

## CIC Begins Issuing Work Permits to Applicants Under the Spouse or Common-Law Partner Class

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On December 22, 2014, Citizenship and Immigration Canada ("CIC") announced a one-year pilot program to issue open work permits to applicants under the Spouse or Common-Law Partner in Canada ("SCLPC") class before they have received approval in principle. The SCLPC category applies to spouses and common law partners of Canadian citizens or permanent residents, who are already in Canada and seeking permanent residence within the country.

Prior to this date, applicants under the SCLPC would not be able to seek an open work permit until they had received approval in principle for their permanent residence application. As it is taking approximately seventeen months for SCLPC applicants to receive approval in principle, the ability to seek an open work permit immediately represents a significant benefit for such applicants.

Applicants who have already submitted an application for permanent residence under the SCLPC but have not yet applied for an open work permit are instructed to apply for their open work permits by mail through the Case Processing Centre in Vegreville, Alberta. However, if the applicant has already received approval in principle, he or she can also apply online. New SCLPC applicants should complete their permanent residence and open work permit applications and submit both to the Case Processing Centre in Mississauga, Ontario.

CIC began issuing open work permits to eligible SCLPC applicants who had already filed prior to December 22, 2014. It also mentioned that applicants who filed on or after that date would have their open work permit applications processed within four months of receipt.

After one year, CIC will to re-assess the pilot program and determine whether it should be continued. ■