
Questions & Answers

Exemptions from air travel restrictions

1. Q: When will these exemptions be in place? Should people being exempted rush to Canada immediately?

A: With travel restrictions in place in many countries around the world and international air travel reduced during the COVID-19 outbreak, we don't recommend that those who are being exempted from travel restrictions immediately try to travel to Canada, and like the air and border restrictions, implementation of the exemptions will take a few days. We expect to announce the implementation of these exemptions early next week (week of March 23, 2020).

2. Q: Why are you exempting temporary foreign workers from the air travel restrictions?

A: Temporary foreign workers play an indispensable role in maintaining Canada's food supply. Canadian agricultural and agri-food producers rely on workers from abroad to ensure the food security of all Canadians, and we need to ensure food production continues during this difficult period. The arrival of farm workers in the spring is essential to ensure planting and harvesting activities can take place.

In addition, we want to ensure that other vitally important workers, like health-care workers, caregivers, emergency service providers, truck drivers, among others, are able to come to Canada, as they will play an important role in the effort to keep Canadians healthy and safe.

3. Q: Why are you exempting international students from the travel restrictions?

A: We have heard of a number of cases of international students who are in the middle of their course of study or who have just been approved to study in Canada, but who were abroad at the time the travel restrictions took effect. Many of these students are looking to come back to Canada to be ready to resume their studies and take exams when classrooms re-open. Study permit applicants who were approved after the travel restriction took effect on March 18, 2020, are not exempt from the air travel restrictions and will not be considered 'essential' travel at a land border.

4. Q: Why are you exempting people approved for permanent residence from the air travel restrictions?

A: Individuals who have been approved for permanent residence have committed to coming to Canada on a permanent basis, bringing skills that will be needed in Canada's labour market. Nearly all of the country's labour market growth comes from new permanent residents and as the COVID-19 outbreak recedes, Canada will still face demographic challenges that permanent immigration helps to address.

5. Q: When the Government's message is to reduce travel and social interaction, what sort of steps are in place to protect Canadians by what could be an influx of people to the country?

A: Like all travellers, the groups of individuals who are being exempted from air travel restrictions will undergo mandatory health checks prior to boarding and an assessment upon arrival in Canada, and they will be expected to self-isolate for 14 days upon arrival in Canada.

6. Q: Is it wise to keep letting more temporary and permanent residents in when more than 500,000 Canadians filed for Employment Insurance in the past week?

A: There will always be jobs available in industries like agriculture and seafood and if more Canadians apply for those positions, fewer producers would seek approval to hire from abroad. If the labour market shifts considerably and more Canadians seek jobs that have often been filled by temporary foreign workers in the past, then employers will not need to hire fewer foreign workers.

We recognize that the COVID-19 outbreak and its effects will eventually recede and Canada will still need to have skilled immigrants arriving, as they bring skills that are needed for Canada's economic growth and they help address the country's demographics challenges in the long term.

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