

Hello Mansoor,

Global migration has been upended by the pandemic. From widespread travel restrictions to constraints on our settlement partners to employees working remotely, it has had a significant impact on Canada's immigration system. Yet we've taken quick action and come a long way since the onset of the pandemic – providing additional resources where they are needed most, streamlining our processes and ramping systems back up.

In the face of great challenges, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is rapidly adapting, innovating and evolving to best serve Canadians and those who wish to come here. One of the very first things we did was implement priority processing for those who need it most. We see vulnerable people and family members seeking to reunite as among those who are most urgent. We are processing those as quickly as possible. We've devoted additional resources to speed up processing, including increasing staff devoted to spousal sponsorship processing by 66%. We've improved technology and digitized more of our operations, and increased the amount of processing happening virtually. This includes our permanent resident landings process, which has now actually reduced the amount of time it takes to land a permanent resident compared to the pre-pandemic process. As of February 19 2021, IRCC welcomed more permanent residents for this year than for the same period in 2020, before the pandemic.

IRCC is scanning and digitizing many paper-based applications so that these applications can be processed remotely by IRCC employees across the global network. Before the pandemic, IRCC was moving towards a more integrated, modernized and centralized working environment in order to help speed up application processing globally. We move applications around our global network to ensure they are processed as efficiently as possible, which means applications may not be processed at or decided upon by decision-makers at the office closest to where a client lives, or where an application is submitted. Regardless of geography, all decisions are made in accordance with the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and Regulations and we continue to ensure that clients have access to services close to home.

We've begun to reopen IRCC offices across Canada, and Visa Application Centres around the world. We've revisited some policies and are exploring more ways to adapt to the current situation and create the flexibility to respond to these unique circumstances. Finally, we have implemented adaptive measures to extend submission deadlines for applicants who face delays due to COVID-19 restrictions – and no application in progress will be closed or refused as a result of ongoing service disruptions related to COVID-19. Many of the aforementioned issues – as well as service disruptions and increased flexibility around submission of supporting documents – have all had an impact on processing times. Because there are so many different variables involved, we are unable to provide specific timelines at this time.

As we confront the pandemic and chart a course for our recovery, attracting skilled immigrants — who bring the talents and skills our economy needs to thrive — is a central part of our plan. With travel restrictions limiting who can come to Canada, IRCC is pioneering new ways to engage those who are already here and hard at work. Individuals who qualify for the Canadian Experience Class program have demonstrated that they have at least a year's worth of skilled Canadian work experience and sufficient proficiency in one of Canada's official languages. Since about 90% of candidates are in Canada, they are less likely to face obstacles when providing a complete application, and are not subject to the same travel restrictions as those coming from abroad.

Also note that permanent residence applicants who are abroad remain subject to the current travel restrictions, but there are some exemptions. Those who received their Confirmation of Permanent Residence (COPR) on or before March 18, 2020 are eligible to travel to Canada. People who received their COPR after March 18, 2020, and who are an [immediate family member](#), as defined under the travel restriction exemption, and are being sponsored by a Canadian citizen, person registered under the Indian Act or permanent resident are also eligible to travel to Canada. People with a COPR who are living in and coming from the U.S. can come to Canada, provided they are coming for a non-discretionary purpose. IRCC continues to prioritize the processing of applications for those who are eligible to travel to Canada at this time.

Have a lovely evening,
Shannon Ker