

Global Immigration alert

June 2026

Canada

Quebec reopens PEQ and maintains targeted measures to support affected workers

Executive summary

Quebec has announced a temporary reopening of both streams of the Programme de l'expérience québécoise (PEQ) from 2 July 2026 to 2 July 2028, with a first intake window running from 2 July 2026 to 31 October 2026. The reopening is limited to individuals who already met the program's education or work experience requirements on 19 November 2025. This measure is relevant for employers with Quebec based foreign workers or graduates impacted by the program's closure in late 2025. It complements Quebec's ongoing prioritization of certain permanent selection applications under the Programme de sélection des travailleurs qualifiés (PSTQ), in effect since 13 May 2026, as well as a federal temporary public policy enabling certain PSTQ applicants to obtain short term work authorization for themselves and their spouses or common law partners.

PEQ reopening

Quebec will reopen both PEQ streams for a temporary two-year period from 2 July 2026 to 2 July 2028, with applications accepted during defined intake periods rather than continuously. The first intake period will run from 2 July 2026 to 31 October 2026, and will be limited to individuals who, as of 19 November 2025, had:

- Obtained a qualifying Quebec credential (bachelor's degree, a master's degree, doctorate, technical college diploma, or a vocational studies diploma, alone or followed by a vocational specialization certificate of at least 1,800 hours) and therefore qualify for the Graduate Stream, or

- Accumulated at least two years of qualifying Quebec work experience in a Teer 0, 1, 2 or 3 occupation, and therefore qualify for the Worker Stream.

There is no cap on applications during this initial intake. Updated program forms and instructions are expected to be released shortly, prior to 2 July 2026.

PTSQ prioritization measures

Since 13 May 2026, Quebec has been prioritizing certain PSTQ applications where the applicants' work permit has expired or is nearing expiry. Applications tied to open work permits are prioritized before those tied to employer-specific permits. Quebec has confirmed that prioritization does not guarantee processing before work permit expiry. Until 31 October 2026, PTSQ invitations will be reduced and will target:

- Workers in TEER 4 and 5 occupations
- Workers with less than two years of work experience

PTSQ prioritization measures

A federal temporary public interest policy allows eligible PSTQ principal applicants to obtain a 12-month employer specific work permit with a new Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) or Certificat d'acceptation du Québec (CAQ). To qualify, applicants must:

- Have received an invitation and submitted a permanent selection application to the MIFI, and

- Hold (or have recently held) an employer specific work permit expiring between 13 March 2026 and 31 December 2026.

This measure remains in effect until 31 December 2026.

As of 5 June 2026, spouses and common law partners of eligible applicants may also apply for open work permits under the same public policy. An important limitation to note is that this policy does not apply to open work permit holders. Separate temporary federal flexibilities under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) remain in place until 31 March 2027, allowing certain employers outside census metropolitan areas to retain or increase the proportion of low wage foreign workers.

Analysis and recommendations

These measures provide targeted relief for specific cohorts but do not eliminate the need for proactive workforce planning. The temporary reopening of the PEQ creates a direct pathway to permanent selection for a defined group of “legacy” candidates who had already met eligibility criteria prior to the program’s closure. For most other workers, however, the PSTQ remains the primary pathway, operating under a prioritization framework rather than guaranteed processing timelines.

The federal work permit policy offers useful bridging support in eligible cases, allowing certain PSTQ applicants to extend work authorization. However, this measure is narrowly scoped and subject to strict eligibility requirements, including timing constraints and work permit type. As a result, it cannot be relied upon as a universal solution for expiring work authorization.

The central operational risk for employers remains the continuity of work authorization. While PSTQ prioritization may improve the order in which applications are processed, it does not ensure that a decision will be issued before an employee’s work permit expires. Employers should therefore avoid relying on prioritization or newly introduced pathways alone and should instead adopt a proactive, multi-pathway approach to workforce planning to minimize the risk of status gaps and operational disruption.

Recommendations for employers

- Identify Quebec based employees with work permits expiring in 2026 and assess potential eligibility under PEQ (legacy cohort), PSTQ prioritization, or the federal work permit public policy
- Confirm whether employees met PEQ eligibility criteria as of 19 November 2025
- Assess eligibility to the federal temporary public interest policy and related spousal work authorization
- Prepare PEQ applications in advance of the 2 July 2026 intake opening
- Monitor release of updated program guidance expected mid-June
- Implement early work permit renewal strategies to mitigate status risk

Key steps

EY Law will continue to monitor further operational guidance and future PEQ intake criteria. Should you have any questions, we encourage you to contact one of our immigration professionals.

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