

Proposed Changes to Assessment of Academic Credentials of Federal Skilled Workers Applying for Permanent Residence in Canada

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Another proposed change to Canada's Immigration System was announced on March 28, 2012 by Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Minister Jason Kenney. This change pertains to the assessment of educational credentials of Federal Skilled Workers applying for Permanent Residence in Canada.

Currently, foreign nationals who apply for permanent residence in Canada under the Federal Skilled category are not required to have their educational credentials evaluated prior to immigrating to Canada. Some have argued that this leads to problems for these individuals, in terms of finding jobs in their fields once in Canada, as Canadian employers are often unfamiliar with how these foreign academic credentials compare with Canadian credentials.

The proposed change would make it a requirement for all Federal Skilled Workers who wish to apply for permanent residence in Canada under the category to first have their foreign educational credentials assessed and verified by designated organizations before they arrive in Canada. This would amount to a pre-arrival assessment of their credentials. The Government suggests that this pre-arrival assessment will give immigrants a sense of how Canadian employers are likely to view and value their education before they arrive in Canada, and will also screen out people who don't have the proper education levels.

While this proposed change may have some benefits, there are several foreseeable problems, in particular with respect to implementation. These potential problems include: finding impartial organizations that can provide fair and accurate credential assessments around the world, especially in remote countries and areas; ensuring accessible credential assessments are available around the world; the added cost of this credential assessment and the confusion it

may cause immigrants, who may believe this pre-arrival assessment means they will qualify to become licensed in a regulated occupation when this is not necessarily the case. A positive credential assessment may also be misinterpreted by these immigrants to mean they will find jobs in their fields once they arrive in Canada, which again is not necessarily the case.

As of yet, there has been no announcement as to when the proposed change is to be implemented. When a further announcement is made, it will be interesting to see whether any of the problems identified above have been addressed.