



Immigration program aims to boost Canada's high-tech sector

By [Nicholas Keung](#) Tues., May 21, 2019

For Hafsa Imran, the decision to come to Canada to work in the high-tech sector was a no-brainer.

“At this point no one in IT wants to go to the United States, and Canada is the natural choice,” said the 26-year-old software engineer, who arrived from Pakistan last September after she was brought in by

her Toronto employer under the federal Global Talent Stream pilot program.

The program is aimed at attracting top talent to Canada's tech industry by fast tracking approvals; the federal government can issue a work permit in less than two weeks, while in the non-migrant-friendly U.S. under President Donald Trump and in protectionist Europe, the process can take months.

“With a work permit, we can see if Canada is for us or not. If we like it, we have a pathway to stay as permanent residents,” Imran said. “It’s a win-win.”

According to the federal government, since the launch of the two-year program in 2017 to this past January, more than 1,000 Canadian companies have used it to hire more than 4,000 highly skilled foreign workers. The program received such positive feedback from employers and applicants that Ottawa announced in the March budget that it was making the pilot permanent.

As part of the application process, an employer is required to develop a company-specific plan that outlines their commitment to generate lasting benefits for Canada, including creating jobs for Canadians and investing in both training and skills development.

The program has spurred the creation of 21,000 new jobs for Canadians as well as 3,500 paid co-op positions, and these employers have invested \$9.3 million into skills training for Canadians, according to Employment and Social Development Canada.

“In the global race to attract the investment of innovative companies, competitors in the European Union as well as the United States have considerably larger pools of talent and labour to draw from than we do in Canada,” said immigration department spokesperson Nancy Caron. “By facilitating the faster entry of top talent with unique skill sets and global experience, the goal is to help innovative companies in Canada grow, flourish and create more jobs for Canadians.”

Head hunters for Canadian high-tech companies said since Global Talent Stream was turned into a permanent program, they have noticed a surge of interest from foreign high-tech workers.

Global Skills Hub, a Toronto-based company that helps Canadian startups find international talent, said 249 overseas high-tech workers responded to its recruitment efforts in the month before the government's March announcement. Since then, the number has shot up to 2,370.

The company's co-founder Yousuf Khatib said Canada lacks senior tech talent, many of whom have been poached by Silicon Valley. A recent report by the Information and Communications Technology Council projected that Canada has to fill 216,000 tech-related jobs by 2021.

“Whether it's a startup or big corporation, every company has become a tech company and is looking for IT talent,” said Khatib, whose firm also handles the work permit application process for clients. “This program issues foreign tech workers with a two-year work permit and gives them a chance for permanent residence. The process is quick and it can stay relevant to the needs of the fast-changing tech world.”

Alisha Patel, vice-president of finance and human resources of Toronto-based TWG, a software company, said the Global Talent Stream helps Canada fill the gaps with foreign workers who can, in turn, assist in helping Canadians develop their skills.

<https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2019/05/21/immigration-program-aims-to-boost-canadas-high-tech-sector.html>