

Chapter 30

Immigration and Career Training—Nominating Qualified Immigrant Applications

1.0 MAIN POINTS

As of February 2019, the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training (formerly part of the Ministry of the Economy) had implemented the two outstanding recommendations we initially made in our 2013 audit of its processes to nominate qualified immigration applicants.

The Ministry updated and approved its Entrepreneur Immigration Procedures Manual for its staff. In addition, the Ministry trained staff.

Having up-to-date guidance and training better enables staff to appropriately assess immigrant applications, including assessing the business establishment plans. This will assist in treating applicants in a fair and equitable manner.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

The Ministry facilitates immigration with the help of the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program. Through this Program, the Ministry recommends the nomination of qualified applicants for permanent immigrant status to the Federal Government.

To support economic and population growth, 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.¹

The Federal Government has the sole authority to grant immigration status to individuals. It has agreements with provinces to help provincial governments in addressing local labour shortages through immigration. 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 the Federal Government accepting a nomination (recommendation).

2.2 Focus of Follow-Up Audit

This chapter describes our second follow-up of management's actions on the recommendations we made in 2013. In our *2013 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 12, we concluded that for the eight-month period ended December 31, 2012, the Ministry's Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program operated effectively, other than areas

¹ *Saskatchewan Plan for Growth vision 2020 and Beyond*, p. 7.



reflected in our five recommendations, to nominate qualified immigration applicants to meet the program's objective.² By March 2016, the Ministry implemented three of the five recommendations.³

To conduct this audit engagement, we followed the standards for assurance engagements published in the *CPA Canada Handbook – Assurance* (CSAE 3001). To evaluate the Ministry's progress towards meeting our recommendations, we used the relevant criteria from the original audit. The Ministry's management agreed with the criteria in the original audit.

To perform our follow-up audit, we discussed actions taken with management, reviewed the relevant documents (i.e., procedures manual, immigrant application files, staff training documents), and tested a sample of application files for the Entrepreneur Immigration Categories of the Program.

3.0 STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This section sets out each recommendation including the date on which the Standing Committee on Public Accounts agreed to the recommendation, the status of the recommendation at February 28, 2019, and the Ministry's actions up to that date.

3.1 Guidance and Training for Staff Provided

We recommended that the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training (formerly 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. (2013 Report – Volume 1, p. 142, Recommendation 1; Public Accounts Committee agreement December 9, 2013)

Status – Implemented for business establishment plans – no longer relevant for relocation and settlement plans

We recommended that the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training (formerly 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. (2013 Report – Volume 1, p. 142, Recommendation 2; Public Accounts Committee agreement December 9, 2013)

Status – Implemented for business establishment plans – no longer relevant for relocation and settlement plans. As noted in our first follow-up, in March 2015, the Ministry changed its program criteria for the Entrepreneur

² The original report regarding these recommendations can be found at www.auditor.sk.ca/publications/public-reports. We reported the original audit work in *2013 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 12 (pp. 133-148).

³ *2016 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 19.

Immigration category. Under the revised criteria, applicants are no longer required to submit a relocation and settlement plan.⁴

In 2016, the Ministry updated its guidance for staff to assess immigrant applications. It removed its documented procedures related to requiring and assessing relocation and settlement plans to reflect the change in the program criteria.

The Ministry also provided staff with adequate training about appropriately assessing immigrant applications, including assessing the business establishment plans (e.g., staff meetings to review the program changes and updates to its Procedures Manual).⁵

The Ministry formally approved the most recent update to its Procedures Manual in April 2018.

At the time of our first follow-up (December 2015), the Ministry had not processed about 1,500 applications under the previous entrepreneur program. As of February 2019, it had processed all of these applications.

For each of the 21 applications we tested under the revised criteria, and the 30 applications we tested under the previous criteria, the Ministry's staff appropriately assessed the applications and business establishment plans, and documented the results in its program database. This shows the Ministry gave staff sufficient guidance and training about assessing immigrant applications.

Training and written guidance on how to assess business establishment plans are necessary so that staff are able to evaluate the plans consistently and appropriately. Without this, the Ministry is at risk of not treating applicants consistently in a fair and equitable manner.

⁴ Relocation and settlement plans outline the applicants plans for moving to Saskatchewan including an estimate of relocation costs and living expenses, and initial contacts related to legal, financial, and family matters.

⁵ Both the revised and previous criteria require applicants to submit business establishment plans as part of the application process. Business establishment plans include information on the proposed business idea, investment details, management, personnel, etc. See publications.gov.sk.ca/documents/310/89677-Business%20Establishment%20Plan-May10%202016.pdf (11 April 2019)

