

## ENSURING FLEXIBILITY IN THE BC PNP PROGRAM TO ALLOW EMPLOYEE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

### Opening Statement

The BC Provincial Nominee Program (BC PNP) is an immigration system that allows skilled and semi-skilled workers to gain permanent residency in BC. To help ensure these skilled workers can grow and develop here in BC and continue to serve the labour market needs of BC employers, additional flexibility is needed in the BC PNP regarding the requirement for two years of “directly related work experience” as this disadvantages people who are promoted or advanced by their employer.

### Background

The BC PNP program has several ‘streams’ through which individuals can apply. One such stream is the “Skills Immigration” stream which is intended for people with the skills, experience and qualifications needed by BC employers and who want to become permanent residents and live in BC.

As part of this immigration process, applicants must meet a number of criteria including having accepted a full-time, permanent and skilled job from a BC employer and having at least two years of directly related work experience to that job. In some situations, this two-year requirement can cause challenges for employers in developing and progressing workers into the roles needed by the business as it disadvantages immigration applicants who receive job promotions.

The BC PNP defines “directly related work experience” based on the National Occupation Classification system. This system organizes and classifies all types of jobs based on their broad category and their skill level. Jobs are given a classifying NOC code, plus are assigned a skill level ranging from A (most skilled) to D (least skilled).<sup>1</sup>

The BC PNP only counts employment as “directly related work experience” if it is in the same specific NOC code, or if it is in a different but related NOC code but the skill level is equal to or greater than the applicant’s current job offer. In this instance, the applicant must demonstrate how this different job is related. Importantly, any experience in any NOC code from a lower skill level will not be counted as “directly related work experience.”

This can cause challenges for employers in situations where employees have performed well and may be able to take on more advanced positions with their employer. Due to the above rules, any promotion to a new NOC code in a higher skill level would invalidate the work experience accumulated in the lower skilled job.

As an illustrative example, consider a financial services business with employee with a work permit in the role of Financial Sales Representative. This job is classified as NOC code 6235 and has a skill level of B. If this employee excels and the business has the need for them to take on a more advanced role, such as a Financial Planner, Mortgage Broker or any managerial position, the employee would be disadvantaged by taking this promotion because each of those new roles would represent a different NOC code and be from a higher skill level (level A). This means any work experience in the Financial Sales Representative role would **not** count towards the “two years of directly related work experience” needed for their immigration application.

---

<sup>1</sup> The NOC skill codes are:

A - Occupations usually require university education.

B - Occupations usually require college education, specialized training or apprenticeship training.

C - Occupations usually require secondary school and/or occupation-specific training.

D - On-the-job training is usually provided for occupations.

The result of this “directly related work experience” requirement and how it is applied in relation to NOC codes and skill levels can result in employees refusing to take on new assignments and businesses not fully utilizing the skilled talent they have access to. The provincial government should explore ways to allow greater flexibility in this aspect of the BC PNP to help both BC employers and future newcomers.

#### THE BURNABY BOARD OF TRADE RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government:

1. Consult with the business community on ways to increase flexibility in the BC PNP “Skills Immigration” stream to ensure the requirement for two years of “directly related work experience” does not unintentionally prevent employees from advancing, or employers from accessing the skilled workers they need.