
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development

B.C. EXPANDS PROGRAM TO HELP FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES

VICTORIA – The provincial government has expanded a two-year, foreign worker pilot project under its Provincial Nominee Program to address labour shortages in the food processing industries, announced Murray Coell, Minister of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development.

“This government is committed to ensuring B.C. businesses are able to attract and retain the employees they need,” Coell said. “We’re expanding our foreign worker pilot project to include certain food production and processing occupations to help offset a serious staffing challenge.”

The foreign worker pilot project, aimed at entry-level and semi-skilled foreign workers, was launched in February 2008 and allows eligible employers to retain foreign workers who have been in their employ for at least nine months by offering them an expedited process for permanent residency. Spouses and dependants of these workers are also eligible to immigrate under the program.

“By expanding the pilot, the Province is helping us retain valued foreign workers and substantially reduce the costs of having to replace them,” said Robin Smith, president of the BC Food Processors Association. “With greater ability to attract both Canadian and foreign workers, the B.C. food processing industry will be in a much stronger position to develop a permanent, reliable and stable workforce, which is essential for competitiveness.”

The B.C. food processing industry will need 7,800 workers in the next decade. Through the BC Food Processors Association, this sector has developed human resource development strategies to hire, train and retain domestic workers. The sector has also demonstrated a need to retain foreign workers through permanent immigration to fully meet ongoing workforce requirements.

Occupations now eligible for the pilot project include industrial butchers, meat cutters, process control and machine operators, and testers and graders for food, beverage and fish processing. With sufficient workers in these occupations, the B.C. food processing sector will be well positioned to continue to provide British Columbians with healthy, high-quality, local food products and to further develop export opportunities.

For more information, visit www.pnp.gov.bc.ca and follow the link under Strategic Occupations.

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