



YWCA Toronto joins with concerned Canadians everywhere to challenge the federal government on its proposed changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

We agree that the backlog needs to be adequately dealt with. As part of the immigrant and refugee serving sector YWCA has advocated for this to happen for years. But a solution to this breakdown in the system should not give the Minister a blank cheque to use unprecedented powers that would create uncertainty and leave Canada's immigration system open to arbitrariness and direct political influence.

As part of an international association based in 100 countries in the world, and with 34 member chapters across Canada, we know that Canadian values support transparency, fairness and due process in our immigration system. We also know that these are values we are recognized for throughout the world. These cherished hallmarks of a functioning democratic process are, in our view, brought into question by these proposed changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. Additionally, our concern is underscored by the lack of due process for the proposed changes themselves. They should go back to regular parliamentary process, notably through the House of Commons' Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

YWCA Toronto is the city's largest women's organization with over 135 years experience working with all communities in Toronto. Seventy-five percent of our 24,000 program participants are visible minority women and their families, many of whom are immigrants and refugees.

We join other immigrant and refugee-serving organizations in their demands that:

- the sections of Bill C-50 regarding amendments to IRPA are removed from the proposed bill (the federal budget implementation bill) and
- That these and any other eventual changes to IRPA are properly debated by the Canadian public and its elected officials, notably through the House of Commons' Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

The proposed changes to IRPA under Bill C-50 are troubling because

- The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration will have the power to decide what categories of immigration applications should be fast-tracked and what categories should not be processed or actually be discarded. As a result applicants may be discarded regardless of whether their applications meet the requirements of the Act.

- In view of exercising such power, the Minister could end up responding only to the lobby groups s/he is willing to listen to. This politicizes a process of selection of immigrants that should remain fair and transparent. There is concern that some voices in Canada have been putting pressure on successive federal governments to stop recruiting immigrants from Africa or Muslim countries, or other places in the global south.
- Canada's ability to attract immigrants will be jeopardized, as potential candidates may decide to apply to other countries where the process is less arbitrary and more formalized, clear and fair.
- They give the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration the power to decide not to process humanitarian and compassionate applications submitted outside of Canada. These applications are the only current means by which refugee children in Canada can reunite with family members who were left back home, and by which immigrants and refugees can bring to Canada family members abroad who were initially excluded from family reunification due to IRPA section 117(9)(d).

**These proposed changes are not an effective way to address Canada's backlog of immigration applications. Instead, adequate resources must be allocated to ensure capacity within CIC to process the applications, and this should be done in an equitable manner in visa posts across all continents.**

Above all, this government's increased emphasis on temporary work visas marks a significant and troubling policy shift. Canada is moving away from its vision of immigrants as integral partners in the building of our country's future. Instead, the over emphasis on temporary workers shows that Canada views foreign born workers as disposable economic units who should not be allowed to participate fully in all aspects of Canadian life. This category of immigration is discriminatory due to the gendered nature of most temporary work. Currently, women brought in as caregivers and domestic workers have the fewest rights of any category of immigrants. YWCA advocates for the fair and equal treatment of all immigrants to Canada.