

Federal government looking to international students to help address Canada's labour shortage

October 17, 2022

In light of Canada's post-pandemic labour shortage and unprecedented interest from immigration applicants around the world, the federal government has introduced various initiatives to strengthen the country's immigration systems. Most recently, Canada has focused on giving international students more opportunities to work and remain in the country during periods of study.

Canada temporarily lifts off-campus work week cap

In a temporary measure of note, the government has cancelled its 20-hour-per-week limit on the number of hours that eligible post-secondary international students can work off campus during their Canadian studies. This change is prescribed for a specific period, from Nov. 15, 2022, to Dec. 31, 2023. Additionally, provided their application is approved, foreign nationals who submitted a study permit application by Oct. 7, 2022, will also benefit from this temporary change to the rules governing their work in Canada.

The temporary removal of the working hours cap for eligible students is designed to help international students gain valuable work experience during their time here. Given that most post-secondary international students are allowed to work on or off campus, and the fact that nearly half of them have reported earning income during their studies in Canada, this change also provides a significant boost in the labour force available to Canadian employers.

However, study permit holders will not be allowed to compromise their full-time study schedule as a result of the temporary removal of the hours cap. To avoid misuse of this temporary legislative change, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) has announced that any study permit holder who stops studying or reduces their course load from full- to part-time study will not be eligible to work off campus. However, it remains the case that students eligible to work on campus are not subject to a cap on hours for on-campus work.

Pilot project to automate study permit extensions

IRCC is also looking at other ways of processing study permit extensions and, as such, is exploring the concept of automating these types of extension applications through a pilot project. This project will be limited to the types of applications that have a consistently high approval rate. For example, in 2021, IRCC processed nearly 119,000 study permit extension applications, with an approval rate of 97%.

This pilot project will involve a reduced group of applicants and expedite the extension of their study permits. However, the automated process will neither refuse applications nor recommend refusals: any decision to refuse an application will continue to be made by an officer. As with any automation process, should the project be met with success, it would free up government resources and allow for more complex applications to be **assessed and processed on a more efficient timeline.**

The federal government also enabled the following measures to speed up the immigration application process:

- a transition period for international online students; and
- an 18-month extension for students whose work permit has expired, such as post-graduation work permits (PGWPs).

These new initiatives represent an acknowledgement by the Canadian government that immigration, and in particular the work provided by international students, will be crucial **to addressing Canada's labour shortage.**

[BLG Beyond Business Immigration](#) is a one-stop shop for the strategic advice and high-volume tailored solutions that your global mobility team needs to achieve its international talent goals. Global organizations come to us because of our reputation, reach and relationships, including at senior levels of government agencies in Canada, the U.S. and abroad. We invite you to reach out to any of the key contacts below for help.

By

[Brian Dingle](#), [Noah Burshtein](#), [Milica Bijelic](#)

Expertise

[Labour & Employment](#), [BLG Beyond Business Immigration](#)

BLG | Canada's Law Firm

As the largest, truly full-service Canadian law firm, Borden Ladner Gervais LLP (BLG) delivers practical legal advice for domestic and international clients across more practices and industries than any Canadian firm. With over 725 lawyers, intellectual property agents and other professionals, BLG serves the legal needs of businesses and institutions across Canada and beyond – from M&A and capital markets, to disputes, financing, and trademark & patent registration.

blg.com

BLG Offices

Calgary

Centennial Place, East Tower
520 3rd Avenue S.W.
Calgary, AB, Canada
T2P 0R3

T 403.232.9500
F 403.266.1395

Ottawa

World Exchange Plaza
100 Queen Street
Ottawa, ON, Canada
K1P 1J9

T 613.237.5160
F 613.230.8842

Vancouver

1200 Waterfront Centre
200 Burrard Street
Vancouver, BC, Canada
V7X 1T2

T 604.687.5744
F 604.687.1415

Montréal

1000 De La Gauchetière Street West
Suite 900
Montréal, QC, Canada
H3B 5H4

T 514.954.2555
F 514.879.9015

Toronto

Bay Adelaide Centre, East Tower
22 Adelaide Street West
Toronto, ON, Canada
M5H 4E3

T 416.367.6000
F 416.367.6749

The information contained herein is of a general nature and is not intended to constitute legal advice, a complete statement of the law, or an opinion on any subject. No one should act upon it or refrain from acting without a thorough examination of the law after the facts of a specific situation are considered. You are urged to consult your legal adviser in cases of specific questions or concerns. BLG does not warrant or guarantee the accuracy, currency or completeness of this publication. No part of this publication may be reproduced without prior written permission of Borden Ladner Gervais LLP. If this publication was sent to you by BLG and you do not wish to receive further publications from BLG, you may ask to remove your contact information from our mailing lists by emailing unsubscribe@blg.com or manage your subscription preferences at blg.com/MyPreferences. If you feel you have received this message in error please contact communications@blg.com. BLG's privacy policy for publications may be found at blg.com/en/privacy.

© 2025 Borden Ladner Gervais LLP. Borden Ladner Gervais LLP is an Ontario Limited Liability Partnership.