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To: Berezowski Business Immigration Law “Borderlaw®” Clients
From: Nan Berezowski, Barrister & Solicitor
Date: January 4, 2018
Re: Pilot Program Extended for In Canada Spouse & Partners

I have good news. The Canadian government has recently extended a pilot program that allows spouses and common-law partners of Canadian citizens and permanent residents to obtain ‘Open’ Work Permits while they await permanent residence processing (from within Canada). The pilot program has been extended to January 31, 2019.

In the past, spouses and common-law partners had to wait for an approval-in-principle of their residency application before they could apply for a work permit. This often compounded the difficulties that families faced in reuniting in Canada.

The pilot program allows spouses and partners of Canadian citizens and permanent residents currently living in Canada at the same address as the sponsor and holding a valid temporary status (visitor, worker, student) to obtain work authorization while they wait for approval of their permanent residence application, which takes approximately a year. There are two ways to take advantage of the pilot program. Spouses and partners who have already received an “approval in principle” of their permanent residence application may apply for an Open Work Permit online; it is also possible to apply when you file the application for Sponsorship & Permanent Residence. The Pilot Program does not apply to spousal sponsorship applications made outside of Canada.

The pilot program allows spouses to start work sooner, benefiting families as well as Canadian companies. Open Work Permits take roughly four months to process.

There was some expectation that the Pilot program would be made a permanent part of the spousal sponsorship process. However, at least for now IRCC is keeping the program as a pilot. Couples contemplating a spousal sponsorship application should keep this in mind as there is no guarantee the Pilot program will be extended beyond January 31, 2019. Please do not hesitate to contact our office should you require advice or assistance.

Nan Berezowski (BA, LL.B, LL.M) compiled this Update with the latest available information for the general information of Berezowski Business Immigration Law clients and other interested parties. This Update is not comprehensive and should not be relied upon without appropriate legal advice.