

Global Immigration alert

August 2024

Canada

Canada announces a Francophone Minority Communities Student Pilot

Executive summary

On 14 August 2024, the Government of Canada announced the introduction of a new Francophone Minority Communities Student Pilot (FMCSPP). The FMCSPP targets French-speaking foreign nationals from certain countries to facilitate the obtaining of a Study Permit by integrating into Francophone minority communities outside of Quebec. The pilot will provide access to settlement services during their studies, as well as open options for permanent residence eligibility after graduation.

Key developments

The Government of Canada announced the Action Plan for Official Languages 2023-2028 in April 2023, which established yearly targets for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) for the admission of French-speaking residents outside of Quebec, as well as the need to implement policy on Francophone immigration. Since this announcement, IRCC has made demonstrated efforts to attract French-speaking foreign nationals to communities outside of Quebec, such as targeted Express Entry selections for the French-language proficiency category, and the relaxing of the eligibility requirements for the Francophone Mobility Work Permit, amongst others. The eligibility criteria for the FMCSPP program will be as follows:

- ▶ Be a citizen of an eligible country. Eligible countries are listed on the IRCC website, and are certain member countries of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie in Africa, the Middle East and the Americas
- ▶ Have a letter of acceptance from a participating designated learning institution (DLI), which is an educational institution permitted to have international students, that states that you're applying under the FMCSPP program. The participating DLIs will be listed on the IRCC website

as agreements are reached between the institutions and IRCC for their participation in the pilot, but as of yet there are no DLIs listed. The program of study must also meet the requirements of the pilot, which are as follows:

- ▶ Be at the post-secondary level
- ▶ Be full-time
- ▶ Be 2 years or more of study
- ▶ Lead to a degree or diploma
- ▶ Have French as the primary language of instruction (over 50% of the classes are taught in French)
- ▶ Demonstrate that you have sufficient funds to pay for tuition fees and living expenses for yourself and any dependent family members who will accompany you to Canada. The amount of money required to cover living expenses will depend on the size of the community where the main campus of the school is located.
- ▶ Live outside of Canada when the applicant applies
- ▶ Demonstrate French speaking, listening, reading and writing skills at a level 5 or higher in the Niveaux de compétence linguistique canadiens scale
 - ▶ Additional documents may be required, depending on the country from which the applicant is applying from, based on the applicable Visa office requirements

IRCC will also provide access to services to help applicants settle in Canada. Such settlement service support is not usually made available to those who are in Canada on Study Permits, so this is a benefit that will be relatively unique. IRCC notes that FMCSPP participants may be eligible for permanent residence (along with their eligible accompanying family members) after they graduate if they are residents of Canada (outside of Quebec), have valid

temporary resident status when they apply, and have received an eligible degree or diploma while participating in the FMCSF. IRCC also mentions that the participant might be able to bring their spouse or common-law partner and dependent children with them to Canada and that they may be eligible for a Visitor Visa, Study Permit, or Open Work Permit. Further details are expected to be forthcoming from IRCC shortly.

Key steps

The FMCSF is scheduled to open for new applications on 26 August 2024. EY Law will continue to monitor the FMCSF as it is introduced and provide further updates, as details surrounding the program are clarified. Please reach out to your EY Law client service team to formulate a strategy if this program is of interest to you.

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