

# Red Tape Review

## Progress Report



Immigration, Refugees  
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés  
et Citoyenneté Canada

Canada 

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## Context

IRCC is responsible for administering Canada's immigration, refugee, citizenship, and passport programs. In fulfilling this mandate, the Minister and the Department are entrusted with the development and enforcement of regulations under key legislative frameworks including the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, the *Citizenship Act*, and the *Canadian Passport Order*.

These responsibilities are central to ensuring that Canada's programs continue to play a vital role in advancing national priorities, protecting individuals, and maintaining public trust in how people come to Canada, become citizens, and access secure travel documents.

## Executive Summary

In support of the Government's economic and productivity agenda, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) is leading a Red-Tape Reduction initiative. This initiative reinforces the Government's commitment to smarter regulation, enabling faster decision-making, better service delivery, and stronger alignment with provincial and territorial frameworks.

IRCC has consistently sought to modernize regulatory tools, striving to reduce red tape and administrative burden for its diverse stakeholders. These include applicants, legal representatives, businesses and academic institutions that rely on temporary and permanent residents, and Canadian citizens. This report highlights the approach IRCC used in this review and outlines a series of initiatives that aim to simplify processes, eliminate duplication, and make the system more responsive to the needs of those it serves.

The Department undertook a review of initiatives that have and will contribute to reducing red tape. This began with consultations across policy teams to review existing processes and regulatory frameworks, as well as existing achievements, with the goal of identifying areas where adjustments could reduce complexity,

duplication, or inefficiencies. IRCC remains committed to streamlining operations and reducing red tape. Although this report was developed within a 60-day timeframe, the analysis continues to evolve, deepening and expanding efforts to simplify regulations and improve overall efficiency. The Department undertook a dual approach, looking both forward and backward, to build a robust inventory of actions that support transparency and operational improvement.

The Department's innovative approach explored available opportunities, both existing and new, to simplify the regulatory system and reduce unnecessary complexity, to make the system easier to navigate for applicants and more efficient for government to manage. From automating routine decisions and simplifying fee structures, to enabling faster access to global talent and removing unnecessary requirements, these changes support economic growth, uphold program integrity, and ensure that Canada's immigration system remains efficient, effective, trusted, and responsive. IRCC will continue to advance initiatives focused on simplifying internal procedures, leveraging digital tools, and improving coordination across programs to sustain and amplify these impacts.

# Progress Achieved

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IRCC is actively advancing efforts to modernize its legislative and regulatory authorities. Recent and ongoing actions include reviewing existing frameworks to enhance flexibility and responsiveness, updating digital systems to improve service delivery, and engaging partners to co-develop forward-looking policy solutions. Regulatory updates are underway to reduce administrative burden. These efforts aim to deliver more transparent, efficient, and client-focused outcomes. The following initiatives reflect tangible actions the Department has taken to modernize its regulatory approach and deliver meaningful improvements across its programs:

## **Item 1: Ministerial Instruction Authorities under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA)**

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### **Context**

In the past, IRCC and its stakeholders had been disadvantaged by not having a nimble mechanism with force of law to keep pace with evolving immigration concerns that formed faster than the traditional Governor in Council regulatory process could address. This situation applied diversely, to adapt tranches of programs within the existing immigration case inventory, to quickly manage arrivals in light of urgent global events, and to establish economic program sandboxes to test new programs before making them permanent.

### **Actions**

Starting in 2008, and up to most recently with amendments to IRPA through the *Budget Implementation Act, 2023, No. 1*, Parliament has created modern legislative tools to provide Ministerial authority to successfully manage and balance social and economic program inventories (process cases faster, adhering to minimum program integrity thresholds), to establish temporary economic immigration programs, and to codify, when necessary, halts or pauses on entry to Canada to facilitate crisis response.

While these Ministerial Instruction authorities provide nimble processes and reduce red tape, they also contain legislative safeguards. For example, they require publication in the *Canada Gazette* and they apply only to select immigration streams. For economic pilots, they have a maximum lifespan of 5 years, and a maximum annual intake of 2,750 cases so as not to impugne the overall annual levels objectives.

## Outcomes

The Minister of IRCC has used Ministerial Instructions as a tool to manage immigration programs, for example, to maintain priority processing in the family class for spouses and dependents, and to introduce and adjust intake control methods (e.g., expression of interest). Ministerial Instructions have also enabled the use of flexible family reunification pathways, such as the super visa, to facilitate multiple entries and stays of extended duration for parents and grandparents of Canadian citizens and permanent residents. Ministerial Instructions have also been used to end “flagpoling” for post-graduation work permits (PGWP) at the border. This change necessitates that PGWP applicants use IRCC’s online application systems, thus reducing duplication and inconsistencies in applications, as well as freeing up border officers to focus on border enforcement activities and reducing wait times at the border. A large number of economic pilots have been tested via Ministerial Instructions, to support new avenues of Canadian business support, as well as regionalization efforts. Many of these have also been codified into the Regulations, given their positive outcomes. Some examples include the Start-Up Visa program and the Atlantic Immigration Program. Ministerial Instructions were also used during the global COVID-19 pandemic to protect Canadians and frontline responder personnel by limiting entrance to Canada, and requiring processes (e.g. online application) to limit face-to-face exposure.

## Item 2: Use of Automated Decision Making

### Context

Over the past several years, IRCC has steadily advanced its use of automation to improve program efficiency, consistency, and responsiveness. From early pilots to sophisticated tools, IRCC has embraced automation as a means to streamline decision-making, reduce processing and enhance client experience. These efforts have been guided by a commitment to transparency, fairness, and excellence in service delivery.

### Actions

In 2016, 2019, and 2023, respectively, IRPA, the *Citizenship Act*, and the *Canadian Passport Order* were amended to create authorities enabling the use of electronic systems and automation in those lines of business.

### Outcomes

Starting in 2018, in the immigration program, automated decision making was implemented in high volume routine processes. This includes positive eligibility determination, generating letters to clients, and summarizing information for processing officers in complex cases. Similarly, automated decisions have been used in the passport program for simplified adult renewal applications.



### **Item 3: Predictability and Streamlining in Immigration Fees**

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#### **Context**

Prior to 2020, the permanent resident processing fees had not been adjusted since their inception under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations* (IRPR) in 2002. Due to the length of this period, a gulf developed between the original fee amounts and the real cost recovery of the programs. Adjusting the fees was administratively cumbersome.

#### **Actions**

In the spring of 2020, changes to the Regulations were made to increase the fees by a reasonable degree. A formula was built into the authorities so that the fees were increased automatically (by operation of law) by the consumer price index every two years.

#### **Outcomes**

Permanent resident processing fees are now automatically adjusted, predictably, and based on an accepted market standard (inflation). Therefore, the fees now adhere more closely to cost recovery, limiting any financial burden on taxpayers, and applying the best value to applicants. The fees are automatically changed at transparent intervals, and notice of their imminent change is provided every two years, in the *Canada Gazette*.

### **Item 4: Reciprocity and Clarity for Canadians and Partners in Youth Mobility Agreements**

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#### **Context**

The International Experience Canada program manages Canada's bilateral youth mobility agreements and arrangements with countries and foreign territory partners. Both facilitate two-way flows of Canadian and foreign youth, aged 18–35, for up to two years – working holidays, actualized through the issuance of special work permits. Since the program's inception, there was an asymmetry in Canada's participation, since Canadian officers could not impose duration limits on foreign youth visiting Canada, whereas other countries and foreign territories could and did impose such limits on Canadian youth.

#### **Actions**

In December 2024, after robust external consultation, the IRPR were amended to give Canadian officers the authority to tailor work permits to reciprocate duration limits imposed by foreign partners, and to safeguard Canadian youth participants against unfair asymmetry. The Regulations were also amended to clarify that officers' authority to impose work permit limits was explicitly linked to working holiday agreements and arrangements, rather than being under the general guise of "Canadian interests".

#### **Outcomes**

The amended Regulations have supported a strong and fair reciprocal program that supports international youth mobility and helps young people explore new cultures, languages and societies, while developing life skills and improving their future job prospects. Such experiences are particularly important in today's global economy. The ability to impose work restrictions when necessary has ensured that working holidays are fair between Canada and its partner countries.

# Next Steps

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To further advance regulatory modernization and reduce red tape, IRCC plans to implement the following initiatives in the short and medium terms. These actions are designed to streamline service delivery, eliminate duplication, and enhance responsiveness through modern legislative and regulatory tools.

## Item 1: Asylum Reform (Bill C-2)

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### **Context**

Canada's asylum system continues to face significant strain due to the increasing number of asylum claimants. Changes are needed to improve the efficiency and integrity of the overall system. The proposed amendments related to the asylum system and included in Bill C-2 would help address challenges faced by Canada's asylum system by creating processing efficiencies and ensuring a more consistent application process to eliminate redundancies and duplicative requirements. The changes would also repeal elements of the Designated Country of Origin (DCO) regime which have not been in effect since the de-designation of all DCO countries in 2019.

### **Action**

IRCC is proposing to develop regulations in support of the new measures. These include, but are not limited to, creating a single online application for submission of documents and information for all claims whether filed inland or at a port of entry, as well as ensuring that only completed packages, where all Ministerial Due Diligence activities have been completed, are referred to the Immigration and Refugee Board for scheduling and adjudication at the Refugee Protection Division.

### **Expected Outcomes**

These reforms would create efficiencies for both claimants and the processing system. The measures would streamline intake and harmonize Canada Border Services Agency and IRCC's processes. They would also benefit claimants, as applicants would be required to submit all their information, including their basis of claim form, to IRCC's online refugee protection portal.

## **Item 2: Certain Measures in Respect of Applications and Documents (Bill C-2)**

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### **Context**

IRCC currently does not have broad authority to cancel, suspend, or change active immigration documents and applications for those documents in its inventory. As a result, Canada is ill-equipped to effectively respond to large-scale emergencies, safety and security threats, or other scenarios that could undermine the integrity and orderly management of migration and the security of its border. Bill C-2 introduces new authorities that would give the Government of Canada greater control over its immigration documents when needed, in the public interest. The goal is to ensure managed migration to Canada and protect the safety and security of Canadians and the Canadian border.

### **Actions**

These new authorities would authorize the Governor in Council, when in the public interest, to make orders that would prevent certain applications from being accepted for processing, or suspend or terminate their processing. It also proposes powers to cancel, suspend, or vary immigration documents issued under the Act, or to impose or vary conditions on those documents. For the application of such orders, individuals could be required to appear for examination, answer questions truthfully, and provide relevant documents or evidence. Safeguards would include mechanisms for internal review, public reporting, and transparency to ensure that decisions are fair and accountable.

### **Expected Outcomes**

The new authority would ensure that the Government of Canada has the tools needed to react more swiftly to unforeseen situations that threaten Canadians, such as those that threaten national security, or respond to public health emergencies. These authorities would ensure that only those who are eligible to travel to Canada can apply for and/or use immigration documents. Internal review and public reporting measures of decisions would make the cancellation process more transparent to clients and Canadians.

## **Item 3: Information Sharing in the Context of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship (Bill C-2)**

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### **Context**

Amendments included in Bill C-2, the Strong Borders Act, will provide IRCC with the authority to share within the department and with any federal or provincial department or agency or Crown corporation, personal information regarding a person's identity, status, and the content or status of their issued documents. These amendments would also authorize the making of regulations to share immigration information with federal partners for the purposes of cooperation.

### **Actions**

IRCC proposes to develop regulations to limit this new authority and develop internal policies, operational guidance, and safeguards to implement the new authority responsibly. Written information-sharing agreements or arrangements would also be required for IRCC to disclose information with partners relying upon the new authorities.

### **Expected Outcomes**

The new authority would enable the Government to share information more easily when administering or enforcing legislation or exercising powers or duties under a lawful authority, while adding greater transparency as to how personal information is collected, used, and disclosed. Clients would benefit from a strengthened immigration system through information-sharing, by ensuring fairness and reducing fraud or security risks.

#### **Item 4: Elimination of Redundant Medical Exam Requirement for Protected Persons**

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##### **Context**

Protected persons (individuals who have been granted asylum or refugee status) are currently required to undergo an immigration medical examination when applying for permanent residence, even though they have already completed similar assessments during the asylum process. This duplication imposes unnecessary costs and delays on a vulnerable population.

##### **Actions**

IRCC is proposing to formalize the removal of this requirement through regulatory amendments. The Department will work closely with health and security partners to ensure that the change maintains public safety and program integrity. Operational updates and targeted communications will be developed to ensure clarity for applicants and service providers.

##### **Expected Outcomes**

The removal of this redundant requirement would streamline the application process for protected persons, reduce costs, and speed up processing. The Department anticipates efficiency gains and a reduction in administrative workload. Success will be tracked through improved metrics, and feedback from stakeholders.

#### **Item 5: Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) – Full Delegation of Intent-to-Reside and Economic-Establishment Assessments to Provinces and Territories (PTs)**

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##### **Context**

The PNP is a key immigration pathway that allows PTs to nominate individuals for permanent residence based on local labour market needs. Historically, eligibility criteria have been shared between IRCC and PTs, leading to occasional overlaps and inefficiencies.

##### **Actions**

IRCC is currently updating the IRPR to redefine authorities under the PNP. This amendment aims to reduce duplication and clarify respective federal and provincial/territorial responsibilities by ensuring that PTs would be solely responsible for the assessment of the two criteria that constitute eligibility in the Provincial Nominee Class (i.e. candidates' "ability to economically establish" and "intent to reside" in the nominating PT).

##### **Expected Outcomes**

This change is expected to enhance program responsiveness to regional economic needs, reduce duplication, and improve processing efficiency. It would also strengthen federal-provincial collaboration and accountability.



## **Item 6: Consolidation and Formalization of Work Permit Exemptions under the Global Skills Strategy (GSS)**

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### **Context**

On June 12, 2017, the Government of Canada launched the GSS to help Canadian businesses attract top global talent more efficiently. A key component of this strategy was the introduction of new work permit exemptions for short-duration work in Canada. These exemptions were implemented through a public policy under Section 25.2 of IRPA, allowing certain highly skilled foreign workers and researchers to enter Canada without a work permit for short-term projects.

### **Actions**

The Government is now proposing a regulatory amendment to formally incorporate these exemptions into the IRPR. This change would provide clarity and ensure all authorities for temporary foreign workers are consolidated in the Regulations, ensuring their consistent application across cases.

### **Expected Outcomes**

By embedding the exemptions in the Regulations, IRCC aims to enhance legal clarity, reduce reliance on temporary public policies, and provide greater certainty for employers and foreign workers. The change supports Canada's broader economic and innovation goals by facilitating faster access to global talent for time-sensitive projects.

## **Item 7: Simplify the Changing Employers Process for Temporary Foreign Workers**

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### **Context**

On May 6, 2020, IRCC launched a measure to enable temporary workers who hold employer-specific work permits, and who want to start working in a new position or for a new employer, to do so while the Department processes their application for a new employer-specific work permit. This measure was launched during the COVID-19 pandemic to support workers seeking to change their position or employers in light of pandemic-related business closures. It was implemented expeditiously through public policy under Section 25.2 of IRPA. This measure is supported by stakeholders and the recommendations of the 21<sup>st</sup> report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration entitled, *Conditions for Growth: Reconsidering Closed Work Permits in the Temporary Foreign Workers Program*.

### **Actions**

IRCC is proposing a regulatory amendment to embed a streamlined work permit process for temporary foreign workers when changing employers in the IRPR. This would mean that workers changing employer situations would benefit from the authority to work without a permit while awaiting a decision on their work permit application.

### **Expected Outcomes**

The proposed change would provide clarity to temporary foreign workers and employers, simplify the work permit application process, and ensure all authorities for temporary foreign workers are consolidated in the IRPR. It also prioritizes workers already in Canada to reduce the inflow of new workers unless necessary.

## Item 8: Digital Platform Modernization (DPM) Program

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### Context

As part of IRCC's initiative to reduce administrative burden and improve service delivery, the Digital Platform Modernization (DPM) program is transforming the department's aging digital infrastructure. The goal is to replace legacy systems with a modern, agile, and client-centric platform that supports faster, more efficient, and transparent processing of immigration, refugee, and citizenship services.

### Actions

The DPM program is being implemented in phases to ensure minimal disruption and continuous improvement. Key actions include:

- Launching a new online account system to simplify and streamline client interactions.
- Enhancing data analytics capabilities to support evidence-based decision-making and optimize application processing within levels space.
- Improving interoperability with federal, provincial, and international partners to reduce duplication and improve coordination.
- Developing governance structures, operational guidance, and feedback mechanisms to ensure the platform evolves in line with user needs and departmental priorities.

### Expected Outcomes

DPM will afford IRCC the opportunity to shape a more modern, responsive service delivery environment resulting in more efficient data exchanges. This will allow for more effective implementation of its programs including the information-sharing initiative within Bill C-2, as well as ongoing modernization and streamlining initiatives. Specifically, the DPM initiative is expected to:

- Significantly reduce administrative burden for clients and staff by automating routine tasks and eliminating redundant processes.
- Improve client experience through more intuitive, accessible, and transparent digital services.
- Increase operational efficiency and reduce processing.
- Strengthen program integrity and responsiveness through better data integration and analytics.

