



Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada

Deputy Minister

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MEMORANDUM TO THE MINISTER

ATIP VOLUMES AND MODERNIZATION EFFORTS AT IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP CANADA

FOR INFORMATION

SUMMARY

- In recent years, the Department has experienced significant increases in access to information requests, with clients frequently using Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP) as a channel to inquire about the status of their immigration application or reasons for which they have been refused.
- In June 2020, the Department established the ATIP Modernization Office to lead various initiatives aimed at finding solutions to contain and address the growing number of ATIP requests. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is committed to modernizing its ATIP program to address the key factors that have an impact on ATIP volumes.
- In 2021, the Government of Canada amended the *Privacy Act* with an Extension Order (EO) that will allow foreign nationals, regardless of their location or legal status within Canada, to request access to their personal information held by federal government institutions.
- The EO's coming into force is expected in July 2022, and will result in a significant increase in the total number of privacy requests with IRCC as the most affected government institution by this broadening of access rights.

BACKGROUND:

- In 2019-2020, IRCC received 75% of all Access to Information requests and 20% of all Privacy requests submitted to federal government institutions. The Department has seen a 166% cumulative growth in requests received since 2014-2015 and an increase of 31.5% in pages processed over the last five years.
- As of December 3, 2021, ATIP has received 137,928 requests, which is a 51.02% increase from the same time in fiscal year 2019-2020.

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- The Department is unique in that most of the requests it receives are for the personal information of its clients – 98.9% requests for immigration case files compared to 1.1% requests for corporate records. Most of its requests concern IRCC clients who are foreign nationals relying on representatives and immigration lawyers to submit access requests on their behalf.
- The Government of Canada's Immigration Levels Plan for 2021-2023 aims to welcome 401,000 new permanent residents in 2021, 411,000 in 2022, and 421,000 in 2023. As volumes increase in other IRCC business lines, there is a direct link with significant increases in ATIP request volumes.
- With the coming into force of the EO, foreign nationals will no longer have to rely on lawyers and immigration consultants to request access to their personal information. This means that anyone outside of Canada will be able to make a *Privacy Act* request to IRCC for their information.
- In anticipation of the EO and to predict its impacts, scenarios were developed to estimate the volumes of requests for the next two years, which illustrates increases between 5% and 20% (see Annex).

CURRENT STATUS:

- IRCC is involved in a suite of projects to better serve its clients and strengthen IRCC's Access to Information Program and guide the Department toward becoming a more open and accessible government institution:
 - IRCC's enhanced Digital Platform Modernization program:
The program will enable the Department to manage increasing application volumes and will assist in supporting Canada's post-COVID economic recovery. This modern digital platform will ultimately mean that clients will see improved processing times and experience reliable, user-friendly online services. Through this new technology, IRCC will expand the availability of client immigration information. Some expected outcomes of digital platform modernization include alleviating undue pressure on the ATIP regime and improving the client experience.
 - MyAccount:
The vision for MyAccount is to modernize and enhance the continuous client experience by providing a single secure point of entry for users as they navigate different applications by enabling online client profile completion, providing a personalized experience, and enhancing communication with the Department. MyAccount is a three-year roadmap project to begin in Q3 of fiscal year 2021-2022, which will aim to be a fundamental part of modernizing the digital client experience while improving operational efficiency. Providing readily and timely information to IRCC clients will reduce the need for clients to rely on the ATIP program to access to their information.
 - MyAccount Trackers:
On May 11, 2021, IRCC launched the Citizenship Application Tracker for the Citizenship Grant line of business; an online tool that allows clients with an active application to view up-to-date information on the status of their application at any time. This is a Minimum Viable Product for the upcoming MyAccount 2.0. The tracker has registered 326,000 new accounts and has recorded 4 million logins since it was launched.

- Refusal Letters:
The Department continues to advance the Client Correspondence Project to reduce or eliminate pre-identified client pain points associated with high priority correspondence, delivering improved consistency and reliability of information through standards and guidelines for the development of client correspondence. IRCC has drafted a revised refusal letter based on feedback from clients and representatives through usability testing. IRCC is exploring additional solutions, including a pilot with clients, to support the revised refusal letter and increase the Department's level of transparency and accountability regarding reasons for refusal.
- IRCC ATIP Online Request Form:
ATIP will enhance the Online Request Form to allow requesters to sharply focus the scope of their requests to reduce the processing of unnecessary and redundant records. Reducing pages will increase efficiencies for the ATIP program and provide the client with the exact information they are seeking.
- New ATIP case processing software:
IRCC is currently exploring solutions to update the current ATIP software suite, which has become archaic and does not take advantage of "modern" technology. It is anticipated that a new software solution will be in place within the next two years. The new software solution will have to be capable of handling IRCC's volume of ATIP requests while remaining compliant with Canada's privacy and security requirements.
- Robotic Process Automation:
The initiative to automate routine data entry aspects of the ATIP process, leading to increased efficiency. IRCC is the first ATIP office in the federal government to take advantage of Robotic Process Automation (RPA). To date, the implementation of RPA has resulted in improved efficiencies and helped to support employee morale.
- Secure adequate short-term human and financial resources:
IRCC is actively pursuing various avenues to secure adequate short-term human and financial resources. The Department continues to work on securing additional resources and hiring additional staff, all geared towards managing the inventory of files.

NEXT STEP:

- IRCC continues to advance on ongoing initiatives and taking the necessary measures to manage the increase in ATIP volumes.

DMA Xavier e-approved December 16, 2021

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Annexes (2):

- A: Privacy Act – Extension Order Impact Scenarios
- B: Privacy Act – List of Initiatives and Progress Report

Annex A: Privacy Act – Extension Order Impact Scenarios



Privacy extension: Impact scenarios

Impact if 5%, 10 or 20% of eligible people use their new right of access.



