Immigration

IRCC data reveals over one million applications are in backlog

By Quinn Patrick, True North Wire - September 26, 2024

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Canada continues to deal with an immigration backlog that has now reached over 1,078,300 applications across different categories.

The backlog is up 7.57% on a month-on-month basis, according to data from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

The IRCC published its latest data on Tuesday, which offers a comprehensive look into the status of people at various procedural stages, including temporary residency applications, permanent residency and citizenship.

According to the latest figures, there were a total of 2,420,800 applications in process as of August 31, with a backlog of almost 1.1 million applications delayed.

The delays are across the citizenship, permanent residence, and temporary residence categories and present a significant problem for potential immigrants.

"The growing number of applications in the backlog is alarming, and the elephant in the room are those for temporary status, including visitor visas, study permits, and work permits," specialist in citizenship and immigration law Sergio Karas told True North.

"Unless this category is addressed, the situation will continue to deteriorate. There is too much demand, and the federal government has already acknowledged that the current pace of application growth is unsustainable. A drastic reduction in the numbers is required until the balance is restored."

Citizenship applications have decreased by 1.02% since July, while permanent residence applications have seen a slight 0.60% increase over that period, indicating better processing.

Temporary residence applications on the other hand have surged since July, up 11.21%.

These applications have seen by far the largest increase, due to the growing demand for international student, visitor and work visas.

"The growing number of study permits poses the main problem, because after graduation students may qualify for work permits, and most expect to apply for residency, putting further pressure on the system," said Karas.

"Also, the skyrocketing number of refugee claimants adds to the pressure on the open work permit category."

According to Karas, the government must "find ways to limit refugee claims and drastically reduce granting study permits while prioritizing work permits for those whose skills are urgently required by employers in skilled labor positions."

Citizenship applications are processed within service standards, meaning the IRCC's "commitment to process your application in a certain amount of time under normal circumstances" dropped by 1.50%, marking a continued trend in recent months.

Temporary residence applications also dropped by 7.77%, meaning the bulk of these applications are now likely in the backlog.

However, permanent residence applications processed within service standards increased by 8.04%.

According to the IRCC, 20-30% of applications in the backlog will be processed by the summer of next year. The agency projects that this can be achieved by expanding technological innovations and better resource allocation.

Additionally, the agency suggests making reforms to help streamline the application process.

However, the agency is also at the mercy of the increasing demand for temporary residence visas, as this category persists in having the largest backlog as well as total applications.

Applicants in the category are expected to experience extended processing times as the backlog currently holds around 738,900 applications.

"Although some measures to reduce study permits and low-wage work permits have been announced recently, they fall short of what is required to clear the backlog and reduce pressure on the adjudication process," noted Karas.

"Many study permit holders whose post-graduate work permits are expiring and who have not been selected for residency are fabricating bogus refugee claims so they can apply for open work permits and remain in Canada for years to come. That is an abuse, it clogs the system and must be stopped immediately."

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