

## Open Work Permits Will Be Issued to Provincial Nominees Under the Federal Skilled Worker Backlog Reduction Pilot

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As previously reported in the April 2012 issue of *Blaneys on Immigration*, when Citizenship and Immigration Canada ("CIC") announced that it was cancelling the backlog of Federal Skilled Worker ("FSW") cases that were filed prior to 2008, several Provincial Nominee Programs ("PNPs") began offering some of those applicants the opportunity to apply for a provincial nomination under CIC's FSW Backlog Reduction Pilot (the "FSW Pilot"). The PNPs in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador and Northwest Territories were given the opportunity to identify FSW backlog applicants for possible nomination based on the applicant's province of intended destination and work experience.

Some of the participating PNPs requested that provincial nominees identified through the FSW Pilot, but who did not yet have a job offer, be eligible for province-specific open work permits, in order to facilitate faster labour market entry while their permanent resident processing was pending. On November 5, 2012, in response to these requests, CIC issued Operational Bulletin 470 ("OB 470").

According to OB 470, as of November 5, 2012, eligible foreign nationals who have been nominated by a participating PNP under the FSW Pilot may now apply for one of 1,500 province-specific open work permits that are available. The issuance of the province-specific open work permit will not be conditional upon the nominated applicant having submitted an application for permanent residence, based on his or her nomination certificate. The issuance of the nomination certificate itself will allow the foreign national to apply for the work permit.

In order to qualify for one of the province-specific open work permits, applicants must meet the following criteria:

1. The applicant must already be a participant in the FSW Pilot; and
2. The work permit application must be accompanied by a letter of support from the nominating province that:
  - Confirms the applicant is being nominated under the FSW Backlog Reduction Pilot; and
  - Indicates the WP will only be valid for work in the nominating province.

Work permits issued under the FSW Pilot are valid for a maximum of two years. However, because they are intended only to facilitate faster labour market entry while the foreign national's permanent resident application is pending, extensions beyond the initial two year validity period will not be permitted. ■