





Citizenship and Immigration Canada

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News Release — A review of the past 12 months and beyond at Citizenship and Immigration Canada “It’s been a busy time, but we are not done yet,” says Minister Jason Kenney

Ottawa, August 24, 2012 — With historically high numbers of new immigrants arriving in Canada, the Government of Canada has introduced a number of significant reforms over the past year to strengthen the integrity and economic responsiveness of the immigration system.

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“Our government has a plan for a faster, more flexible, responsive and secure immigration system that will better meet Canada’s economic needs while continuing to uphold our humanitarian commitments,” stated Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Minister Jason Kenney. “With our changes, immigrants will see their lives improve, and Canadians will see the economy grow.”

In the past year alone, the government has strengthened our immigration system by:

- introducing and passing the *Protecting Canada’s Immigration System Act*, which reforms the asylum system to make it fast and fair, combats human smuggling and allows for the collection of biometric data from visa applicants;
- introducing and passing *Economic Action Plan 2012*, which makes the economic stream faster and more flexible to contribute to jobs, growth and prosperity. The changes cleared the way for a new, modernized Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP) by eliminating the old backlog that was leading to wait times of more than seven years for skilled worker applicants;
- introducing the *Faster Removal of Foreign Criminals Act*, which would close avenues used by convicted foreign criminals to delay deportation and stay in Canada.

There have also been a significant number of regulatory changes. As part of the government’s commitment to family reunification, it has:

- introduced the Parent and Grandparent Super Visa, valid for up to 10 years for visits of up to two years, which has been a great success with nearly 3,700 successful applications in its first six months;
- reduced the backlog for sponsored parents and grandparents.

Other regulatory and program changes crack down on fraud and abuse in the system by:

- taking action against marriage fraud by barring sponsored spouses from sponsoring a new spouse for at least five years and proposing a new two-year period of conditional permanent residency for some sponsored spouses;
- cracking down on crooked immigration representatives, thereby helping people who want to immigrate to Canada by protecting them from exploitation and abuse;
- combating residence fraud in the citizenship and permanent residence programs by enhancing program integrity measures and working with the Canada Border Services Agency and the [RCMP](#) on investigations into cases suspected of false representation and fraud;
- launching a new tip line through the Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) Call Centre where tips on suspected citizenship fraud cases may be reported;
- reforming the Interim Federal Health Program to act as a disincentive for people not in need of Canada’s protection and to ensure that failed claimants do not receive health care more generously than what is available to Canadians, while continuing to protect the health and safety of Canadians;
- protecting vulnerable workers by prohibiting the issuance of visas and work permits for foreigners coming to work in strip clubs, massage parlours and escort agencies.

Recognizing the important role immigration plays in our economy, and the growing labour shortages in parts of the country, including in key industries, over the past few years the government has also:

- proposed improvements to the [FSWP](#) to place greater emphasis on selection criteria that have shown to

contribute to better labour market outcomes, so that Canada can select skilled workers who would be able to integrate more rapidly and successfully into the Canadian labour market;

- reduced by over three-quarters, from 640,000 to close to 150,000, the total number of people in the Federal Skilled Worker backlog of applications prior to February 27, 2008;
- proposed the creation of a new Federal Skilled Trades Program;
- proposed changes to the Canadian Experience Class to make permanent residence even more accessible to talented skilled workers proficient in English or French, with Canadian educational credentials and work experience who are already doing well in Canada;
- improved the Live-in Caregiver Program by speeding up the process of issuing open work permits to caregivers who have completed the requirements of the Program, so they can establish their own homes and seek jobs in other fields;
- increased the number of provincial nominees and, in doing so, improved the geographic distribution of newcomers across Canada;
- in collaboration with provincial and territorial partners, introduced new minimum language requirements for immigrants under the Provincial Nominee Program, thereby helping social, economic and cultural integration;
- expanded a pilot project with the Government of Alberta to help Alberta employers seeking highly skilled foreign workers to fill an acute, regional labour shortage;
- introduced a new immigration stream to attract and retain international PhD students;
- proposed changes, as part of the Educational Credential Assessment Initiative, which would introduce a mandatory requirement that immigrants under the FSWP have their education abroad assessed against Canadian education standards by designated organizations;
- tripled its investment in settlement services outside of Quebec since 2005–2006, while ensuring fair funding across Canada for services like free language classes;
- launched a new website promoting innovations in the assessment and recognition of international qualifications.

In keeping with Canada's tradition of having one of the most generous immigration and refugee programs in the world to help the world's persecuted, the government has increased resettlement targets by 20 percent. Canada's resettlement program continues to be one of the top three largest in the world. This includes an increase to the Refugee Assistance Program. In addition, a new Refugee Appeal Division at the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada has been introduced for refugee claims made in Canada.

"We are continuing to make changes to create a faster, more flexible immigration system," said the Minister. "We have made great strides in the past year, but we know there is always more work to do and look forward to even more improvements and reforms in the year ahead."

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Photo of Minister Kenney available at: www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/photos/high-res/index.asp.

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Building a stronger Canada: Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) strengthens Canada's economic, social and cultural prosperity, helping ensure Canadian safety and security while managing one of the largest and most generous immigration programs in the world.

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