

In 1991 the Province of Quebec has signed the Canada-Quebec Accord with the Federal government. Under the 1991 Canada-Quebec Accord, Quebec has the sole and exclusive power to “select” prospective “independent immigrants” who intend to settle permanently in the Province of Quebec. The class of “independent immigrants” in Quebec is comprised of “workers” (commonly referred to as “Skilled Worker” applicants), “entrepreneurs,” “self-employed persons” and “investors” (collectively commonly referred to as “Business” applicants).

The Canada-Québec Accord, the most comprehensive agreement to date, gives Quebec selection powers over qualified immigrant and responsibility for integration services for those immigrants. Quebec is the only province to have signed an agreement of this nature.

In 2002, Quebec accepted approximately 21,600 Skilled Workers applicants and approximately 3,000 Business applicants.

A Skilled Worker application must be submitted to the Quebec Immigration office that serves the territory where the applicant lives. Quebec Immigration will issue a Certificate of Selection (a “CSQ”) to an applicant who satisfies Quebec’s independent selection criteria. A holder of a CSQ will then apply for a Canadian Permanent Resident Visa at a Federal Visa Office. Upon passing Federal statutory admissibility requirements (medical, criminal and security checks), a holder of a CSQ will be issued a Canadian Permanent Resident Visa.

Each Quebec Skilled Worker applicant must “pass” the “Employability” preliminary selection exam. This preliminary selection stage is a form of “paper screening,” in that no selection interview is held and the applicant is generally evaluated solely on the strength of the documents submitted.

An applicant who does not satisfy the “Employability” criteria will be refused a CSQ. An applicant who meets the “Employability” criteria will then undergo a second, more in-depth evaluation of his or her credentials as a potential immigrant to Quebec. Thus, “Employability” is in fact the most important of all of the Quebec selection criteria.

Quebec's approach to "independent" immigration – particularly in the case of Skilled Workers – is quite progressive. Applicants are assessed on a whole host of objective and subjective factors, and fluency in French is by no means an absolute minimum requirement. For many potential Canadian immigrants, Quebec may represent the best opportunity to begin anew in a Province that is open to newcomers, culturally dynamic, cosmopolitan, and economically viable.

The Quebec Government has made it clear that it intends to live up to its commitment to attract an ever-increasing number of immigrants to the Province. More resources have been allocated to immigration- and integration-related services.

Although intent to reside in the Province of Quebec is one of the requirements of applying to the Quebec provincial program, this intent can always change (as any other personal preference in life) upon arriving to Quebec and, thus an immigrant may not be forced to reside in that or any other province in Canada, once he/she becomes a permanent resident of Canada.