



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

June 2, 2020

B.C. immigration program helps fill labour gaps, but fraud safeguards need work

VICTORIA – The Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia has released a new report: [*Skills Immigration Stream of the British Columbia Provincial Nominee Program*](#).

The British Columbia Provincial Nominee Program (BC PNP) is an immigration program that lets B.C. attract and retain immigrants to help address labour market needs and contribute to economic development.

The B.C. Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Competitiveness nominates successful applicants to the federal government for permanent residency. Almost all nominees come through the Skills Immigration stream of the BC PNP—the focus of this audit.

What we found

Because of the BC PNP’s significance to the province’s economy, the audit examined:

- how well the ministry managed the program’s performance, which included looking at its targets and outcomes
- whether the ministry had effectively managed the risk of fraud

Acting Auditor General Russ Jones said both issues are key to knowing whether the ministry is choosing applicants who are most likely to contribute to economic growth.

“We found the ministry has managed the PNP’s performance to support the economy and fill labour gaps,” said Jones. “But we also found the ministry isn’t doing enough to manage fraud risks.”

Performance management—key findings

The audit found that the ministry always nominated the maximum number of workers allowed by the federal government. More than 85% of immigrants who became permanent residents through the program stayed in B.C. And more than 90% of those who have come since 2012 were still employed.

“Those are indicators the program is working as intended,” said Jones. “More could be done to refine targets and analyze the program’s design to maximize economic benefits, and that work is underway.”



Fraud—key findings

The audit found that the ministry had safeguards, but it had not done a structured assessment of all risks posed by fraud. “That’s key to knowing the ministry has the right safeguards in place and that they work,” said Jones.

The audit also found that certain expected safeguards were missing, and that the ministry had not consistently monitored the use of its safeguards.

Background

Economists predict 861,000 job openings in B.C. between 2019 and 2029, due to factors such as retirement and new jobs. Too many unfilled openings can hurt the economy by slowing business productivity, which impacts government’s ability to raise taxes to fund programs and services. Immigrants are expected to fill about 30% of the openings.

Each year the ministry reviews applications from thousands of potential immigrants to the PNP. Applicants must demonstrate their ability to contribute to the economy based on criteria such as work experience, education and language ability. Most also need a job offer.

“The PNP lets B.C. influence the skills and experiences that new British Columbians bring to the workforce, at a time when economists are telling us that we face significant labour and skill shortages in key areas of the economy,” said Jones. “It’s important to get things right.”

Most provinces have provincial nominee programs, which are set up with individual agreements with the federal government. In 2018, one in five nominees in Canada came to B.C. From 2015 to 2018, approximately 32,000 people (including nominated workers and their spouses and dependents) became permanent residents in B.C. through the PNP.

The audit covered the period from January 2017 to November 2019 and was completed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“While the pandemic may have an impact on the level of immigration to B.C., our audit findings will still be relevant to improving the program going forward,” said Jones.

Related link

[Video – BC PNP report summary](#)



OFFICE OF THE
Auditor General
of British Columbia

Russ Jones, Acting Auditor General, will answer questions pertaining to the report via a news conference.

News conference date: Tuesday, June 2, 2020

Time: 10:00 a.m. (Pacific time)

Dial-in information:

From Greater Vancouver: 604 681-0260

From elsewhere in Canada and the U.S.: 1 877 353-9184

Participant pass code: 44848#

During the question-and-answer session:

To ask a question: press *1

To exit the question queue: press *2

About the Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

The auditor general is a non-partisan, independent officer of the legislature who reports directly to the legislative assembly. The *Auditor General Act* empowers the auditor general and staff to conduct audits, report findings and make recommendations.

Contact us

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