

Mobility: Immigration alert

October 2023

Canada

Visa processing delays at the Canadian High Commission in India

Executive summary

On Thursday 19 October 2023, Minister Marc Miller, Canada's Minister of Immigration, held a press conference to provide an update on the situation between Canada and India, specifically as it relates to immigration processing. Amid the ongoing diplomatic dispute between the two countries, the Canadian government has announced a reduction in staff at the Canadian visa office in New Delhi, which will in turn negatively impact processing times for visas being handled at that office. While continued processing of applications is reassuring, clients throughout the Canadian immigration process may start to experience delays throughout the various stages of the immigration process over the coming months.

Background

Due to ongoing diplomatic tensions between Canada and India, visa services in both countries have been impacted for nationals seeking visas to the other country. While the Indian High Commission and consulates in Canada have recently stopped processing visa applications for Canadian citizens, Canada has announced that it has reduced the number of Canadian immigration officers in India from 27 to five. This latest action will result in delays for Indian citizens applying for visas through the Canadian High Commission in India.

Key developments

The significant reduction in Canadian staff will impact operations locally in India for both Canadian citizens and Indian foreign nationals. Canada has been forced to halt consular services in Chandigarh, Mumbai, and Bengaluru

(Bangalore), leaving only the New Delhi High Commission operational, until further notice. While 89% of visa applications filed for Indian foreign nationals are adjudicated by immigration staff outside of India, the five immigration officers who remain in India will shift their priorities to urgent cases that must be performed from within India, including support for Canadians residing in India and urgent processing and visa stamping.

What this means

Foreign nationals in India can expect delays over the next few months in overall processing times, responses to their inquiries and the passport submission process for visa stamping. This delay could have important consequences for individuals who are relying on these immigration services to travel to Canada, including temporary foreign workers, international students, and permanent residents. Canadian employers may also be impacted as they may struggle to obtain the necessary work authorizations and travel visas in a timely manner for the foreign workers they are looking to hire.

It is important to keep in mind that the diplomatic dispute between Canada and India is ongoing and it is unclear what developments may unfold with time. Individuals and employers are strongly encouraged to start any Canadian immigration process for Indian foreign nationals residing in India as early as possible considering anticipated delays and backlogs. We will continue to monitor the situation closely and provide further updates once available.



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