

To,

Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration/Comité permanent de la citoyenneté et de l'immigration

House of Commons / Chambre des communes

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Honorable Committee members,

I am one of the immigrants for Express Entry Permanent residents who are badly affected by the COVID-19 situation around the world. I am here to represent thousands of immigrants who are in a similar helpless situation as mine. In this wait of almost 10 months, people in similar circumstances as mine joined lots of online groups to look for some support and guidance. COPR (Confirmation of Permanent Residence) approved Before March 18, 2020, are exempted to travel but thousands of us couldn't receive an Authorisation letter to travel even after a year and hence still stranded.

All this while those COPR holders who were approved post 18 March 2020 have their COPR expired as they aren't exempted to travel. These numbers have also been added to the workload of IRCC creating a backlog that will take years to move on.

As we have suffered already for one year from these backlogs, we have some suggestion on How expired COPR holders can be handled as below:

Suggestions for handling Expired COPRs in 2021(Approval Pre or Post March 18, 2020):

1. A blanket extension can be considered.

If not

1. An online Portal should be launched where people can fill in their Ready to travel dates and Quarantine plans etc.
 - a. All the applications should be handled chronologically or FIRST IN FIRST OUT not giving unfair advantage or picture to anyone.
 - b. A separate team should handle this portal. So that this extension process does not increase the workload of officers handling regular proceedings of IRCC.
 - c. Since they are already approved applications if their documents are valid the client and case processing officer should have an indication such as a green symbol that the person is ready and as well as eligible to travel and an instant Authorization letter should be issued.
 - d. The Portal should be transparent and auto communicative so that if their medical or PCCs are not valid the client can get communication and update it upfront in the system if they are ready to travel.
 - e. If after a certain time say 1 year the person is not ready to travel, a final 3-month extension should be given to the client, as this cannot go forever.
 - f. There should be a timeline reflected which gives an idea of the waiting time of their application to the client. Knowing when their turn is due helps ease unnecessary anxiety and contact attempts via mails, MPs, Phone calls, and Social media.
 - g. Clear communication always helps, even if there is a waiting period of months, if we were aware, we would have been less desperate.

Finally, be compassionate towards people that the Pandemic and COVID situation is in none's control but how we respond to it, is certainly in our control. The world seems to be getting adjusted with a new style of working and it is time that IRCC adopts it too. Many people like us left their jobs, took kids out of school, sold their assets, vehicles and are living life out of their packed bags for almost a year now.

Over these months, we have some observations and recommendations where things didn't go as the planned and increased workload for IRCC as below. Hope IRCC committee members will find it useful:

1. Raising **Ready to Travel Webforms**:

IRCC asked for raising a Ready to Travel webform to those whose COPRs expired for almost 10 months and finally took this back on 23 December 2021.

Observations:

People misused this facility by sending web forms every day or multiple web forms every day (as many as 43 webforms per day) which clogged the system too much. A generic reply which took 5 working days earlier took almost 30 days in December before our hands were tied for not sending any more web forms. These people got their Travel authorization letter and shared their experience in multiple online forums and groups. Somehow when people shared their success stories after doing so, it motivated other people to do the same and it further clogged up the system.

Reason: Some impatient people got successful while those who waited patiently are still waiting.

People could not see the action of their webforms.

Suggestion: IRCC may work on some tab in the GCKey where the client could see their raised webforms, status -read/unread and action taken so that they see what they are doing with the system and ruining it for many others as well as slowing it down.

Such people should not get priority in decision making, it should be First Come First Serve.

An immediate auto-reply when their web forms are received, read, or attached to an application would also be helpful.

1. Taking it to **Social Media**:

People took it to IRCC official Handles on Facebook, Twitter and wrote all sorts of comments, pleas, allegations, abusive remarks because that is where nobody could stop them from writing their heart out.

Observation:

People who made noise on Twitter sailed through this, earlier than others and shared their success stories which motivated others to do the same. IRCC's Official accounts are flooded with such comments. Even I took it to social media due to inaction on my application.

Suggestion: A more transparent system is required where the concerned are aware that their communication is reaching the concerned person. For example: seeing their webforms attached to their profile. COPR extension process should be First IN First out which means those who applied first should receive communication or approval first than those who didn't apply or applied at a later date.

1. **Miscommunication/No communication**:

IRCC sent emails to different clients at different times of the year asking to send information for their COPR extension but never reverted to the same.

Observation:

An example of mail is attached which was sent to me on 2nd July 2020, I and many other booked flight tickets, quarantine stay only to never hear back on the plans that were asked but never read. There were different versions of this mail but people never received an update or decision on the information sent.

Suggestion: One common policy should have been planned and followed before sending a communication to the affected clients despite different visa offices across the world.

Miscommunication led to confusion and resulted in the aforementioned actions from the affected people.

1. Contacting Local **MPs**

A lot of us contacted Local MPs and asked for help. Some of them were able to help initially but eventually, even the IRCC's Information center for MPs also got flooded with too many emails as more and more people started contacting them.

Observation/Suggestion: If there were clear communication and process set from the beginning maybe this could have been easily avoided.

A system in place will help IRCC and the people affected, likewise, I am sure the Committee must have been working on something more efficient already, if the committee finds these suggestions somewhat helpful please consider them for the mental health of thousand Expired COPR holders who wish to travel in near future.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Yours Sincerely,

Kavita
