Canada – Restricted Entry to Canada

The government of Canada has announced two restrictions with respect to travel to Canada, which are primarily designed to minimize the spread of COVID-19.

Announcement 1 – Foreign Nationals Entering Canada

Effective 12:00pm (noon) EDT on Wednesday, March 18, 2020, Canada will deny entry to all foreign nationals with few exceptions. Canadians citizens and permanent residents who are exhibiting no symptoms of COVID-19 at the point of departure will be permitted to return to Canada.¹

Exceptions:

- Air crew;
- Diplomats;
- Immediate family members of permanent residents and Canadian citizens;
- US citizens and foreign nationals traveling to Canada from the US on “essential” business
- Foreign nationals who have resided in the United States and/or Canada continuously for the last 14 days immediately prior to travel to Canada may be permitted to travel by plane to Canada. At this point there is no definitive official position released by the Canadian government and KPMG Law will be monitoring this issue closely.
- Individuals performing services under trade and commerce to maintain supply chain operations.
- Foreign nationals transiting through Canada with a final destination outside of Canada

Canada Reducing Airports Accepting International Flights

- Pending further announcement, international flights are only permitted to land at the following Canadian airports:
  - Montreal;
  - Toronto;
  - Calgary; and
  - Vancouver.

Exceptions to the international flight restrictions include:

- Flights originating from Mexico, the Caribbean and St. Pierre-et-Miquelon will still be permitted to land at other Canadian airports.

Visa Application Centre Closures

To prevent the further spread of the COVID-19 virus, certain visa application centres (VACs) are closed until further notice. Many Canadian Consulates, Embassies, and High Commissions are currently operating with essential staff only. Appointments to provide biometrics are also being cancelled and delayed until future dates.
Other Delays

Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada instructed that all landing appointments for permanent residents and refugee claimants are delayed until April 13, 2020. All citizenship ceremonies and tests are cancelled until further notice.  

Announcement 2 – Restricting Access to Canada US Border

On March 18th, 2020, President Trump and Prime Minister Trudeau announced their joint decision to close the Canada US border to non-essential travel between the countries. There are thousands of daily cross border movements and it therefore expected that this announcement will have a significant impact on containing the virus. It is anticipated that this travel restriction will take effect imminently – the logistics of the timing is presently being finalized.

What Employers Need to Know

- Foreign nationals holding Canadian work or study authorization who are currently outside of Canada and the United States will not be able to enter to Canada until further notice.

- There are ongoing discussions within the government as to whether non-essential travel (work or study permit holders) will be permitted to enter Canada from the US given the current travel ban.

- Foreign nationals (Non-Canadian citizens or permanent residents) in the United States may not enter or make any application for temporary status with certain exceptions, unless they have resided continuously in the United States and/or Canada in the 14 days prior to departing for Canada via air travel and their work is deemed to be essential.

- Employers may continue to make applications and obtain approvals for their foreign employees to work in Canada, in anticipation of immediate travel after the restriction is removed. At this time, work and study permit applications will continue to be processed at visa offices inside and outside of Canada. Additional processing time will likely be required given reduced staffing capacity.

Employees and travelers who have concerns about their status and next steps are encouraged to contact KPMG Law LLP for further guidance.

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FOOTNOTES:


Please note that KPMG LLP (U.S.) does not provide any immigration services. However, KPMG Law LLP in Canada can assist clients with U.S. immigration matters.

The information contained in this newsletter was submitted by the KPMG International member firm in Canada.

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