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May 26, 2022

Via email: [Minister@cic.gc.ca](mailto:Minister@cic.gc.ca)

The Honourable Sean Fraser, P.C. M.P.  
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship  
365 Laurier Avenue West  
Ottawa, ON K1A 1L1

Dear Minister Fraser:

**Re: Recommendations to Improve Processing Time and Procedures of Work Permit Applications for Visa Office and GSS Processing**

I write on behalf of the Immigration Law Section of the Canadian Bar Association (CBA Section) to urge you to take immediate steps to improve the processing time and procedures for Global Skills Strategy (GSS) and Outside Canada Work Permit Applications at visa offices.

The CBA is a national association of 36,000 members, including lawyers, notaries, academics and students across Canada, with a mandate to seek improvements in the law and the administration of justice. The CBA Section has approximately 1,200 members across Canada practicing in all areas of immigration and refugee law.

The CBA Section is concerned with the lack of consistency, transparency and communication in Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's processing of Work Permits at visa offices and through the Global Skills Strategy system. This has led to inordinate processing times of over 12 months at certain visa offices which affect Canada's reputation and business competitiveness.

The CBA Section's comments and recommendations to improve the processing standards of these applications are set out below.

**Issue 1: Lack of responsiveness and transparency from visa offices**

In the past few months, CBA Section members have reported considerable difficulties communicating with visa offices to provide updated information and documents. Documents and enquiries submitted through the visa office specific webform often take weeks to be updated to the file, and often remain unanswered and unaddressed. The automatic and boiler plate responses to web forms received do not constitute individualized responses and offer no insight into the processing of the Work Permit application. Many inquiries to visa office Program Managers are also unanswered.

Furthermore, because files are often transferred by IRCC within the centralized network without notice, counsel often does not know which office to contact to follow up about a long pending file.

The inability for counsel to communicate effectively with visa offices causes unnecessary delays and administrative errors that could be resolved with a simple email response. When requested web-form documents are not added to the Work Permit application, erroneous refusals occur. This also damages Canada's reputation in providing a reasonable standard and quality of service.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. Set a reasonable service standard for the time to respond to inquiries sent to the webform, visa office email addresses, and Program Managers.**
- 2. Inform counsel or the applicant through a message or letter in the online application as to which visa office is processing the Work Permit application.**
- 3. Post details on the IRCC policy as to when a Work Permit application would be processed and when it would be transferred to a visa office for processing within the region.**

### **Issue 2: Unreasonable processing times at certain visa offices and discrepancies between visa offices**

In the past year, several visa offices, such as those in New Delhi and Abu Dhabi, have posted processing times for Work Permits that stretch to 12 months and beyond. At a time when labour needs are crucial in Canada, lengthy processing times have created extensive hardship for Canadian employers who need critical workers as soon as possible to staff their businesses and recover post-COVID-19. This has the potential to damage Canada's competitiveness in the global market when companies looking to expand in Canada see these unreasonable Work Permit processing timelines, even in GSS-eligible high skilled occupations.

There is a marked inequity in Work Permit processing times for nationals of certain countries. Faster visa offices take one to two months to process, while others may take over 12 months. IRCC Work Permit processing times are posted for each country where the client is "applying from" – varying for example from four weeks in Azerbaijan to 12 weeks in Brazil, 48 weeks in India and 49 weeks in Nigeria. However, IRCC operates within Global Case Management and a Centralized Network of resources, a network made stronger with the advent of mainly online applications. Distribution of the workload outside the regions where applications originate would reduce the great disparity in processing times globally. This workload-sharing practice appears to have begun, as CBA Section members sometimes receive decision letters from visa offices not in the region of the applicant (e.g., visa office in France issuing a decision for an application made by a Congolese citizen and resident).

These marked disparities adversely impact workers and also their family members who apply for spousal Work Permits, study permits and visitor visas to reunite with their spouses and parents in Canada. These differences lead to a pronounced sense of injustice that contradict the objectives of IRPA s. 3(1)(f) to support by means of consistent standards and prompt processing, the attainment of immigration goals; and s. 3(1)(d) to see that families are reunited in Canada.

Posted processing times on the IRCC website are often inaccurate for many visa offices and actual processing time may be longer. To ensure transparency for employers seeking to hire temporary

foreign workers, processing times must be updated regularly to ensure accuracy with the actual processing speed.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

4. **Prioritize the reduction of lengthy processing times for Work Permit applications at visa offices such as New Delhi and Abu Dhabi by increasing staff or mobilizing IRCC processing resources in other locations to eliminate processing time disparities regionally and to ensure that processing times remain standard globally.**
5. **Post updated and accurate processing times for visa offices online.**

#### Conclusion

The CBA Section urges you to prioritize the reduction of Work Permit processing times for visa offices and set service standards for communication messages with the visa offices and GSS processing teams. We stress that the lack of transparency and communication, and inequitable processing times undermine the principal objectives of IRPA and deserve immediate attention. Within IRCC's Centralized Network, it is possible to reallocate processing resources to alleviate processing time disparities.

The CBA Section appreciates the opportunity to raise concerns on this issue. We would be pleased to discuss our recommendations, offer additional insights, and assist with the development and implementation of relevant policies and regulatory amendments.

Yours truly,

*(original letter signed by Véronique Morissette for Kyle Hyndman)*

Kyle Hyndman  
Chair, CBA Immigration Law Section

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