KPMG

GMS Flash Alert

Immigration

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Canada – Express Entry Rewards High-Wage Occupations; LMIA No Longer Required for Job Offers

Starting November 3, 2026, Canada's Express Entry system will again award points for job offers, but only for occupations Canada classifies as "high wage." Candidates will also gain additional points for Canadian work experience in those same occupations. A Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) will no longer be needed for a job offer to count.[1]

This is the first time employers have been able to move the needle on an employee's Express Entry ranking since job offer points were eliminated in March 2025. Profiles must be updated before November 3 to capture job offer points, and invitation rounds will pause for up to two weeks while scores are recalculated.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Express Entry is and continues to be a highly competitive process. Candidates are ranked by a points score, and only the candidates whose scores meet or exceed the cut-off for a particular invitation round are invited to apply for permanent residence. A difference of as little as a single point can determine whether an employee is invited to apply.

For employers, three things change as of November 3:

- The job offer letter is valuable again. A job offer in a top-tier occupation is worth up to 100 additional points, with no LMIA required.
- Occupation classification now drives outcomes. Eligibility turns on the employee's National Occupational Classification (NOC) code.
- Additional employer scrutiny. Without an LMIA, immigration officers will test the offer itself: whether the job is real, needed, and compliant with relevant employment law provisions.

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Background

Job offer points are now once again a determinative factor in success in Express Entry. Below is a summary of how job offer points have affected Express Entry applications starting from the inception of the Express Entry program in 2015.

Date	Rule	What it meant in practice
January 2015	Express Entry launches; an LMIA-backed job offer earns 600 points	A job offer virtually guaranteed an invitation. Employers had to obtain an LMIA, which was slow and costly.
November 2016	Job offer points cut to 50 (200 for senior managers); certain LMIA-exempt work permit holders can qualify	Job offers became tie-breakers. Canadian experience and language scores were key factors in the calculation of applicant's CRS scores.
March 2025	Job offer points eliminated entirely	In response to fraud, including the sale of LMIAs to candidates seeking additional points, employers lost the ability to influence an employee's ranking in the Express Entry pool.
Ongoing 2026	IRCC consults on wider Express Entry reform; final report published October 15[2]	Proposals included a high-wage factor, changes to age, spousal and education points, and a single federal skilled program.
October 16, 2026	High-wage changes announced, effective November 3	Job offer points return, limited to high-wage occupations, with no LMIA required.

Key Highlights

What changes on November 3

Candidates earn points through one of two routes, whichever scores higher. (*The two routes cannot be combined.*)

What counts as "high wage"

An occupation is high wage if the Canada-wide median wage for that NOC code is at least 1.3 times the median wage of the overall workforce. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) has published 186 eligible NOC codes, sorted into three tiers. The employee's own salary is irrelevant. A junior software engineer and a principal engineer in the same NOC earn the same points.

Typical examples by tier:

- **2.0x tier**: financial managers, HR managers, engineering managers, IT managers, lawyers, physicians, university professors.
- **1.5x tier**: software engineers and developers, data scientists, cybersecurity specialists, civil, mechanical and electrical engineers, management consultants, pharmacists, registered nurses.
- **1.3x tier**: accountants and auditors, financial analysts, HR professionals, architects, web developers, engineering technologists, medical technologists.

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Senior management occupations: Senior management positions may fall within different wage tiers, depending on the applicable NOC code and area of responsibility. Depending on the specific NOC code and area of responsibility (e.g., construction, broadcasting, other business services, etc.), senior managers may qualify under different wage tiers. Eligibility and the applicable tier are determined by the occupation's NOC classification rather than the employee's job title or actual salary.[3]

Route 1: Canadian work experience

Candidates keep the existing points for the length of their Canadian experience (up to 80 points for five years). Those with at least 12 months in a high-wage occupation receive additional bonus points:

High-wage tier	Bonus points (12+ months in Canada)
2.0x the median	70
1.5x the median	40
1.3x the median	20

Experience must be in an approved high-wage occupation, gained in Canada within the past 10 years. The combined maximum for this factor is 150 points (140 with an accompanying spouse or partner).

Route 2: A qualifying job offer

The offer must generally be for full-time, continuous employment lasting at least one year after the candidate becomes a permanent resident. Job offers in occupations outside the high-wage list still earn no points.

High-wage tier	Job offer points
2.0x the median	100
1.5x the median	70
1.3x the median	50

Based on the points calculation, candidates would generally earn higher points under Route 1 as opposed to Route 2 once they have gained at least one year of Canadian work experience.

No LMIA required

Starting November 3, an LMIA is no longer needed for a job offer to earn points. A temporary public policy also removes LMIA requirements for job offers used to qualify under the Federal Skilled Worker and Federal Skilled Trades programs, for candidates invited on or after that date.

Instead, an officer will assess whether the offer is genuine, including whether the employer:

- is actively operating the business making the offer;
- has a reasonable need for the role and can meet the offer's terms;
- has complied with federal and provincial employment and recruitment laws.

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The officer will also assess whether the candidate can perform the work and is likely to accept and carry out the role.

Transition

- Existing profiles are rescored automatically for Canadian experience.
- Job offer details must be entered manually before November 3 to be counted.
- Invitation rounds pause for up to two weeks from November 3 while IRCC recalculates scores.

What this means for your workforce

- **Biggest winners**: recent transferees and foreign-based hires in senior, technical and professional roles. For them, a job offer letter can be worth 50, 70, or 100 additional points.
- **Steady gainers**: employees already working in Canada in high-wage roles will receive the experience bonus automatically.
- **No change**: employees in occupations not on the list, including many skilled trades and service roles. Their scores do not change, but cut-offs are expected to rise as high-wage candidates move up. Some may now be better served by a provincial nominee program or a category-based draw.

KPMG INSIGHTS

Considerations for HR and mobility managers

Before November 3

- Identify affected employees. List foreign national employees in the Express Entry pool, or planning to enter it, whose NOC appears on the high-wage list.
- Prioritize job offer letters where they improve the score. Focus on employees with under 12 months of Canadian experience, recent transferees, and foreign-based hires. For most long-tenured staff, a job offer letter may not increase competitiveness.
- Update Express Entry profiles. Job offer details must be in the employee's profile before November 3 to make the employee more competitive for potential draws.
- Check status runways. Flag anyone whose work permit expires within six months and confirm a back-up plan in case invitations are delayed.

Ongoing

- Adopt a job offer letter policy. Decide who can sign, what template is used, and which roles qualify. An offer must be genuine and one the company can honour.
- Audit NOC assignments. The NOC must reflect the actual duties of the role, not the job title.
- Maintain supporting documentation. Employers can expect officers to request evidence demonstrating that the role is genuinely needed, the business is actively operating, and recruitment and compensation practices comply with applicable employment standards.
- Employers could avoid issuing employment confirmation or job offer letters for permanent residence purposes until the employee has received an Invitation to Apply (ITA). If the employee leaves the role or the job offer is withdrawn, associated points may no longer apply.

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KPMG Additional Notes

More change is likely. The consultation report signals possible revisions to age, spousal, education and French-language points, as well as the introduction of a single federal skilled worker program. New Express Entry categories for 2027 are typically announced in February.

KPMG Law LLP can help you map affected employees, review NOC classifications, prepare compliant job offer letters, and plan around the draw pause. If assignees and/or their programme managers have any questions or concerns about the scope of the updated framework, its application and potential impacts, and appropriate next steps, they should consult with their qualified professional or a member of the GMS team with KPMG in Canada (see the Contacts section).

ENDNOTES:

1 Government of Canada, "Changes to Express Entry for high-wage occupations," updated on October 16, 2026.

2 Government of Canada, "2026 Consultations on Express Entry reforms – Final report," updated on October 16, 2026.

3 Government of Canada, "High-wage occupations list," updated on October 16, 2026.

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Contacts

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