

## **Year-end IRCC Updates**

### ***New IRCC Minister***

As of November 2019, Marco Mendicino, member of parliament for Eglinton-Lawrence since 2015, is the new Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). This was announced shortly after the Liberal party won a minority government at the last federal elections, when the Prime Minister reshuffled the members of his cabinet. Former IRCC Minister Ahmed Hussen is now Minister of Families, Children and Social Development.

The official biography of IRCC Minister Mendicino in the Government of Canada website reads as follows:

“Minister Mendicino is a proud resident of Toronto and a passionate advocate for his community. During his first term, he championed local investments in public transit and in affordable housing and supported youth-driven programs aimed at creating more employment opportunities and safe spaces.

Before entering politics, Minister Mendicino served as a federal prosecutor for nearly 10 years, helping to fight against organized crime and bring terrorists—including members of the “Toronto 18”—to justice. He also worked at the Law Society of Ontario, was elected President of the Association of Justice Counsel and taught trial advocacy as an Adjunct Professor at Osgoode Hall Law School.

The son of an immigrant family, Minister Mendicino has a long track record of community activism in Eglinton—Lawrence. He has sat on numerous boards, volunteering at John Wanless Public School, COSTI Immigrant Services, Toronto Symphony Volunteer Committee, North Toronto Soccer Club, and Heart & Stroke Canada.

Minister Mendicino lives in Toronto with his wife and children.”

Congratulations to the new IRCC Minister! We look forward to further improvements to Canada’s immigration law and policy under your leadership.

### ***Biometrics from within Canada***

For Canadian immigration purposes, "biometrics" refers to the electronic fingerprints and facial photo collected from visa applicants to help "maintain the integrity of the system" and "ensure the safety and security of Canadians."

As of 3 December 2019, biometrics can now be obtained from within Canada. The biometrics requirement applies to those applying for temporary residence as a worker, student or visitor (including extensions) or for permanent residence. Some exemptions apply such as: those who are younger than 14 or older than 79; diplomats; and visa-exempt individuals or those requiring electronic travel authorizations (ETAs).

Applicants should include payment of the biometrics fee (\$85 per person or \$170 per family applying together) with the processing fees paid upon submission of the application. The applicant/s will then receive a biometrics instruction letter which should be printed and brought

to a designated Service Canada location authorized to obtain biometrics. If applying from outside Canada, the biometrics can be processed at the applicable visa application center (VAC).

In 2013, Canada began requiring biometrics from temporary resident visa applicants (visitor, student or worker) from 29 countries and one territory. On 31 July 2018, the requirement was expanded to include applicants from Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Starting 31 December 2018, the biometrics requirement was also imposed on temporary resident applicants from Asia, Asia Pacific and the Americas.

According to IRCC, "Having biometrics makes it easier for immigration and border services officers to stop individuals who pose a risk to the safety and security of Canadians. It also helps officials verify travellers' identities, makes processing applications easier and simplifies entry for legitimate travellers."

To help ease the burden on frequent travelers, temporary resident visa applicants will only need to give their biometrics once every ten years. However, visas can only be issued up to the remainder of the 10-year biometrics validity period. If the applicant would want a longer-term visa, a new biometrics fee will be required.

### ***Increased Excessive Demand Threshold***

Meanwhile, a significant change in Canada's immigration policy which took effect on 1 June 2018 had benefited many prospective immigrants who might have been refused in the past if they or their dependents have a medical condition which may potentially cause an excessive demand on Canada's health and social services.

The tripling of the annual cost threshold and removal of certain social services (such as special education, rehabilitation and vocational services) from the computation of 'excessive demand' have led to more inclusive and fair decisions in recent permanent residence applications. That is, minor disabilities or chronic medical conditions which may have led in the past to a finding of medical inadmissibility due to excessive demand, are now being granted permanent residency.

In 2019, the annual cost threshold for determining whether a permanent residence applicant will cause an excessive demand on health and social services was **\$20,517** per year (or three times the new average Canadian per capita health and social services cost of \$6,839). The 2018 annual cost threshold was \$19,812 (or 3 times the 2018 per capita cost of \$6,604). This amount is expected to increase again in 2020.

The above are meant for information purposes only and not as specific legal advice. Since medical and other admissibility issues can make or break your immigration application, it will be best to consult a trusted immigration legal professional to seek proper legal advice on your particular situation.

*Meanwhile, here's wishing you and your families a blessed Christmas season and a fantastic new year!*

*The author is an immigration lawyer in Canada and may be reached at [deanna@santoslaw.ca](mailto:deanna@santoslaw.ca) or tel. no. 416-901-8497.*