and provide stability to the labour market.

Express Entry operates by way of a points-based system, ranking and selecting candidates based on numerous factors, such as age, education, work experience, and language proficiency. The system allows Canada to issue Invitations to Apply (ITAs) to prospective permanent residents with specific skills, training, or language abilities.

The Express Entry system has been constantly evolving to meet the needs of the Canadian labour market. Between November 2022 and January 2023, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) held public consultations on enhancing the Express Entry system through category-based selection, which considered, among other things, the need to fill chronic labour market shortages in specific occupations or sectors and how best to support Francophone immigration and economic growth.

The introduction of category-based selection

Acknowledging the need to close labour gaps for skill-based occupations, on May 31, 2023, the Government of Canada introduced the first-ever category-based selection (CBS) system under Express Entry. The new system will boost invitations from

applicants who demonstrate proficiency in the French language or have work experience in certain key fields.

For 2023, the list of eligible categories under the CBS will focus on candidates who:

- Have French-language ability;
- Work in healthcare occupations;
- Work in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) occupations;
- Work in trade occupations;
- Work in transport occupations; or
- Work in agriculture and agri-food occupations.

In the coming weeks, IRCC will release additional details concerning the eligibility, timing and application process involving CBS. Employers in any of the above industries or occupations may find it easier to fill labour gaps through quicker and more effective entry of certain foreign nationals seeking to work in in-demand roles.

Contact us

For more information about how employers can attract foreign talent to work in Canada under CBS, please reach out to the contacts below or any BLG lawyer from our Business Immigration Group.

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