

Skilled workers... get ready to immigrate to Canada!

**by Genevieve Desalliers, Canadian Lawyer, VisaWise Immigration Consultancy
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If you are interested in immigrating and working in Canada, there are a few different ways to concretise your dream depending on your situation. For skilled workers exercising certain occupations, the best option may be the Canadian Federal Skilled Workers program.

Federal Skilled Workers Program

The Federal Skilled Workers (FSW) program was introduced in the Canadian Immigration system in 2002. This program was -and still is- intended to welcome workers who show sufficient skills to adapt to the dynamic labour market associated with global and local economy. Since 2002, the Canadian government has determined various occupations considered eligible for immigration under this program based on current and long-term gaps in the Canadian labour market. About 240,000 immigrants per year were selected and admitted to Canada under this category between 2002 and 2008.

In 2010, the Canadian government decided to review their immigration policies and reduced the **number of eligible occupations to 29**. To be eligible, applicants must have **at least 1 year continuous and paid work experience in one of the eligible occupations**.

A points-based system

The FSW program is a points-based system similar to those in force in countries like the UK or Australia. Skilled workers who have experience in an eligible occupation are **selected based on their ability to become economically established in Canada**. The following criteria are considered:

- **Age**
- **Education**
- **Work experience**
- **Knowledge of English and/or French**
- **Other criteria such as previous studies or work in Canada.**

To be selected under this category, you need to score a minimum of **67 points**.

The whole process takes around one year depending on the country you apply from which is quite long compared to processing times in other countries for similar programs, but if you are selected, you will be granted **permanent residence** and be allowed to apply for Canadian citizenship after only 3 years continuous residence in Canada.

Annual limits

In June 2010, the government has introduced yearly limits in order to prevent an over-representation of any one occupation on the list. They have determined that a maximum of **20,000 Federal Skilled Worker applications** would be considered for processing yearly. Within this cap, a maximum of 1,000 Federal Skilled Worker applications per eligible occupation would also be considered for processing each year.

As of 21 June 2011, 12,682 of the overall cap of 20,000 applications were received. Even if the overall limit has not been reached, some professions and occupations have reached the 1,000 cap very quickly in comparison to the others. **Those that reach the cap quicker are:**

- **Health care professions** such as: nurses, dentists, pharmacists;
- **Food and Restaurant Managers**; and
- **Professional occupations in business and management** such as ISO consultants, advertising account executives, business management consultants, business methods analysts and promotion specialists.

30 June 2011: a key date!

On 30 June 2011, the annual cap will be set back to zero for all eligible occupations, including those who have been closed for a while. If you are interested in immigrating to Canada under the Federal Skilled Workers program, it's now more than ever time to submit your application!

If your occupation is one of those who disappear quickly, applying as soon as 30 June will secure your place in the queue and therefore assure that your application will be processed before your occupation is closed for processing.

Our advice to you? Apply as soon as you are sure you are eligible, but only once you have gathered all your supporting documents. Otherwise your application may be delayed or even worse, refused and returned to you.

Exception

If you have a **valid job offer from a prospective Canadian employer, the limits above will not apply to you**, which means that you will be allowed to apply even though the cap has been reached for your occupation. It can even improve your chances of having your application approved as you will score additional points.

For further immigration advice and assistance

If you are looking to immigrate to Canada and think that you may be eligible under this category, then please contact VisaWise at info@visa-wise.co.uk or on +44 (0) 203 012 2312 for a free eligibility assessment and more information about the process.

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