

Mobility: immigration alert

April 2021

Canada

Canadian government promises investment in Canadian immigration in new budget announcement

Executive summary

On 19 April 2021, the Canadian government released its 2021 budget 'A Recovery Plan for Jobs, Growth, and Resilience', a plan to finish the fight against COVID-19 and ensure a robust economic recovery.

Background and analysis

Budget 2021 is described as a historic investment to address the specific wounds of the COVID-19 recession, put people first, create jobs, grow the middle class, set businesses on a track for long-term growth, and ensure that Canada's future will be healthier, more equitable, greener, and more prosperous.

In her speech, Minister of Finance Chrystia Freeland made it clear that the Canadian government has an intention to draw even more talented, highly skilled people to Canada, including international students. Investments in this budget will support an immigration system that is easier to navigate, and more efficient in welcoming the dynamic new Canadians who add to Canada's strength.

Key immigration budget items

- ▶ **\$430 million to IT infrastructure:** Building a better IT digital infrastructure to allow Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to be more innovative and flexible in how and where it processes applications. The focus of this commitment is the replacement the current case management system (known as GCMS).
- ▶ **\$110 million over three years to enhance the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP):** This will be aimed at creating program and infrastructure to support vulnerable workers and maintaining program integrity. \$54.9 million will be allocated for increased compliance inspections and creating a system/program to allow vulnerable workers to easily obtain open work permits if they are employed in an environment where they have been abused by their employer (\$6.3 million allocated).
- ▶ **Accelerated pathways to Permanent Residence:** The Canadian government has released a plan to grant permanent residence status to over 90,000 essential services workers and international graduates who are already in Canada, through a temporary accelerated pathway and additional pathways may be announced in the coming months.
- ▶ **\$15 Million to support racialized newcomer women:** This will be allocated to programs to support newcomer women to Canada to gain English or French skills and help secure meaningful employment in Canada.
- ▶ **Streamlining Express Entry:** The Canadian government is planning to propose amendments to IRPA to modify the selection factors under Express Entry to allow the government to pick candidates who best meet Canada's labour market needs.

Implications and considerations

The budgetary items related to immigration outline an intention to increase immigration to Canada as part of an overall economic recovery plan. These new investments in immigration are also in line with the October 2020 announcement from Immigration Minister, Marco Mendicino, on the plan to compensate for the current shortfall in admissions due to the pandemic, and ensure Canada has the workers it needs to fill crucial labour market gaps and remain competitive on the world stage.

This budget will be important for foreign nationals who are looking to come to Canada for work as increased funding will mean additional resources for the IRCC and is likely to result in a more efficient system of application processing. It is also promising for foreign nationals who are already in Canada and looking to make Canada their permanent home as they may be able to take advantage of the amendments to express entry and accelerated pathways to permanent residence.

Should you have any questions with respect to these new announcements, please do not hesitate to contact your EY Law professional.

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