



CORPORATE IMMIGRATION
LAW FIRM

Changes to Work Permits for International Students

On April 21, 2008, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, announced changes to work permits for international students eligible programs at certain Canadian post-secondary institutions. Effective immediately, these international students will be able to work under the Post-Graduation Work Permit Program, with no restrictions on the type of employment and no requirement to be employed by a specific employer. The duration of the work permit has also been extended to three years across the country. Previously, the program only allowed international students to work for one or two years, depending on the location of their studies and the location of their employer's operations.

THE 2008 BUDGET

On February 26, 2008 the federal government tabled its budget in Parliament. From an immigration perspective, the budget contains two noteworthy developments.

Passport and Visa Changes

The federal government has announced that it will introduce a higher security electronic passport by 2011. The validity period will be doubled to 10 years. The new passport will resemble the passport currently in use but will contain an encrypted microchip which will contain the passport's information in what is thought to be a tamperproof format.

The government also announced that it will introduce the use of biometric data, such as live photographs and fingerprints, in the passport application process. The 2008 budget provides \$26 million over two years for this initiative. Both initiatives – the use of new passports and the use of biometric data – are viewed by the government as means to improve Canada's border security.

Increased Ministerial Discretion in the Processing of Immigration Applications

Bill C-50 contains amendments to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act that will give the Minister significantly enhanced powers over the processing of immigration applications and requests.

Specifically, the Minister's new powers will include the ability (1) to establish new categories of applications; (2) to establish which categories of applications (by category or otherwise) are to be processed; (3) to set the number of applications (by category or otherwise) to be processed in a given year (i.e., to establish category quotas); and (4) to provide for the disposition of applications (even those made under a category of application).

What might these amendments mean for clients of Corporate Immigration Law Firm? While the breadth and depth of this new legislation is considered to be worrisome in some quarters, the government's stated rationale for these changes is to decrease processing times for applications from skilled workers needed most by Canada's economy and employers. Currently, applications from skilled workers are processed in the order they are received. The amendments change that: the Minister will soon be able to prioritize and focus upon applications from particular skill sets, effectively moving such foreign nationals to the front of the line.

There is little detail at the moment as to how the Minister's new discretion will be exercised. However, given the government's stated immigration opportunities and flexibilities may emerge – opportunities and flexibilities that can be leveraged to the benefit of Corporate Immigration Law Firm clients.

The new amendments will apply to immigration applications and requests made on or after February 27, 2008.

Update From Our Previous Bulletin

We wish to clarify the amount one can bring back to Canada without duties or taxes if you are gone for 48 hours. The amount is now \$200 as we had reported. This change was actually announced over a year ago – March 19, 2007, but the government is still using old declaration cards.

To discuss how these new requirements could impact you or your business travel, please contact:



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