

Ottawa announces new pathway for permanent residency for foreign nationals currently in Canada

COVID has made plan for 401,000 newcomers in 2021 unlikely, say immigration lawyers



David Garson, Sergio Karas

BY [Aidan Macnab](#) / 16 Apr 2021 / [Share](#)

The Ministry of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship has announced a new pathway to permanent residency to “essential temporary workers” and “international graduates,” who are currently in Canada.

To be eligible, candidates must have at least one year of Canadian work experience in one of the health-related occupations or pre-approved essential occupations, or have completed an eligible Canadian post-secondary program within the last four years, but no earlier than Jan. 2017. There are 20,000 spots for those in healthcare, 30,000 for essential workers and 40,000 for international students. The Ministry has also launched three additional streams with no intake caps for Francophones or bilingual candidates. The Ministry will be accepting applications from May 6 to Nov. 5, 2021, or until 90,000 total permanent residents have been admitted.

The Ministry's announcement said it hopes the pathway will help Canada achieve its "2021 Immigration Levels Plan" of 401,000 new permanent residents.

COVID has made it unlikely Canada can achieve its desired immigration numbers, says David Garson, managing partner of Garson Immigration Law and a certified specialist in immigration law.

But in focussing on prospective new Canadians who are already in Canada, the Ministry is concentrating on the "low-hanging fruit," when there could be candidates with more essential skills, who may be of greater benefit to the country, beyond its borders, says Garson.

"I know they are here, and they're working to prove that they can succeed in Canada. I understand that logic," he says. "But the interesting part of that is that [the Ministry] hired more immigration officers to deal with this. And they're working remotely. So, it's not like they can't do these types of applications for individuals who are not here to begin with."

"I mean, to ignore them, I think is wrong, because I think there is a tremendous amount of talent outside the country as well."

The inclusion of all international students, whatever their program of studies, is "questionable," says Sergio Karas, principal of Karas Immigration Law PC and a certified specialist in citizenship and immigration Law.

"The problem with this program for international students is that it doesn't prioritize what occupations they should be in," says Karas. "Because obviously we need international students, at certain level, who are graduating in Canada – but not everyone."

International students who graduate from a public institution can also already apply for express entry under the Canadian Experience Class, he says.

Also eligible for express entry are most of the healthcare occupations listed, making their inclusion "redundant," says Karas. He also doubts there are enough of these professionals – which include doctors, dentists, and pharmacists – currently in Canada, to fill 20,000 spots, he says.

"To facilitate residency for healthcare workers is always a good idea... foreign doctors are very much needed here in this country," says Karas. He advocates for a separate immigration channel, just for doctors, to attract candidates from abroad, similar to the U.S.'s J1 Visa Physician Program.

On Oct. 30, 2020, Marco Mendicino, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, tabled the 2021–2023 Immigration Levels Plan. Along with 401,000 planned newcomers for 2021, the Ministry hopes for 411,000 in 2022 and 421,000 in 2023.

The Ministry said in its announcement on the new pathway that Canada is facing "serious demographic challenges" as baby boomers retire. While in 1971, there were 6.6 working age Canadians for every senior, today there are three and by 2035, there will be only two.

"Without newcomers, future generations will end up paying more to sustain the public services we rely on," said the announcement.

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