

Federal Program - Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot

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On January 24, 2019 Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada ("IRCC") launched a new pilot program called the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (the "RNIP").

The RNIP is a community driven program that proposes to assist and support rural communities with labour market shortages and regional economic development. In addition, the RNIP is a federal pathway for foreign nationals to work and obtain Permanent Resident status in Canada similar in some respects to the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program's (MPNP) Strategic Initiatives. One obvious difference being that the RNIP is community driven whereas the MPNP Strategic Initiatives are employer driven.



Take note that IRCC has provided an extremely short window to apply under the RNIP with the deadline for applications fast approaching on March 1, 2019 at 11:59pm PST.

Who can Apply?

A community that is interested in applying under the RNIP must work with a local economic development organization to complete and submit the application on behalf of the community.

IRCC has set out parameters as to what type of entity is considered an economic development organization. An economic development organization must have:

- economic development as a central part of its mandate
- an economic development or strategic plan, or would fall under a broader economic development plan
- available resources to participate in the pilot

The following are examples of economic development organizations:

- a community futures organization
- a chamber of commerce
- an independent or not-for-profit economic development organization
- a hybrid organization of a municipality with an independent board of directors made up of community stakeholders

The economic development organization remains responsible for managing the RNIP process for the community including, working with local employers to attract and integrate foreign nationals as well as working with the Government to attract and integrate foreign nationals into the community.

What are the Eligibility Requirements for Communities?

In order for a community to be eligible for participation in the RNIP, it must meet the following criteria:

- population of either:
 - o 50,000 or less and be located at least 75 km from the core of a Census Metropolitan Area. The simple definition of a Census Metropolitan Area is an area consisting of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a core. A Census Metropolitan Area must have a total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more live in the core.
 - o up to 200,000 people and be considered remote from other larger cities
- located in:
 - o Manitoba
 - o Alberta
 - o British Columbia
 - o Northwest Territories
 - o Nunavut
 - o Ontario
 - o Saskatchewan
 - o Yukon
- have job opportunities
- have an economic development plan
- have an economic development organization to manage the program
- able to settle new immigrants in the community by having:

- o relationships with local or regional immigrant-serving organizations
- o opportunities to connect foreign nationals with members of the community for mentoring or networking
- o access to key services such as education, housing, transportation and health care

In addition, the community must have written support of both the community's municipal leader and a local or regional immigrant-serving organization.

What are the Roles and Responsibilities of the Community and Economic Development Organization?

If chosen to participate in the RNIP, both the community and the economic development organization will be responsible to:

- organize stakeholders within the community, such as local employers, to identify labour shortages and opportunities that could benefit from immigration
- promote the pilot program and the community to eligible foreign nationals
- recruit and assess foreign nationals based on the community's economic needs and genuine employment opportunities
- recommend chosen candidates for permanent residence
- develop a strong support network for new immigrants within the community
- connect new immigrants with members of the community for mentorship purposes, settlement services and key social services
- monitor and report on the results of the pilot program

How to Apply?

The economic development organization must complete and submit a government issued form called the Community Interest Form together with various documentation, including a recently prepared economic development plan, a letter of support from a municipal leader, a letter of support from a local or regional immigrant serving organization and letters of support from local employers and community members.

When is the Deadline for Applications?

As previously mentioned, the deadline to apply for the RNIP is 11:59 p.m. PST on March 1, 2019. Due to the very tight deadline, communities with interest in this program should immediately find a local economic development organization willing to apply and begin preparing the documentation required for the application.

How will Communities be Chosen to Participate?

IRCC has indicated that it will be choosing communities that: (i) need immigration to meet

local labour market needs and support the economy; and (ii) have set up strong resource and community partners to support the program.

Note that not all communities that meet the requirements for the program will be chosen to participate.

When will IRCC make a Decision?

IRCC will contact the economic development organizations in the spring of 2019 to advise whether the community has been chosen to participate in the program.

IRCC has advised that it will be releasing further information about the pilot program relating to permanent residence applicants later in 2019. We will provide an update once further information is released.

How to Access Assistance?

Contact Jennifer McRae, Business Immigration lawyer directly at (204) 934-2374 or jem@tdslaw.com

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