

Provide a Pathway to Permanent Residency for Entrepreneurial Immigrants

Issue

Alberta is unable to attract or retain immigrant entrepreneurs because there is no pathway to permanent residency.

Background

Immigration plays an invaluable role in our province and is essential to our economic growth. It offsets aging demographics and helps employers fill gaps in their workforce, bringing new skills, ideas, and talents to our province. Immigration is essential to manage the rapidly shifting economy. Alberta has a robust and largely effective immigration system unless you are an immigrant entrepreneur wishing to invest in a business in the province.

Until 2014, the Canadian Immigrant Investor Program did provide an avenue for wealthy immigrants wishing to get Canadian Citizenship. Unfortunately, the program was characterized as a way for the wealthy to “buy” their way into Canada without providing much economic benefit to the country. While termination of the program certainly ended abuse of the federal immigration system, it also ended any legitimate avenues that resulted in measurable benefits to Canada, and to Alberta.

The current federal permanent residency programs for immigrant entrepreneurs are very specific, excluding the vast majority of potential immigrants. The Start-up Visa program is available to those with an innovative business idea that has received support from a designated organization, such as venture capital fund or angel investor. The self-employment program is available to farmers, artists, and athletes only. This leaves limited avenues for immigrant entrepreneurs to pursue.

On an annual basis, the Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program (AINP) helps thousands of immigrants obtain permanent residency, filling gaps in our workforce and providing significant benefit to Alberta employers. Those nominated have proven their mettle and make positive contributions to their communities, our province, and our country. Eligible occupations vary from chief executives to housekeeping staff, but fails to include entrepreneurs.

With no avenue to permanent residency available in Alberta, immigrant entrepreneurs are establishing their businesses in other provinces. Apart from Newfoundland and Labrador and Alberta, all other provinces actively court and provide pathways to residency for entrepreneurial immigrants with varying requirements:

- British Columbia: \$600,000 net worth and demonstrated business or management experience.¹
- Saskatchewan: \$500,000 net worth, 3 years' experience, and a willingness to invest either \$300 thousand in Regina or Saskatoon or \$200 thousand in any other community.²
- Quebec: \$300 thousand net worth, and minimum \$100 thousand investment worth 25% of the capital equity, 2 years' experience.³
- Ontario: \$1,500,000 net worth in the GTA, \$800,000 net worth outside of the GTA, 3 years' experience, create at least 2 full-time jobs.⁴
- Manitoba: \$350,000 net worth, and 3 years' experience.⁵

Immigrant entrepreneur programs can be designed to add incentive for entrepreneurs choosing to locate outside of major urban centres or invest in underrepresented industries that will promote economic diversification. Regardless of the details they share a common thread of creating a pathway for immigrant entrepreneurs to obtain permanent residency.

With proper oversight and investment requirements, an Alberta Immigrant Entrepreneur Nominee Program would diversify and grow the economy and create jobs for Albertans.

The Alberta Chambers of Commerce recommends the Government of Alberta:

1. Implement a pathway to permanent residency for immigrant entrepreneurs.

¹ "(B.C.) Entrepreneur Immigration – Program Requirements," <https://www.welcomebc.ca/Immigrate-to-B-C/BC-PNP-Entrepreneur-Immigration/Program-Requirements>

² "Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program entrepreneurs," https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/moving-to-saskatchewan/immigrating-to-saskatchewan/saskatchewan-immigrant-nominee-program/applicants-entrepreneursOI_PNPENTREPRENEUR.html

³ "Entrepreneur Program," <https://www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/immigrate-settle/businesspeople/applying-business-immigrant/three-programs/entrepreneurs.html>

⁴ "Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program: Entrepreneur," http://www.ontarioimmigration.ca/en/pnp/OI_PNPENTREPRENEUR.html

⁵ "MPNP for Business," http://www.gov.mb.ca/jec/invest/pnp-b/e_intro.html