



Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the Upcoming Federal Budget

August 7, 2020

Recommendations

- 1) Ensure that despite the disruption to applications for permanent residency and travel restrictions in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Canada continues to prioritize immigration and returns to its targets as soon as possible.

Introduction

The Immigration Consultants of Canada Regulatory Council (ICCRC or the Council) is pleased to share its thoughts with the Standing Committee on Finance for its pre-Budget consultation. We believe that coming through the COVID-19 pandemic, Canada's immigration system will face unique challenges as global travel is reduced due to the virus' spread. Likewise, we also feel that in order to have a strong recovery, Canada's immigration system must return to accepting target levels of immigration as soon is possible. Newcomers have enriched Canada's social fabric and made significant contributions to our economic well-being. Canada's immigration system – with its strong, efficient and trusted operation – can continue this legacy with little impact as long as an increased focus is applied to returning to our existing targets.

Impact of COVID-19

On March 18, 2020, the Canadian government took extraordinary steps in response to the global spread of the coronavirus by imposing travel restrictions to Canada. This has had a dramatic effect on permanent resident additions to Canada in the intervening months. In April, permanent resident arrivals dropped 84% over 2019 arrivals in the same time periodⁱ. While arrival numbers are beginning to recover, there are still reports that arrivals could be down by as much as 170,000 in 2020ⁱⁱ. This impact will have negative consequences across society and the economy as families will have to wait longer to be reunited and businesses will not be able to access the talented workforce they need to keep Canada competitive. Compounding this will be the backlog of applicants that will need to be addressed as operations return to normal and restrictions on travel begin to ease. There is also the ever-present concern that a second wave could lead to a return of strict travel restrictions, increasing the backlog.

In 2018, the Conference Board of Canada studied what would happen to Canada if it were to shut its doors to newcomers completely. The modelling showed that the economic growth of Canada's economy would slow significantly while Canada's overall population would become much older on average, placing more strain on important social services and our health care system. The value of immigration to our society makes it an important component the government can support by bolstering efforts to return Canada to its immigration targets as quickly as possible.

College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants Act

In 2019, the *College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants Act* passed into lawⁱⁱⁱ. The Act provides for the ICCRC to be continued as the College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants

and provides the College with enhanced self-regulatory powers and a broadened mandate to govern citizenship and immigration consultants, and international student immigration advisors in the public interest. The Act is awaiting proclamation.

Over the past year, the ICCRC has been busy preparing for continuance as College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants and has taken many steps to ensure that the College is established on a solid footing during and after the transition. Moving from a designated self-regulatory organization (SRO) to a statutory SRO is an important advancement in the professionalization of immigration consulting in Canada – one that will bring with it increased professional standards, transparency, and public accountability. Simply put, transition of ICCRC to the College will strengthen our immigration system in Canada.

In September of 2019, ICCRC held a Special General Meeting where members overwhelmingly supported a Special Resolution authorizing the Council to transition to the College. Throughout 2020, the Council has made several advances toward increasing the standards of the Immigration Consulting profession in accordance with the commitments made following the 2017 Report of the House of Commons Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. Several of these initiatives such as the Essential Competency Profile; the tiered membership strategy; and, a Quality Management Program are outlined below:

The Essential Competency Profile for RCICs developed this past year represents the basis on which upcoming postgraduate diploma education requirement will be founded. This profile was developed in direct consultation with RCICs from across Canada and represents a very important step in the ongoing evolution of the profession.

This Fall, Queens' University, the sole accredited English-language provider, will begin enrolment into their Graduate Diploma Program in Immigration Law for a January 2021 intake. This post-graduate diploma program will become the new standard in prerequisite education for individuals seeking entry to the profession and will replace the current, college-level, accredited immigration practitioner programs.

Over the next two years, the Council/College also intends to implement a tiered membership strategy for new entrants to the profession. Individuals will become licensed on a provisional basis, pending completion of a period of monitored experience and final assessment. This initiative will greatly strengthen the competence and quality of service provided by new consultants.

ICCRC's new Quality Management Program, beginning in August of 2020, will replace and improve upon the Council's former Compliance Audit and Continuing Professional Development Requirements.

In addition to developing measures to increase the standards of the profession, the Council has also undertaken a comprehensive rebranding exercise to develop a specific and distinctive brand for the new College to assist with its' transition from a public point of view.

Also during 2019 - 2020, our Professional Conduct Department has continued its increased efforts toward resolving outstanding complaints and discipline matters in a streamlined and strategic manner. The Department has also developed an Unauthorized Practitioner strategy to support assumption of the College's new authority to take action against unlicensed individuals who hold themselves out as providing immigration advice or services.

Despite the hardships of the 2020 Pandemic, ICCRC management and staff, along with the Board of Directors, have been working diligently and effectively toward enhancing the stability and effectiveness of the organization as it transitions to become the new College, while at the same time ensuring that it has remained focused on carrying out the goals of the Strategic Plan.

We believe that the profession as well as its' regulator have been evolving; and will continue to evolve, in a positive manner for many years to come. As the regulatory council transitions, we remain open and interested in educating consultants, the general public and elected officials who regularly work with prospective Canadians on applications to help them understand the role of the College in to the ongoing regulation of immigration and citizenship consultants across Canada.

About the ICCRC

ICCRC is Canada's national regulatory body overseeing regulated immigration and citizenship consultants and international student advisors. Our federal mandate stems from the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) and the Citizenship Act which require anyone providing Canadian immigration or citizenship advice or representation for a fee or other consideration to be a member in good standing of ICCRC. Exceptions are members in good standing of a law society in Canada or the Chambre des notaires du Québec. We fulfill our mandate by establishing entry-to-practice requirements, licensing professionals, receiving, investigating, and adjudicating complaints and administering a disciplinary process to sanction professionals who fail to meet the regulator's standards. Our work is done to promote and protect the public interest by giving Canadians and newcomers confidence in Canada's immigration system.

References

ⁱ Colin Singer (2020, June 9). Canada Immigration Drops 78% as April Sees Just 4,140 New Permanent Residents. Immigration.ca. Retrieved from <https://www.immigration.ca/canada-immigration-drops-78-as-april-sees-just-4140-new-permanent-residents>

ⁱⁱ Royal Bank of Canada (2020). COVID-19 derails Canadian immigration. Retrieved from <https://royal-bank-of-canada-2124.docs.contently.com/v/covid-19-derails-canadian-immigration-report>

ⁱⁱⁱ College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants Act, SC 2019, c 29, s 292