

Global Immigration alert

November 2024

Canada

Quebec suspends two key streams that lead to a Quebec Selection Certificate, reducing the number of new Permanent Residents destined to the province

Executive summary

On 31 October 2024, the provincial Immigration Minister, Jean-Francois Roberge, (Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration, (MIFI)), announced the Quebec Immigration Plan for 2025-2027 along with two temporary measures suspending two programs that lead to the issuance of a Quebec Selection Certificate (certificat de sélection du Québec, (CSQ)). Obtaining a CSQ is the first step that a foreign national must undertake to qualify for Canadian Permanent Residence as a Quebec-selected skilled worker. As additional background, Quebec is unique amongst the provinces in Canada, as the federal government of Canada has an agreement in place with the province of Quebec to give full responsibility to the province for the selection and settlement of permanent immigrants who want to settle there.

This new Quebec plan announced by Minister Roberge seeks to establish sustainable levels of immigration to ensure a better integration of immigrants in Quebec society, focused on alleviating demands on housing, infrastructure and social services, while prioritizing the protection of the French language.

The two suspended CSQ streams are:

- ▶ The Quebec Graduate stream of the Quebec Experience Program / programme de l'expérience québécoise (PEQ)
- ▶ The Regular Skilled Worker Program (RSWP), along with its revised version, the Skilled Worker Selection Program (SWSP) which was supposed to go live in November 2024

The suspensions took effect on 31 October 2024 and will remain until 30 June 2025. Applications that are already in process will not be affected.

Quebec will continue to accept and adjudicate CSQ applications under the Quebec Experience Class (PEQ) - Foreign Worker stream. To qualify under this stream, an applicant must have a minimum of 24 months of qualifying work experience in the province of Quebec (within the preceding 36 months of submission) and evidence of verbal French language proficiency (level 7 of the Échelle Québécoise des niveaux de compétence en français and level 4 for accompanying spouse or common-law partner, if applicable).

Key figures for Permanent Residents (2024)

- ▶ The Quebec Immigration Plan of 2024 aimed to deliver between 40 000 to 45 750 CSQs. In fact, the most recent forecast indicates that approximately 48 560 CSQs will be issued in 2024. This figure does not include CSQs under the PEQ - Quebec Graduate stream which had unlimited admissions prior to the suspension that was just announced.

Key figures for Permanent Residents (2025)

- ▶ For 2025, Quebec expects to issue between 48,500 and 51,500 CSQs, with a target of new economic immigrants making up the majority.
- ▶ The suspension of the PEQ - Quebec Graduate stream is forecasted to reduce the number of CSQs issued under that stream to a maximum of 15,000 for 2025.

What's next?

The reduction in the issuance of CSQs under these key categories, particularly the RSWP/SWSP, may impact Quebec's appeal as a destination for international talent who seek long term status in Quebec. While the PEQ-Foreign Worker stream remains available - for those who meet the necessary language skill - it does require that they wait until they have gained at least 24 months of eligible work experience in the province before they can apply.

As announced on 24 October 2024, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's (IRCC) Immigration Plan highlights IRCC's Policy on Francophone Immigration. The Plan provides increased targets facilitating higher proportions of French-speaking permanent residents outside of Quebec (increased by 8.5% in 2025, 9.5% in 2026, and 10% in 2027 in comparison with the preceding Plan). The pause of the two CSQ programs may lead to greater interest in the other provinces, where they may benefit from IRCC's elevated targets and may be eligible immediately.

The Quebec Multi-Year Immigration Plan will be set in the spring of 2025, establishing the targets for 2026 onwards. The MIFI have announced that this exercise will also consider temporary residents in addition to permanent residents which is normally the only population considered. This is a new change in the same vein as IRCC's Immigration Plan. Similar to the IRCC Levels Plan for all of Canada, it is anticipated that there will be a reduction of the number of temporary residents admitted in Quebec.

EY Law will continue to monitor changes and will provide updates as announced. Should you have any questions with respect to these new measures, please do not hesitate to contact your EY Law LLP professional.

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