

Chapter 12

Nominating Qualified Immigration Applicants

1.0 MAIN POINTS

The Ministry of the Economy (Ministry) facilitates immigration by using the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program to recommend the nomination of qualified applicants for permanent immigrant status to the Federal Government.

The Federal Government has the sole authority to grant immigration status to individuals. It has agreements with provinces so provincial governments can address local labour shortages through immigration. The Federal Government allocates each province an annual quota of nominations; in 2012, Saskatchewan's quota was 4,000 nominations.

This audit examined the effectiveness of the Ministry's processes to nominate qualified immigration applicants to meet the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program's needs.

For the eight-month period ended December 31, 2012, we concluded the Ministry of the Economy's Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program operated effectively to nominate qualified immigration applicants to meet the program's objectives except that the Ministry needs to:

- › Provide guidance and training for staff to assess the feasibility of relocation and settlement plans and business establishment plans submitted to the Entrepreneur Immigration Categories of the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program
- › Document the support (e.g., date, institution, or person contacted) to explain how decisions were reached on eligibility and qualifications of immigration applicants
- › Update quality review policies to reflect its risk-based practice

In this chapter, we describe the key findings for this audit and make five recommendations for the Ministry.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets out the results of our audit to assess whether the Ministry of the Economy's Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program operated effectively to nominate qualified immigration applicants to meet the Program's objectives.

The Ministry's Immigration Services Branch had a budget for 2012-13 of \$4.9 million¹ and has 52 staff.

The Federal Government has the sole authority to grant immigration status to individuals. It has agreements with provinces so provincial governments can address

¹ Saskatchewan Provincial Budget 12-13 Estimates for Immigration Services Branch was \$12.8 million. The Ministry reorganization on May 25, 2012 resulted in Career and Employment Services being moved out of the Immigration Services Branch. The remaining budget for Immigration Services Branch was \$4.9 million.



local labour shortages through immigration. The Federal Government gives each province an annual quota of nominations; in 2012, Saskatchewan's quota was 4,000 nominations.

The Ministry facilitates immigration by using the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (Program) to recommend (i.e., nominate) applicants, who qualify under provincially-established criteria, for permanent immigrant status to the Federal Government. The Ministry does not directly participate in recruiting potential immigrants. Rather, it facilitates the immigration process by working with Saskatchewan employers and potential immigrants to improve the likelihood of a nomination being accepted by the Federal Government. According to the Ministry, the Program can provide an alternate and quicker entry into Canada than other federal immigration programs.²

In 2012, 11,182 immigrants (applicants, their spouses and dependents) settled in Saskatchewan (2011 – 8,955). Of the new immigrants, 81% (2011 – 78%) had been granted permanent resident³ status by the Federal Government through provincial nomination in prior years. The other 19% (2011 – 22%) had applied directly to the Federal Government as economic, federal family, refugee, or other classes of immigrants.⁴

The Program is intended to nominate applicants who will contribute to the economic development of Saskatchewan and have the ability to become economically established in Canada.⁵ In 2011-12, most of the 4,072⁶ applicants the Program nominated either had a permanent job waiting for them in Saskatchewan or were economically independent and willing to invest in a business or farming operation.⁷

In order to support economic and population growth,⁸ the Ministry needs to nominate potential immigrants who will be accepted by the Federal Government for immigration. The Program needs to be fair and transparent to avoid real or perceived bias against or favoritism of potential immigrants and employers. The Ministry also needs the Program's processes to be timely because processing delays can impact a potential immigrant's decision to apply and when to apply, an employer's decision to make an offer of employment, as well as overall immigrant and employer satisfaction.

3.0 BACKGROUND

The Provincial Government's overarching priority of economic growth for Saskatchewan includes immigration. Saskatchewan had a net increase of almost 38,000 immigrants to the province between 2007 and 2011.⁹

The Ministry nominated 4,072 immigrants in 2011-12 under the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program. The Ministry expects this to result in the arrival of 11,000

² www.saskimmigrationcanada.ca/sinp (20 March 2013).

³ Permanent resident – a person who has legally immigrated to Canada but is not yet a Canadian citizen.

⁴ CIC Micro Data, preliminary for 2012.

⁵ Canada-Saskatchewan Immigration Agreement, 2005.

⁶ Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration, *2011-12 Annual Report*, p. 25. The Program nominated 4,072 individuals in 2011-12. This includes an additional 72 nominations that were transferred to the Program from other provincial jurisdictions that did not meet their federal nomination allocation.

⁷ Prior to May 2, 2012, immigrants nominated under the family referral category were not required to have a skilled job.

⁸ Saskatchewan Plan for Growth Vision 2020 and Beyond, p. 11.

⁹ Ibid.

to 12,000 immigrants¹⁰ to Saskatchewan over a period of 18 months.¹¹ Employer demand for immigrant workers exceeds the Federal Government's allocation of 4,000 nominations.¹² Saskatchewan estimates that it will require as many as 75,000 to 90,000 skilled workers in the next five years.¹³

The Immigration Services Branch at the Ministry uses the following units to administer the Program:

- › The Employer Engagement Unit determines whether prospective employers are legitimate, operating businesses and do not have outstanding Labour Standards or Occupational Health and Safety contraventions. It also determines whether the jobs offered are for skilled workers in accordance with the federal job classification system,¹⁴ are full-time and permanent positions, and that the employer plans to pay competitive wages.
- › The Economic Immigration Unit processes applications for five immigration categories. **Figure 1** below describes these categories.
- › The Entrepreneur Immigration Unit processes applications for two immigration categories. **Figure 2** below describes these categories.

Figure 1—Economic Immigration Categories

- › The **skilled workers category** includes individuals who have university, college or apprenticeship training and have an offer for a full-time skilled job in Saskatchewan.
 - The skilled worker professionals sub-category is for individuals who are not currently employed in Saskatchewan, but have a full-time permanent job offer in a skilled position.
 - The existing work permit sub-category is for individuals who have worked for at least six months in Saskatchewan on a temporary work permit¹⁵ issued by the Federal Government in a skilled field, and have a full-time, permanent job offer in a skilled position.
- › The **family referral category** is for individuals with a relative who has been living in Saskatchewan for at least one year, and who will assume responsibility for providing assistance during the immigration process. The individual must have an offer for a full-time, permanent job in Saskatchewan in a skilled position.
- › The **health professions category** includes physicians, nurses and other health professionals who have international training, meet regulatory requirements, have worked full-time for at least six months in Saskatchewan as a health professional on a temporary work permit, and have a full-time, permanent job offer.
- › The **long haul truck driver category** is for truck drivers who have worked a minimum of six months with an approved trucking firm in Saskatchewan on a temporary work permit, hold a current Saskatchewan Class 1A driver's license, and have a full-time, permanent job offer.
- › The **student category** is for individuals who have recently graduated from a recognized post-secondary institution in Canada.
 - The post-graduation work permit sub-category is for individuals who have graduated from a recognized post-secondary institution, have worked in Saskatchewan for a minimum of 1,920 hours on a temporary work permit, and have received a full-time, permanent job offer in Saskatchewan.
 - The Masters and PhD sub-category is for individuals who have graduated with a Master's degree or PhD from a recognized post-secondary institution in Canada and have either worked in Saskatchewan for at least six months on a temporary work permit in their field of study, are currently employed in their field of study, have a job offer in their field of study for a term longer than six months, or have sufficient funds to sustain themselves for a short period without work.

Source: Ministry of the Economy

¹⁰ This includes the nominees and their immediate families.

¹¹ Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration, *2011-12 Annual Report*, p. 10.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹³ Government of Saskatchewan, News Release – December 3, 2012: Saskatchewan Introduces Legislation to Protect Foreign Workers and Immigrants.

¹⁴ National Occupational Classification is the nationally accepted reference on occupations. It provides labour market information by reporting occupational statistics and organizing job titles and descriptions.

¹⁵ Temporary Work Permit – An official document issued by a visa office abroad that is placed in a person's passport to show that he or she has met the requirements for admission to Canada as a temporary resident (worker).



Figure 2—Entrepreneur Immigration Categories

- ▶ The **entrepreneur category** includes individuals who have a minimum of three years entrepreneurial or relevant business management experience and plan to invest at least \$150,000 in a business in Saskatchewan. There are three sub-categories under this main category.
 - The entrepreneur sub-category is for individuals with a minimum net worth of \$300,000 who plan to establish a business in Saskatchewan.
 - The science and technology sub-category is for individuals who promote active investment in the science and technology sector by owning a patent, innovative information technology idea, or plan on actively investing in a partnership with an existing Saskatchewan science or technology-based firm. They must also meet all of the criteria for the entrepreneur sub-category, including having a minimum net worth of \$300,000.
 - The large-scale investor sub-category is for individuals who plan to actively invest at least \$10 million into Saskatchewan businesses.
- ▶ The **farm owner/operator category** is for individuals with proven experience in the farming industry and have the finance capital available to invest in and operate a farming operation in Saskatchewan.
 - In the farm owner/operator sub-category, individuals must have a minimum net worth of \$500,000.
 - The young farmer sub-category is for individuals under the age of 40, who have a net worth of \$400,000.

Source: Ministry of the Economy

If applicants meet the provincial immigration criteria, the Ministry issues a provincial nomination certificate,¹⁶ which is valid for 180 days. The applicant then applies to Citizenship and Immigration Canada which has the sole authority to grant immigration status to individuals.

4.0 AUDIT OBJECTIVE, CRITERIA, SCOPE, AND CONCLUSION

The objective of this audit was to assess whether the Ministry's Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program operated effectively to nominate qualified immigration applicants to meet the Program's objectives. We examined processes for the eight-month period ended December 31, 2012.

We examined the Ministry's criteria, policies and procedures that relate to nominating qualified immigration applicants. We assessed the Ministry's processes to evaluate employers and job offers. We tested a sample of applicant's files and evaluated how the Ministry assessed and verified the applicant's qualifications. We looked at the Ministry's processes for reviewing complaints, and reviewed a sample of complaint cases. We also examined how the Ministry collected data and reported on its key success factors.

Employers frequently use third-party recruiters to find qualified potential immigrants. Also, immigration applicants may decide to use a representative to assist them with the application process of the Program (as described in **Section 5.2.2**). The Program is not involved in either the recruitment process or the use of a representative; therefore, we did not audit the recruitment process or an immigrant's use of a representative.

To conduct this audit, we followed the *Standards for Assurance Engagements* published in the *CICA Handbook - Assurance*. To evaluate the Ministry's processes, we used criteria based on the work of other auditors and current literature. The primary sources for the criteria in **Figure 3** are set out in **Section 7.0**. The Ministry's management agreed with these criteria.

¹⁶ Nomination certificate – a certificate issued by a province or territory that recommends a foreign national for permanent residence under a Provincial Nominee Program.

Figure 3—Audit Criteria for Nominating Qualified Immigration Applicants

To operate effectively to nominate qualified immigration applicants to meet the Program's objectives, the Ministry should:

- 1. Identify standards for nominating qualified immigration applicants**
 - 1.1 Approve standards required
 - 1.2 Align nomination processes with standards
 - 1.3 Communicate criteria
- 2. Select qualified immigration applicants for nomination**
 - 2.1 Determine provincial need for immigration applicants
 - 2.2 Assess qualifications of applicants (e.g., screening)
 - 2.3 Verify qualifications of applicants
 - 2.4 Approve recommendation
 - 2.5 Communicate nomination in a timely manner
- 3. Monitor outcomes of nomination program**
 - 3.1 Assess key success factors of the program
 - 3.2 Investigate complaints
 - 3.3 Analyze and adjust program
 - 3.4 Communicate results

We concluded that for the eight-month period ended December 31, 2012, the Ministry of the Economy's Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program operated effectively to nominate qualified immigration applicants to meet the Program's objectives except that the Ministry needs to:

- › Provide guidance and training for staff to assess the feasibility of relocation and settlement plans and business establishment plans submitted to the Entrepreneur Immigration Categories of the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program
- › Document the support (e.g., date, institution, or person contacted) to explain how decisions were reached on eligibility and qualifications of immigration applicants
- › Update quality review policies to reflect its risk-based practice

5.0 KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, we set out our key findings and recommendations related to the audit criteria in **Figure 3**.

5.1 Standards Identified

5.1.1 Standards Approved

Federal legislation sets out key Canadian immigration requirements (e.g., *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations*, and *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*). In the *Canada-Saskatchewan Immigration Agreement, 2005*, the Federal Government gives the province the authority to determine criteria for nominating provincial nominees within the federal parameters.



The Ministry sets provincial nominee criteria for each immigration category (as described in **Figures 1** and **2**). These criteria align with the federal laws and guidelines.

While Saskatchewan's criteria align with the federal laws and guidelines, we noted that other jurisdictions with provincial immigrant nominee programs may have varying requirements. For example, we noted that other jurisdictions require or strongly recommend an exploratory visit to the province by a potential immigrant in the entrepreneur category. In Saskatchewan, this is not required, but an exploratory visit does contribute 15 points out of 100 points (see ranking system in **Exhibit 6.2**). The Ministry annually receives a report from the Federal Government that shows a comparison of the standards in all provincial immigrant nominee programs. The Ministry considers the other jurisdictions' standards, as well as what will best fit the Saskatchewan labour market, in determining what the standards will be for the Program's immigration categories.

5.1.2 Nomination Processes Aligned with Standards

The Ministry aligned its nomination processes with the standards and criteria for each immigration category. The Ministry's policies and procedures set out how it evaluates applicants based on the provincial standards and criteria for each category. Applicants in the skilled worker professional category and the entrepreneur category must meet all selection criteria and achieve required scores in the Ministry's rating system (see **Section 6.1** and **6.2**). The rating system is transparent. Applicants in other categories must meet all criteria for those categories.

5.1.3 Criteria Communicated

Immigration criteria are communicated to potential applicants and employers in application guides and forms provided on the Ministry's website. The Ministry's application forms are available in English and French, and other Program information is available in 24 different languages that are representative of potential immigrants wanting to enter Saskatchewan. The Ministry also works with the 11 regional newcomer gateways¹⁷ throughout Saskatchewan to keep the gateways informed of immigration procedures.

The Ministry's website explains employment requirements to employers interested in using the Program to attract foreign workers. The Ministry also holds information sessions to communicate the criteria to interested employers, or will meet with them individually.

¹⁷ The regional newcomer gateways are centres for newcomers arriving in Saskatchewan and are funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Ministry of the Economy. The gateways help newcomers find the information, resources, services and people needed to aid in their move to Saskatchewan.

5.2 Qualified Immigration Applicants Selected

5.2.1 Provincial Need for Immigration Applicants Determined

As described in **Section 2.0**, the Ministry does not recruit potential immigrants. Rather, it facilitates the immigration process by working with Saskatchewan employers and potential immigrants. For the economic immigration categories (See **Figure 1**), employers determine their labour shortages and recruit potential immigrants for the positions. The Ministry evaluates employers who want to use the Program against the criteria such as wage rate requirements and business legitimacy (see **Section 5.2.2**).

Figure 4 below shows the applications by immigration category the Ministry has at various stages of processing in its inventory at December 31, 2012.

Figure 4—Applications by Immigration Category at December 31, 2012

Immigration Category	Applications in Inventory
Economic Immigration Categories	
Skilled Worker	3,980
Family Referral	3,904
Health Professions	61
Long Haul Truck Driver	30
Student	1,028
Entrepreneur Immigration Categories	
Entrepreneur	2,164
Farm Owner/Operator	7
Other*	134
Total	11,308

* Other category represents applications received for semi-skilled workers or applications that have not yet been assigned to a category

Source: Ministry of the Economy (8 February 2013)

5.2.2 Assessment of Eligibility and Qualifications of Applicants can be Improved

Employers

The Employer Engagement Unit maintains a training manual to instruct its staff how to assess employers who want to use the Program, as well as how to evaluate the employers' job offers to potential immigrants.

In March of 2011, the Employer Engagement Unit changed its processes from assessing an employer and job offer at the same time as the qualifications of an applicant to a two-step process. The two-step process assesses employers and job offers prior to accepting an immigrant's application for processing. We describe assessing employers



and job offers in this section, and in **Section 5.2.3**, we describe the process for the verification of eligibility and qualifications of applicants.

The Employer Engagement Unit assesses if potential employers are legitimate, operating businesses, understand Program processes, and have any past history of hiring and retaining foreign workers. Assessing the legitimacy of an employer is done through online searches and verification that the company is registered with the corporations branch of a jurisdiction and/or has a valid business license in the city or town they are located in. Staff can also inquire directly to the Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety to ensure the employer does not have outstanding Labour Standards or Occupational Health and Safety violations. Such violations would indicate they would not be a suitable employer in the Program (e.g., complaints about the employer not paying workers).

In the files we examined, we found that staff verified the legitimacy of employers by checking business registrations with the Corporations Registry¹⁸ and through site visits and/or discussions with owners. We also found that employers were verified through other means such as searches on stock exchanges and verification with industry associations (e.g., Saskatchewan Construction Association).

After the Ministry approves the employer, the employer submits the job offer to the Ministry for assessment. The Ministry ensures that the job is for a skilled, full-time permanent position, the applicant will be residing in Saskatchewan, will be working for a Saskatchewan-registered company, and the wages in the job offer meet the Ministry's minimum standards.¹⁹ The Ministry verifies the job type to the National Occupational Classification to ensure it is for a skilled category.

Once both the employer and job offer are approved, the Ministry issues a Confirmation of Job Approval to the employer, who is responsible for sending it to the potential immigrant. The potential immigrant attaches this confirmation of job approval to his or her application.

Applicants

All applications within each stream²⁰ are processed chronologically once complete (i.e., contain all required documents from the applicant for the category) and are randomly assigned to staff to reduce real or perceived bias in the process.

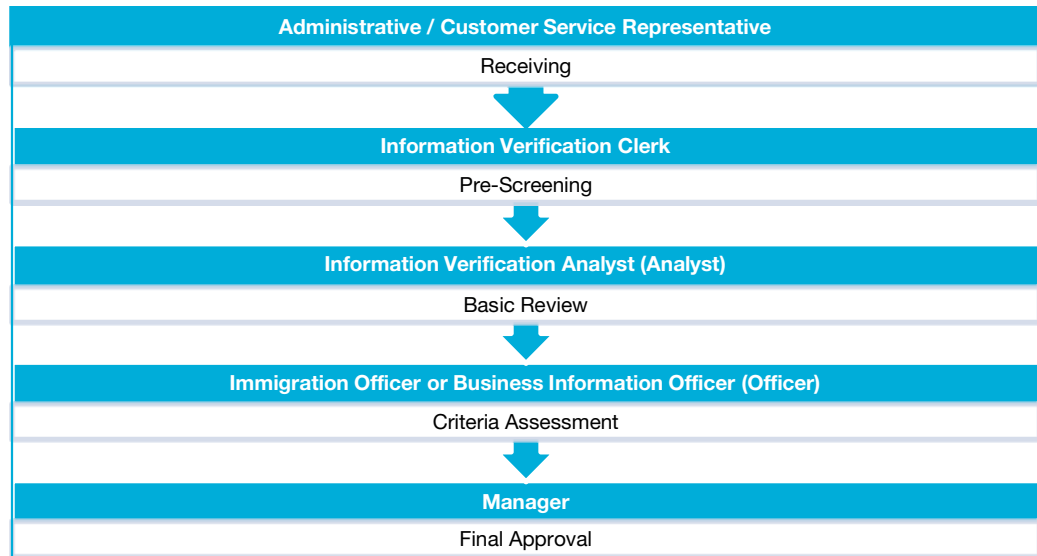
The Ministry's process consists of pre-screening applications for completeness, basic reviewing of applications for program eligibility, in-depth reviewing of applications against criteria and verification of documentation, and final approval of applications for nomination.

Figure 5 outlines the general flow of a potential immigrant's application through the Ministry's processing stages.

¹⁸ Corporations Registry is part of the Information Services Corporation (ISC) family of registries.

¹⁹ Wage offers must be the same pay rate for Canadians and foreign workers doing the same work, and must be within 15% of the median pay for the job category.

²⁰ The Ministry divides applications into the following streams: temporary work permit applicants, entrepreneur and farm owner/operator applicants, and all other applicants.

Figure 5—Immigrant Application Processing: General Flow

Source: Ministry of the Economy; Policy and Procedures Manual

Applicants can use representatives when they apply to the Program. Representatives are appointed by applicants to conduct business on their behalf with the Program and federal agencies. Applicants can use unpaid representatives, such as family members, friends, or members of non-governmental or religious organizations; or paid representatives. The Program only recognizes paid representatives who are members of a Canadian provincial or territorial law society, the Immigration Consultants of Canada Regulatory Council, or the *Chambre des notaires du Québec*. Limiting the types of paid representatives recognized reduces the risk of applicants receiving wrong advice or being taken advantage of.

Generally, the Ministry has policies and procedures that provide guidance to staff about what documents are acceptable to support each criterion for each immigration category. However, there is a lack of guidance in assessing entrepreneur relocation, settlement and business plans as discussed later in this section.

Ministry staff attend a federal course to learn about the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* and the criteria required by the Act.

The Economic Immigration Unit's staff receive on-the-job training both with an experienced staff member in the same position and their supervisor. Staff also receive formal training on the Unit's policies and procedures. The Unit maintains detailed procedures for evaluating potential immigrants' applications against the criteria for the various categories. However, as noted in **Section 5.2.3** below, procedures are not always followed.

The Entrepreneur Immigration Unit's staff also receives on-the-job training with experienced staff members. However, it does not provide training or written guidance for assessing relocation and settlement plan or business establishment plan criteria for the entrepreneur and farm owner/operator immigration categories. Because of the complexity of these areas, training and written guidance in assessing these plans is necessary so that staff evaluate applicants consistently.



1. We recommend that the Ministry of the Economy provide guidance for staff to assess the feasibility of relocation and settlement plans and business establishment plans for the Entrepreneur Immigration Categories of the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program.

2. We recommend that the Ministry of the Economy provide training for staff to assess the feasibility of relocation and settlement plans and business establishment plans for the Entrepreneur Immigration Categories of the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program.

5.2.3 Document Support for Verification of Eligibility and Qualifications of Applicants

Verifying eligibility and qualifications of immigration applicants includes the:

- ▮ Validation of applicants' academic and skills qualifications and/or work experience
- ▮ Verification/confirmation of existence and liquidity of applicants' assets
- ▮ Evaluation of applicants' plans for owning/operating businesses or farms for the likelihood of success and feasibility

The Federal Government is responsible for verifying health, criminality and security (i.e., terrorism) information from the applicants.

Applicants are required to send in supporting documents in their original language as well as provide an English or French translation. To ensure that the documents accompanying the application forms are legitimate, the Ministry should verify, as necessary, that the documentation is not fraudulent or misrepresentative.

The Ministry provides guidance to staff about how to verify applicant eligibility and qualifications. This guidance focuses, for example, on verifying the applicant's education and work experience, whether a representative is registered, and the applicant's English or French language proficiency. Verification could include the Ministry contacting institutions or foreign governments to confirm documentation.

The Ministry requires third-party expert verification of an entrepreneur or farm owner/operator applicant's net worth and accumulation of funds. In 2012, the Ministry issued a request for proposal to contract third party experts who could verify this information. During our audit period, the Ministry used either a third-party expert or Ministry Officers for the verification of applicants' net worth and accumulation of funds.

The Ministry also provides yearly fraud detection training to all staff to increase their knowledge and awareness about indicators of document and other types of fraud. In **Section 5.3.2**, we describe a situation where the Ministry's processes identified a falsified job offer.

The Ministry's policies and procedures require staff to ensure the potential immigrant's application meets the criteria requirements, verify authenticity of the provided information, document that verification was done, and document the support (e.g., date, institution, or person contacted) to explain their verification decisions on eligibility and qualifications in the applicant's file. We examined a sample of 30 application files from different categories that were at least at the Analyst stage of the process (see **Figure 5**). In this sample, we saw that there were representation that verification of eligibility and qualification was performed. However, we did not find any supporting documentation that explained the steps Ministry staff had taken to verify eligibility and qualifications.

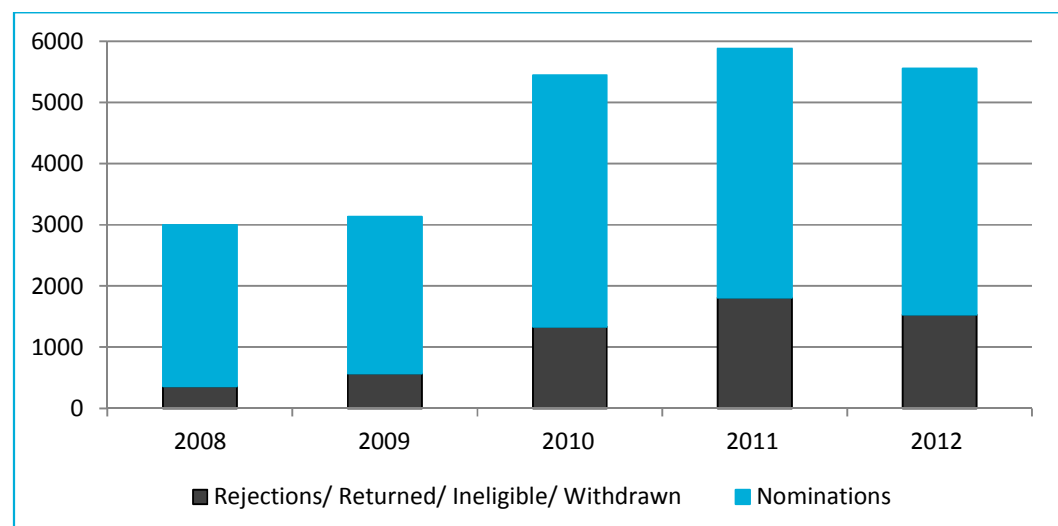
3. We recommend that the Ministry of the Economy follow the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program policies and procedures that require staff to document the support (e.g., date, institution, or person contacted) to explain how decisions were reached on eligibility and qualifications of immigration applicants.

5.2.4 Nomination and Rejections Properly Handled

Approval of Recommendation

Once an application has been processed, the Analyst or Officer will recommend nomination or rejection of the applicant. A randomly-assigned manager will conduct a final review of the file, including reviewing the assessment and approving the recommendation. **Figure 6** shows the applications processed and resulting nominations and rejections for the past five years.

Figure 6—Applications Processed by Calendar Year



Source: Ministry of the Economy (22 March 2013)



Quality Review of Processed Applications

The Ministry's Program Integrity Unit is responsible for quality review of the processed applications.

The Unit reviews a sample of processed application files to confirm they comply with Program policies and quality standards. The Ministry's policy requires a review of a file completed by each Officer or Analyst every two years.

A quality review of files may result in recommendations when there are deficiencies in how applications are processed or when policies are not being followed. At the end of the review, a report is to be provided to senior management and, where appropriate, to staff.

Staff in the unit have been informally selecting files for review using their own risk assessment (e.g., changes to a category, staff departure). However, the Program has not updated its policies or formally documented how it selects files for review. Therefore, certain types or categories of files may not be selected and reviewed on a consistent and timely basis each year.

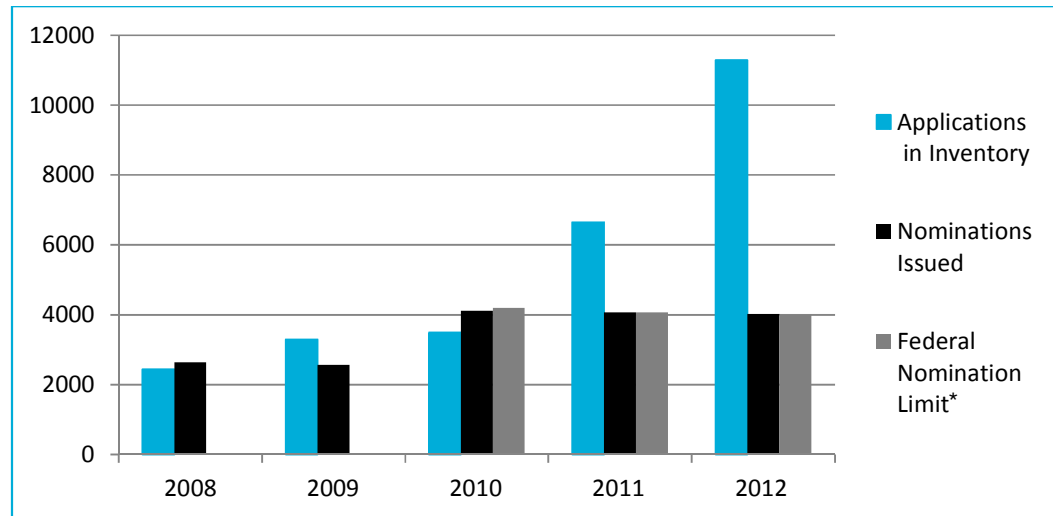
4. We recommend that the Ministry of the Economy update policies to reflect its risk-based practice for quality reviews to guide staff of the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program.

5.2.5 Nominations Communicated in a Timely Manner

The nomination or rejection is communicated to applicants in letters. Nomination letters serve as the nomination certificate. This nomination certificate is valid for 180 days and allows the applicant to apply for immigration to the Federal Government. Monthly, the Ministry notifies the Federal Government of the approved nominations. In the files we examined, the nomination or rejection letter was sent to the applicant within three business days of the manager's approval of the recommendation. The Ministry effectively communicates the nomination to applicants in a timely manner.

At December 31, 2012, the Ministry had 11,308 applications at various stages of processing in its inventory. **Figure 7** highlights the rapid growth over the last five years of applicants using the Program.

The Ministry cannot nominate more than the annual federal nomination limit (i.e., 4,000 in 2012); therefore, applicants over the limit must wait to be nominated until a subsequent period. If the trend of increasing applications continues in the future, eligible applicants may wait for significant amounts of time until approved for nomination certificates.

Figure 7—Application Inventory and Nominations by Calendar Year

Source: Ministry of the Economy (22 March 2013)

* There was no federal nomination limit in 2008 and 2009. The federal nomination limit was set in consultation with Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

The Ministry publishes historical average application processing times. This works well when the number of applications received is relatively stable. However, this does not provide adequate estimates of future processing times when the number of applications significantly changes, as it has in the two last years. If employers and applicants are aware of potentially longer processing times, they may choose to apply directly to the Federal Government or pursue other alternatives.

5. We recommend that the Ministry of the Economy establish a process to estimate and communicate future processing times for the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program.

5.3 Outcomes Monitored

5.3.1 Key Success Factors Assessed

The Program is intended to nominate applicants who will contribute to the economic development of Saskatchewan and have the ability to become economically established in Canada.

One purpose of the Program is to nominate applicants who are ultimately accepted for immigration by the Federal Government. Citizenship and Immigration Canada makes the final immigration selection decision. That is, it can reject applicants if they do not meet federal immigration criteria that are harmonized with the Program's criteria, or criteria related to criminality, health, security or other factors. In 2012, the Federal Government approved 92% (2011 - 96%) of the Ministry nominees.

Annually, the Ministry obtains information from the Federal Government on when and where nominated immigrants settle in the province. The Federal Government provides



information on an immigrant's income and how long an immigrant stays in the province. For example, at December 2010, 87% of immigrants who arrived between 2000 and 2010 remained in Saskatchewan.

The Ministry defines key success factors of the Program (e.g., attachment to the Saskatchewan labour market, timeliness of processing applications, acceptance of nominations by the Federal Government), tracks performance, and reports the results.

5.3.2 Complaints Investigated

The Program Integrity Unit reviews complaints from a variety of external sources and follows up on issues referred to it internally.²¹

The Ministry received 33 new complaint or referral cases between April 1 and December 31, 2012. In the complaint/referral cases we examined, the Ministry followed its policies and procedures. One of these was a referral to the Program Integrity Unit by staff of the Ministry about a suspicious job offer in an applicant's file. In this case, the Officer determined the employer had no knowledge of that job offer and that the job offer was not valid. The Program Integrity Unit determined the falsified job offer had been produced by a representative. As a result, this representative was suspended from using the Program for two years. Also, the immigration application was rejected by the Ministry's processing staff.

The Ministry also had 91 complaint cases related to prior years that were still in the process of being reviewed in the period we audited. Cases may involve multiple applicants, employers, recruiters and/or representatives. For example, one of the cases involved multiple fictitious employers in applications from one group of representatives.

The Ministry does not have authority to investigate immigrants. If an immigrant is suspected of entering the country based on fraudulent information, the Ministry notifies federal authorities who have the authority to investigate and deport, if warranted.

5.3.3 Program Analyzed and Adjusted

The Ministry routinely identifies areas for improvement in the Program through branch, unit and committee meetings. The Ministry also seeks feedback from its stakeholders (i.e., employers, industries and applicants), about how the Program can be improved. The Ministry updates its policy and procedure documents annually, or as immigration categories change. For example, on May 2, 2012, the family referral immigration category changed to require applicants to have a skilled job offer. The Ministry's policies and procedures were updated to reflect these changes.

5.3.4 Results Communicated

The Ministry publishes on its website quarterly its average historical application processing times. However, as we explain in **Section 5.2.5**, the Ministry needs to estimate and communicate future estimated processing times for the program. The Ministry also publishes trends on the number of provincial nominations in its annual

²¹ New legislation currently before the Legislative Assembly will enhance the Program Integrity Unit's powers to investigate employers, recruiters and representatives.

report. The Ministry communicates the results of its internal goals within the organization quarterly.

6.0 EXHIBITS

Assessment ratings are done on a points system using the following matrices.

6.1 Assessment Rating–Skilled Workers/ Professionals

An applicant must both meet all selection criteria (e.g., having a Ministry approved, skilled job offer) and achieve an assessment rating score of a minimum of 35 points to be considered for nomination. The Ministry provides guidance on scoring for each factor.

Factor No.	Description	Max. Points
1	Education	15
2	Work Experience	Intended Occupation
		Alternative Occupation
3	Language Ability	1 st Official Language
		2 nd Official language
4	Family Adaptability	10
5	Saskatchewan Adaptability	15
6	Community Support	5
7	Age	10
8	Personal Financial Resources	5
Total Score: (maximum 90)		90

Source: Ministry of the Economy

6.2 Assessment Rating–Entrepreneur Category

An applicant must both meet all selection criteria (e.g., having sufficient net worth) and achieve an assessment rating score of a minimum of 55 points to be considered for nomination. The Ministry provides guidance on scoring for each factor.

Selection Criteria	Maximum Points
Visit	15
Business Contacts	20
Business Development	20
Home Ownership	10
English Competency	15
Community/Family Contacts	10
Commitment	10
Total	100

Source: Ministry of the Economy



7.0 SELECTED REFERENCES

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