27th October 2020

Written Submission to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration on the Impact of COVID- 19 on the Immigration system.

This written submission covers four main discussion areas, namely:

- 1. Instructions from Immigrations, Refugees Citizenship Canada (IRCC)
- 2. Responses from affected IRCC clients
- 3. The Realities
- 4. Recommendation and conclusion

Discussion Areas	Responses
Instructions from Immigrations, Refugees Citizenship Canada (IRCC)	 Informational letters were updated on client's accounts giving assurances that in the case we were unable to travel due to the pandemic, no approved application will be refused. We were also informed to raise webforms once we were able to travel As part of developing guidelines for the CoPR extension process, IRCC launched and conducted a survey on the 18th of June 2020, seeking for responses on the impact of COVID-19 on her clients. The survey was a welcome development as it showed some progress In July 2020, an updated guideline was released where applicants with expired CoPR (Group3 – outside the US) were instructed to submit settlement plans in Canada as requirements for the extension process. As shown in appendix 1 - IRCC Instructions/guidelines, the settlement plan would include Proof of settlement funds, lease agreement in Canada (if any), Job offers in Canada (if any)/employment plans, quarantine plans and any other document to prove the non-discretionary reason(s) to travel to Canada.

- As per same IRCC's instruction, priority will be given to applicants with a proposed or confirmed travel plan or willingness to book and confirm travel plans immediately once approved.
- Furthermore, on the 26th July 2020, IRCC posted updates through its twitter handle confirming that timelines on processing of CoPRs extensions could not be given and has continued to send out periodic reminders of same. See appendix 1 - IRCC Instructions/guidelines
- It was further confirmed that a travel authorization would be issued once an assessment of whether travel exemptions have been met.

Responses from the affected IRCC clients:

Nigeria India

Nigeria

- As per IRCC's instruction to submit the Ready-to-travel (RTT) webform, a group numbering 185 individuals in Nigeria set out to gather the required documents to ensure a smooth and prompt processing of the CoPR extension. It is worthy to note that those with valid CoPRs/PRVs (approved on or before 18th March 2020) at this time, could travel to Canada without the need to forward a settlement plan to IRCC.
- Given the closure of the International airports in Nigeria at this time and to show a confirmed travel plan, same group approached two airlines (Overland Airways and Ethiopian Airlines) to facilitate our flight to Canada. Luckily, the request was granted, and cover letters addressed to IRCC were obtained and same was submitted alongside other documents with the RTT webform.
- Two travel dates were chosen for the flight Saturday 28th August 2020 and Saturday 5th September 2020. Relying on IRCC's instruction, some applicants booked confirmed travel tickets, paid for Airbnb and hotels for the mandatory quarantine while others incurred expenses on lease agreement.
- Appendix **2-RTT Web forms Acknowledgement** shows a sample of RTT webforms acknowledgement (07/23/2020 & 07/29/2020) and a confirmation that the attached documents (settlement plans) have been forwarded to the "responsible office" for their consideration.

India

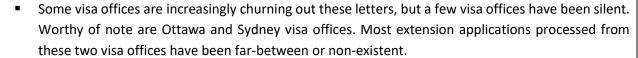
Like affected Nigerians, applicants from India have taken the necessary steps to book flight tickets through a special bubble arrangement called *Vande Bharat Mission* which cost them several thousands of dollars for one-way tickets. They have also raised the RTT webform and from the interactions, they have received similar limited responses from IRCC.

The Realities

- Despite raising the required webforms (in some cases multiple times) and attaching documents providing settlement plans, we have continued to experience delays in processing of authorization letters and/or CoPR extensions.
- We have escalated the situation through the following initiatives:
 - Emails to the Office of the Prime Minister, Minister of Immigration, Shadow Minister of Immigration and the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. We also reached out to GlobalNews and CICNews, however we have received little or no reassurances as to a timeline for the processing
 - An Online petition addressed to the Government of Canada and IRCC on expired CoPRs http://chng.it/9vDv7tKc which has (so far) garnered over 3000 supporters.
 - Twitter storms using hashtags such as #CoPRExtension & #ExpiredCoPR, See appendix 3 -Feedbacks/Social Media engagements
 - Constant phone calls to the call centers and emails were sent to the different visa offices. All
 efforts proved futile and little did we know that it was going to be a long walk to freedom.
- I have attached feedback shared by individuals who called the call center. Some of which reveal inconsistencies with IRCC's instruction.
- I will like to state that each day passes by without any realistic hope of hearing from IRCC, it has become very tough to continue with our lives as plans had already been made to settle in Canada.
- Many had long left their jobs, withdrawn kids from school since the past eight months, sold all our properties with the intention of moving to Canada, had our bags packed and have been living in limbo ever since.
- The delay also led to loss of funds and loss of job opportunities in Canada. Please find evidence of this in appendix 7 - Proof of loss of job in Canada & 8 - Proof of loss of funds

Authorization letters

• In fairness to IRCC, while a significant number of affected applicants are still waiting, a few have randomly received the authorization letters from IRCC in August, September and October 2020, the criteria for the selection however remains unknown.



- For tracking purposes, a total of 797 affected IRCC clients responded to a survey to independently monitor IRCC's response rate as it relates to CoPR extension. The result of the can be found in appendix 5 Result of Survey & appendix 6 Result of Survey
- Honorable MPs, going by the outcome of the survey, this shows that a good number of approved PR
 applicants with expired CoPRs are still stuck in their home countries with little or no hopes of
 receiving the authorization letter from IRCC.
- To further substantiate this claim, herewith is a link to a post shared by Shelby Thevenot (an immigration journalist) on twitter confirming IRCC's latest response to her enquiries after the publication of our story https://twitter.com/shelby thevenot/status/1319384323376746496?s=20. The comments to the post reveal the pains, agony, mental torture we have been experiencing. See appendix 4 Reactions on IRCC's feedback to CIC News

Recommendations and Conclusion

In all of these, the following inferences could be drawn from the process of extending expired CoPRs during the pandemic:

- Whilst IRCC seem to have issued a clear instruction to her clients on the process of extending the expired CoPRs, the process was hugely not followed by the visa offices. Inconsistencies were noted in the extension process as visa officers were empowered to take decisions as deemed fit before granting the authorization letter.
- A huge number of approved PR applicants who are exempt from the current travel restrictions are still waiting on IRCC with no end in sight. The immigration target of 341,000 for year 2020 continues to be threatened with this prolonged and inexplicable delay from IRCC.

Honorable MPs, In the same light, please permit me to table some of our recommendations which we humbly appeal that the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration considers.

- To prevail on IRCC to close-out all expired COPR cases in the year 2020 and not carried forward to 2021 as all expired COPR holders are still hopeful to arrive in Canada this year, our lives have since been on a stand-still. We are highly skilled economic migrants and we bring skills that will be valuable in driving economic growth through the pandemic and beyond
- Issuance of Authorization letter should be automatic and not conditional. This will increase the processing timelines and also reduce the already stretched IRCC workforce and help channel resources towards the processing of pending applications.
- Adoption of a sustained and uniformed pattern for the issuance of the authorization letter across all visa offices.
- Deployment of more resources to aid all the visa offices with the issuance of the authorization letter.
- Waiver of Re-medicals request and other expired documents as determined by the visa officers. This
 becomes necessary as these are already approved files in addition to the cost implications and
 inconveniences of carrying out medical examination.
- Launch an enquiry as to the reasons new applicants are issued PPRs while holders of expired CoPRs are being neglected.
- As an alternative to authorization letters, an instruction could be sent to the Immigration departments of the home countries of all the affected IRCC clients to allow boarding with expired COPRs/PRVs.

Once again, I extend my sincere appreciation to this committee for allowing me to appear and act as a witness to the impact of COVID-19 on the Immigration system. Should there be a need to provide further updates on the issues raised, I will not hesitate to make myself available.

Thank you, David Ojo

Witness

APPENDIX

1 - IRCC Instructions/quidelines

of Canada

Government Gouvernement

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

- Operational instructions and guidelines -> Service delivery
- Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Program delivery instructions

Permanent residence: COVID-19 program delivery

 This section contains policy, procedures and quidance used by IRCC staff. It is posted on the department's website as a courtesy to stakeholders.

These are COVID-19 program delivery instructions for applications for permanent residence.

Overseas refugee lines of business are excluded from the provisions of these instructions. For COVID-19 processing instructions for REF-OVS, please consult Resettlement; COVID-19 program delivery.

- · General processing measures: COVID-19 program delivery.
- See important information on • office closures

On this page

· Application intake

II.

Permanent residence: COVID-19 program delivery - Canada ca

- proof of an acceptable plan to guarantine for 14 days in Canada; includes proof of funds (bank or credit card statements) and how they will access groceries, medical care and other essential services.
- o While in quarantine, they will not be able to leave their place of quarantine for any reason. This is mandatory even if they have no COVID-19 symptoms.
- · proposed travel itinerary; a description of their proposed travel itinerary, including travel tickets if they already have purchased them

In addition, the applicant and accompanying family members must show that they meet the following criteria:

- held a valid COPR and PRV on or before March 18, 2020, but these documents have now expired; no specific date for US-based applicants
- have a compelling reason to travel to Canada now;
 - o family reunification; family member is in Canada and usually resides there
 - o economic; economic services and supply chains, critical infrastructure support
 - o health (immediate medical care), safety and security
 - o supporting Indigenous communities
 - o expiring status in the US
 - o tending to family matters for non-optional or non-discretionary
 - o any other activities that are deemed non-optional or nondiscretionary by the Government of Canada or based on an officer's assessment

Permanent residence: COVID-19 program delivery - Canada.ca

- · can travel to Canada for non-discretionary reasons with the COPR and PRV in order to settle and live in Canada as a permanent resident and
- . must have an acceptable plan to quarantine for 14 days in Canada

Applicants must check the issue date in the Application Details section of their COPR to see if this applies to them.

Travelling from the US (group 4)

Applicants with expired COPRs can travel to Canada from the US for nondiscretionary reasons to settle and live in Canada as a permanent resident if

- · their application was approved
- . they received their COPR and PRV and
- . they have an acceptable plan to quarantine for 14 days in Canada

Only permanent resident applicants who are in possession of an expired COPR and PRV and who are ready to travel to Canada should contact IRCC using the Web form, to provide information on when the COPR expired and the non-discretionary reason(s) for travelling. Once Web forms are received, the Client Support Centre will refer them to the appropriate processing network (CN or IN), which will assess them based on the eligibility criteria below.

These applicants can come to Canada and become a permanent resident now if they plan to stay and settle. If they're planning on coming temporarily and leaving again, they can't do that right now unless they're exempt from the restrictions. They must show

· proof of an acceptable plan to settle; documents to support their living situation in Canada (address, lease agreement, home ownership document), employment plans in Canada (location of work, letter from employer) or any other relevant information



2-RTT Web forms Acknowledgement

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada // Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada

From: CE CSC Do Not Reply / Ne Pas Repondre CSC EC (IRCC) (ircc.cecscdonotreply-nepasrepondrecscec.ircc@cic.gc.ca)

To: de.de.paggahoo.com

Date: Wednesday, July 29, 2020, 07:19 PM GMT+1

Good day GOO GOOD,

Thank you for contacting Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

We are pleased to confirm the reception of the following documents:

- . Consent to help with Groceries during Quarantine.pdf
- . Email Correspondence with ACCES Employment 2.pdf
- . Email Correspondence with ACCES Employment.pdf
- ET_Cover letter_29.08.2020.pdf
- . Letter of Explanation as regards Settlement and Quarantine plans in Canada.doc
- · Overland Airways FLIGHT LAGOS TO COTONOU.pdf
- Resignation Letter______.pdf

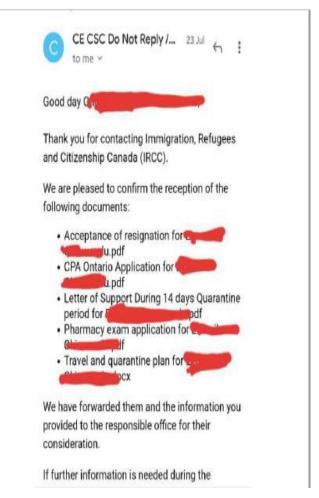
We have forwarded them and the information you provided to the responsible office for their consideration.

Please rest assured that you will be notified as soon as your case is analyzed or if additional information is required.

We hope the information provided is helpful in assisting you with your enquiry.

We would also like to suggest the following online services that might be helpful to you with any immigration, refugee and/or citizenship future requests:

- · Download application forms and guides
- · Change of address
- · Check your application status
- Help Centre To find answers, you may consult the different sections or type keywords related to your question.



3 - Feedbacks/Social Media engagements



So i called IRCC today,

- As our files are already approved, there is no need for medical as of now (of course dependent upon the agent)
- 2. They have marked me as ready to travel. Major point was that people in "essential services" are being prioritised
- 3. As per her, authorization letter will be issued if the agent processing the webform/file considers the case as urgent
- 4. Leaving job/waiting from a long time is not termed as urgency as per IRCC.
- 5. She remarked "Canada does not want to let alot of people in as of now, Wait wait wait!"

I told her that it felt like going through the PR process again and that students/work permit people were being given priority.

She started laughing and said "since you're already approved for PR - you are special to Canada but not right now"

+234 245 245 366 ~Opeyemi

I just got off the call with an agent. She said no update from Sydney yet, so wait.

I asked about medical status - she said medical for my hubby and I were extended till Oct 24th; medicals for kids were extended till Oct 12th and have again expired. Why do the medicals have different dates? She said she doesn't know.

So should we get new medicals done? She said she wouldn't advise that, but we should wait for instructions from VO.











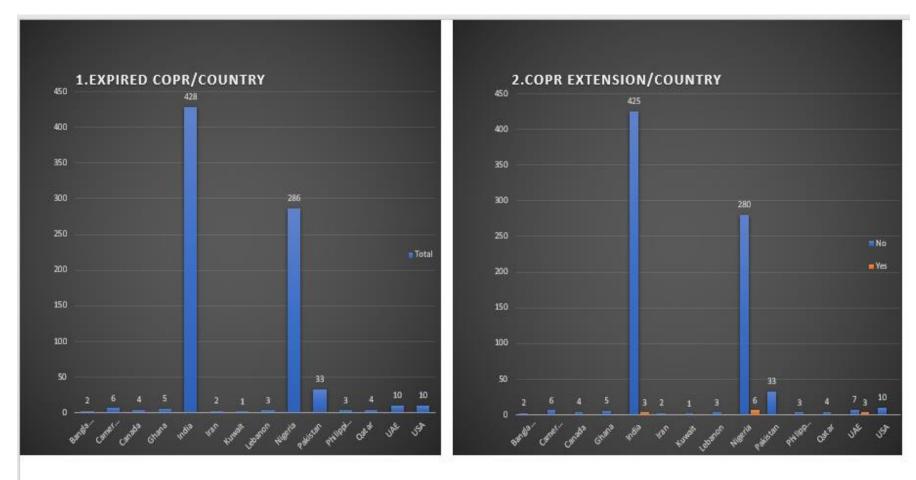


4 - Reactions on IRCC's feedback to CIC News

https://www.cicnews.com/2020/10/thousands-of-would-be-canadian-permanent-residents-stranded-abroad-1016093.html

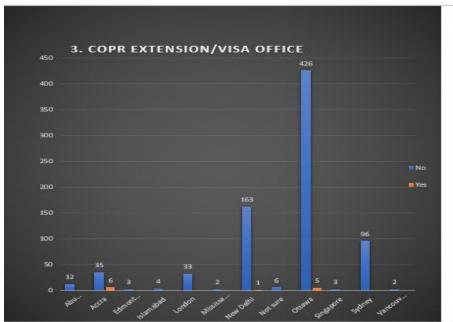


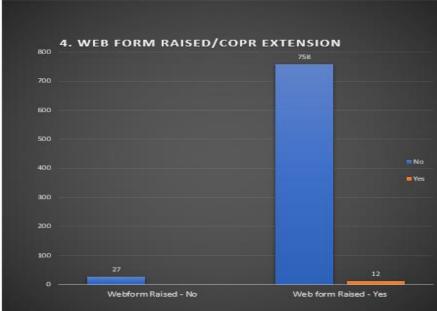
5 - Result of Survey

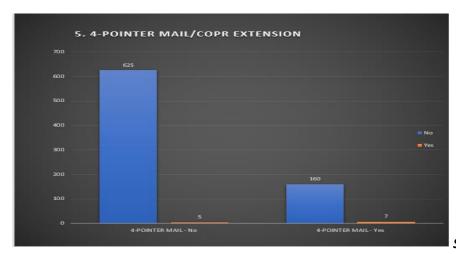


Source: Independent Survey done by a sample of the affected IRCC clients

6 - Result of Survey







Source: Independent Survey done by a sample of the affected IRCC clients

7 - Proof of loss of job in Canada

Tue, Oct 6, 2020 at 7:01 PM la@gmail.com> Hi Justin and Tapas, https://mail.google.com/mail/u/07ik=92be61c64d&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-f%3A1678831939841129839&simpl=msg-f%3A16788319398... 2/4 10/26/2020 **Gmail - Employstream Documents** Unfortunately, I am not able to get feedback from IRCC with respect to getting an Authorization letter to travel to Canada at this time. You are right, some COPR holders whose documents were issued prior to March 18, 2020 can travel. I belong to that category, However, my travel documents expired before I could travel due to the international travel restrictions hence, my need for a travel authorization letter. Since there is no other means to keep the role open, I will suggest that you move on with another candidate. I will keep in touch for future opportunities as soon as I arrive in Canada. Thanks again for the opportunity Regards [Quoted text hidden] Tue, Oct 6, 2020 at 9:28 PM @gmail.com> Hi Festus. That really is too bad to hear. I wish there was a way to save this but unfortunately its not going to be possible. We will be letting Bell know shortly of the result and will be cancelling the contract. All the best, [Quoted text hidden] [Quoted text hidden]

8 - Proof of loss of funds

Your receipt from Airbnb



Receipt ID: RCP5T8ETXR · Jul 20, 2020

Saskatoon

30 nights in Saskatoon

Mon, Aug 31, 2020 → Wed, Sep 30, 2020



208 Lindsay Place 17 Saskatoon, SK S7H 3E6

Hosted by Courtney McCutcheon

Confirmation code: HMQW4HN2PY Go to itinerary · Go to listing

Traveler: Akaninyene Akpan

Cancellation policy

Free cancellation for 48 hours after booking. After that, cancel before 3:00 PM on Aug 31 and get a full refund, minus the first 30 days and the service fee. More details

Cutoff times are based on the listing's local time

Have a question?

Visit the Help Center

	\$1,463.12
Will process in 1 payments	
Total (USD)	\$1,463.12
Occupancy taxes and fees	\$75.28
Service fee	\$133.2
Cleaning fee	\$14.73
39% monthly price discount	-\$792.60
Accommodation	\$2,032.50
Price breakdown Accommodation	\$2,032.50

Payment	
MASTERCARD 6080	\$1,463.12
Jul 20, 2020 · 08:49PM CEST	

10/24/2020 Resolution Center Courtney declined your request Refund for cancellation I HAVE ALREADY DECLINED. YOU READ THE CANCELLATION POLICY, I WILL NOT BE REFUNDING YOU, DO NOT BOOK DURING COVID IF YOU ARE GOING TO BE CANCELLING ON HOST. Your message Dear Courtney, reference our series of conversations as attached that necessitated my cancellation of this reservation primary due to the COVID-19 Pandemic travel restriction, I wish to request/appeal for the refund of \$1,239.90 which I understood would be sent to you on 31st September 2020 by Airbnb. I made successive efforts to secure your supports before during and after the reservation cancellation in getting you to initiate the refund but realized that Airbnb was yet to send said money to you, which I agreed that it would not be fair to refund your personal money to me as you mentioned in the attached conversation. It will not be good to make life more difficult for me as suggested in the last conversation as attached because I believed that we can still relate together with each other in the nearest future. Looking forward to having your understanding in doing the needful as soon as you receive the money from Airbnb. Thanks. Photos



Send message

Request history



Courtney declined your request

I HAVE ALREADY DECLINED. YOU READ THE CANCELLATION POLICY. I WILL NOT BE REFUNDING YOU. DO NOT BOOK DURING COVID IF YOU ARE GOING TO BE CANCELLING

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