



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

Canada provides update on exemptions to travel restrictions to protect Canadians and support the economy

March 20, 2020—Ottawa—The Government of Canada is providing an update on travel restrictions put in place to stem the spread of COVID-19.

Exemptions to the air travel restrictions will apply to foreign nationals who have committed to working, studying or making Canada their home, and they will be considered essential travel with regards to land border restrictions. This includes:

- seasonal agricultural workers, fish/seafood workers, caregivers and all other temporary foreign workers;
- international students who held a valid study permit or had been approved for a study permit when the travel restrictions took effect on March 18; and,
- permanent resident applicants who had been approved for permanent residence before the travel restrictions were announced on March 16 but who had not yet travelled to Canada.

In addition, a temporary modification is being made to the Labour Market Impact Assessment process for agriculture and food processing employers, as the required 2-week recruitment period will be waived for the next 6 months. We are also increasing the maximum allowable employment duration for workers in the low-wage stream of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program from 1 to 2 years. This will improve flexibility and reduce the administrative burden for employers, including those in food processing.

In order to safeguard the continuity of trade, commerce, health and food security for all Canadians, temporary foreign workers in agricultural, agri-food, seafood processing and other key industries will be allowed to travel to Canada under exemptions being put in place to air travel restrictions that took effect on March 18. In addition to health screening protocols before travel, all individuals entering from abroad must isolate for 14 days upon their arrival in Canada.

Allowing foreign workers to enter Canada recognizes their vital importance to the Canadian economy, including food safety and security of Canadians and the success of Canadian food producers. The arrival of farm workers and fish/seafood workers is essential to ensure planting and harvesting activities can take place. There will always be jobs available for Canadians who wish to work on farms and at food processing plants.

Those affected by these exemptions should not try to travel to Canada immediately. We will announce when the exemptions are in place, which we anticipate will be early next week.

These exemptions follow others announced earlier this week:

- foreign nationals travelling at the invitation of the Canadian government for a purpose related to the containment of COVID 19
- close family members of Canadian citizens
- close family members of Canadian permanent residents
- a person who is authorized, in writing, by a consular officer of the Government of Canada to enter Canada for the purpose of reuniting immediate family members;
- a person registered as an Indian under the Indian Act;
- accredited diplomats and family members (includes NATO, those under the United Nations Headquarters Agreement, other organizations)
- air crews
- any foreign national, or group of foreign nationals, whose entry would be in the national interest, as determined by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Immigration, Minister of Public Safety
- members of the Canadian military, visiting forces, and their family members
- transiting passengers.

Quotes

“Our government will continue to take the measures necessary to protect the health and safety of Canadians, including putting in place social distancing, isolation and travel restrictions to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Today’s announcement will ensure a robust response to addressing the spread of the virus and that our farmers, fishers and other producers have the workers they need, when they need them, to strengthen Canada’s food security and provide other vital services.”

– The Honourable Marco E.L. Mendicino, P.C., M.P., Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

“Temporary foreign workers are important for sectors with critical labour needs - notably agriculture. Our Government is taking strong measures to protect the health and safety of Canadians during the COVID-19 pandemic. These exemptions will provide the short-term workforce support necessary to maintain our high-standard levels of trade, commerce, and food security.”

– The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, P.C., M.P., Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion

"The participation of temporary foreign workers on our farms and our food businesses is absolutely necessary. It is nothing less than an issue of food security. We are making sure that our food supply chain is not compromised by the closure of our borders, as we now need thousands of workers on the farms for the planting season as well as the processing of foods from the land and sea."

- The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, P.C., M.P., Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

“We’ve heard the call from our fish and seafood sector and we’re responding. These exemptions mean local processors on both coasts will have access to the workers they need to keep feeding Canadians and global citizens with healthy, high-quality food sources. These are unprecedented times and we will continue to work across-government and at all levels to ensure Canadians are safe and the economy is supported.”

- The Honourable Bernadette Jordan, P.C., M.P., Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard

Associated link

- [Government of Canada COVID-19 Information and Updates](#)

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