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TEMPORARY PAUSE ON NEW SPONSORSHIP APPLICATIONS FOR PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS

By Edward C. Corrigan

On November 4, 2011 the Government of Canada took action to address the backlog and wait times for sponsored parents and grandparents.

Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Minister Jason Kenney announced in a prepared Press Release: "Currently, more than 165,000 parents and grandparents who have applied to become permanent residents of Canada are still waiting for a final decision. Each year, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) receives applications for sponsorship of nearly 38,000 parents and grandparents, a number that will only continue to expand if no action is taken."

The Minister stated: "To prevent the build-up of an unmanageable number of new applications during these consultations and to further reduce the 165,000-strong backlog of parent and grandparent applicants, CIC is putting in place a temporary pause of up to 24 months on the acceptance of new sponsorship applications for parents and grandparents. The pause comes into effect on November 5, 2011."

Applications for new sponsorship of parents and grandparents are expected to resume on November 5, 2013. However, this date may change and is subject to "consultations" with Canadians.

Minister Kenney said in the Press Release: "Wait times for Family Class sponsorship applications for parents and grandparents now exceed seven years, and without taking action, those times will continue to grow, and that is unacceptable.Action must be taken to cut the backlog, reduce the wait times, and ensure that the parents and grandparents program is sustainable over the long run" said Kenney."

To deal with the large backlog and lengthy wait times, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) announced a four phase "Action Plan" for faster Family Reunification.

First - The Government of Canada will increase by over 60 percent the number of sponsored parents and grandparents Canada will admit next year, from nearly 15,500 in 2010 to 25,000 in 2012 B the highest level in nearly two decades.

Second - The government is introducing the new AParent and Grandparent Super Visa, which will be valid for up to 10 years. The multiple-entry visa will allow an applicant to remain in Canada for up to 24 months at a time without the need for renewal of their status.

The Parent and Grandparent Super Visa came into effect on December 1, 2011. CIC will be able to issue the visas, on average, within eight weeks of the application. This means that instead of waiting for eight years, a parent or a grandparent can come to Canada within eight weeks. Parent and Grandparent Super Visa applicants will be required to have a medical and obtain private Canadian health-care insurance for their stay in Canada.

Third - The government will consult Canadians on how to redesign the parents and grandparents program to ensure that it is sustainable in the future. The redesigned program must avoid future large backlogs and be sensitive to fiscal constraints.

Fourth - To prevent the build-up of an unmanageable number of new applications during these consultations and to further reduce the 165,000-strong backlog of parent and grandparent applicants, CIC is putting in place a temporary pause of up to 24 months on the acceptance of new sponsorship applications for parents and grandparents. The pause came into effect on November 5, 2011.

Waiting periods for Sponsorship of parents and grandparents of more than seven years is a very serious problem. The Minister was correct in reviewing the process of sponsor-

ing Parents and Grandparents and taking measures to cut the backlog. The temporary hold on accepting new applications was a prudent measure to try to reduce the backlog of sponsorship applications coupled with an increase in the target quota from 15,500 in 2010 to 25,000 in 2012, an increase of 60% is a good start.

The introduction of the "Super Visa" for parents and grandparents to allow them to come to Canada for two years instead of six months will help address the immediate problem of parents not being able to visit their children and grandchildren for seven years or more while their sponsorship application is being processed. Having someone wait for 7 or 8 years for a sponsorship decision was unfair and frequently prevented parents and grandparents from visiting their children.

The fact that the "Super Visa" will be valid for 10 years and can be issued for multiple entries into Canada goes a long way to addressing the problem of parents and grandparents visiting their children and grandchildren during the long wait period for processing parents and grandparents' applications.

The requirement that the recipients of the "Super Visa" have to undergo medicals and have proper health coverage before coming to Canada protects the health and financial interests of Canadians.

For further information on possible ways to sponsor parents and grand parents to Canada please consult a qualified professional.

Edward C. Corrigan is certified as a Specialist in Citizenship and Immigration and also Immigration and Refugee Protection by the Law Society of Upper Canada and practices law in London, Ontario. He can be reached at corriganlaw@edcorrigan.ca or 519-439-4015. iganlaw@edcorrigan.ca or 519-439-4015.