

CHC 16TH CONFERENCE
PRO-EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN



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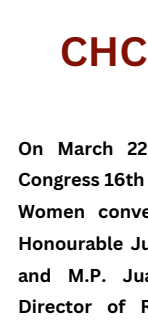
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PRESIDENT, CANADIAN
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Dear friends of the Canadian Hispanic Congress,
It is April and Spring is in the air.
We are happy to share with you our April Newsletter
Happy Easter and a wonderful start to the season of rebirth and renewal.
Monique Forster
President
Canadian Hispanic Congress

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CHC's 16th Conference Pro-Empowerment of Women

On March 22, 2026, the Canadian Hispanic Congress 16th Conference Pro-Empowerment of Women convened M.P. Julie Dzerowicz, The Honourable Judy Sgro, M.P. Jennifer McKelvie, and M.P. Juanita Nathan, alongside CHC's Director of Research and Development Dr. Alfredo Tinajero and CHC President Monique Forster. The panel offered a critical and multidimensional analysis of the contemporary global condition of women, characterizing it as both progressive and inherently paradoxical. While acknowledging decades of substantive advancements in legal rights, educational attainment, workforce participation, and political representation, the speakers emphasized some increasingly visible patterns of regression.



They identified economic crises, armed conflicts, legislative retrenchment, and persistent sociocultural hierarchies as key forces undermining hard-won progress. These dynamics, they argued, not only threaten existing gains but also expose the structural fragility of achievements secured through generations of sustained advocacy and reform. Consequently, the discussion underscored the urgent necessity of consolidating these advancements through coordinated policy, institutional accountability, and transnational cooperation.

Furthermore, the presenters provided a comprehensive overview of current governmental initiatives in Canada, designed to support women. These included the expansion of subsidized daycare programs, strengthened workplace protections, and increased investment in education and leadership development. Collectively, the conference served as a compelling call to action, emphasizing both reflection and proactive engagement in advancing gender equity worldwide.



Bill C-12 Becomes Law: Major Immigration Overhaul Sparks Rights Concerns

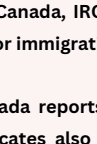
Canada's most significant immigration reform in over a decade received Royal Assent this March. According to CBC News, Bill C-12 grants the federal government broad new powers, including the ability to mass-cancel groups of visas, and sets a one-year time limit on filing asylum claims, changes the government says are necessary to manage immigration numbers and prevent system abuse.

The bill passed with support from the Liberals, Conservatives, and Bloc Québécois. However, CBC News reports that a broad coalition, including Amnesty International, the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers, and the Canadian Council for Refugees, has condemned the legislation, arguing that it undermines Canada's international obligations and places too much unchecked authority in the government's hands.



Particularly concerning, CBC News notes, is a retroactive provision that could dismiss approximately 19,000 pending refugee claims filed by people who entered Canada more than a year earlier. Legal experts quoted by CBC News say constitutional challenges are likely.

The government maintains that the law respects the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the 1951 Refugee Convention, noting that individuals whose claims are rejected still have access to a pre-removal risk assessment.



Super Visa: Easier for Families to Bring Parents and Grandparents

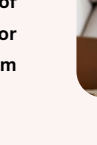


Families looking to reunite with their parents or grandparents in Canada have good news this March. According to CIC News, Canada has updated the income requirements for the Super Visa program, making it more accessible for Canadian citizens and permanent residents to qualify.

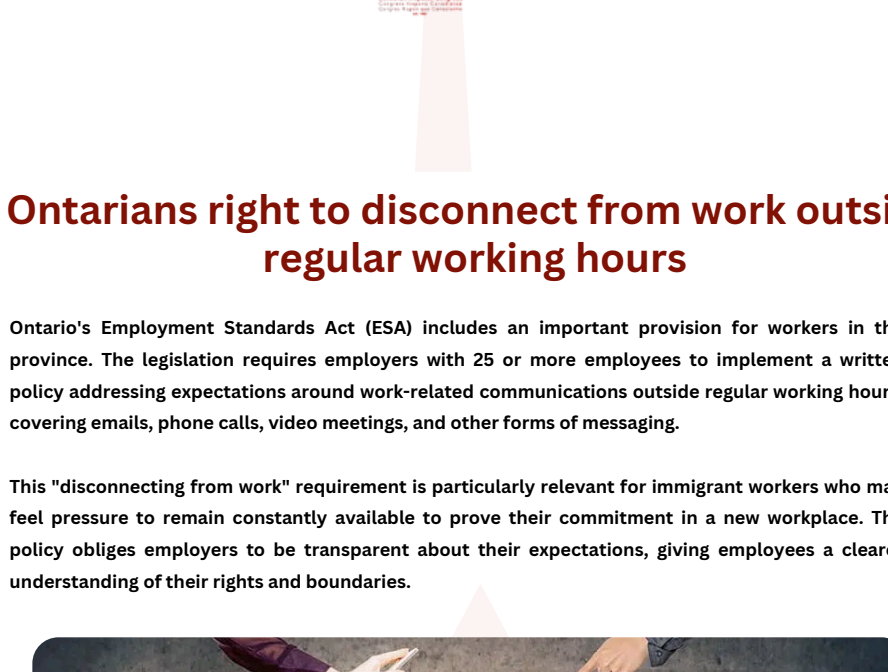
Starting March 31, 2026, CIC News reports that hosts now have two new ways to meet the minimum income threshold. First, they can use either of the two most recent taxation years, not just the most recent one, giving families more flexibility if their income fluctuates. Second, CIC News notes that part of the visiting parents' or grandparents' own income, such as a pension, can now be counted toward meeting the requirement.

The Super Visa allows parents and grandparents to visit Canada for up to five years at a time, with a visa valid for up to 10 years. CIC News clarifies that applications already in process as of March 31 will also benefit from the new rules, and families who qualified under the old criteria remain eligible.

This update is especially meaningful for Hispanic families hoping to bring loved ones closer.



Canada Sets Time Limits on Settlement Services for Economic Immigrants



Newcomers to Canada should take note of an important policy change announced this March. According to the Government of Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is introducing time limits on how long economic immigrants can access federally funded settlement services.

The Government of Canada explains that currently, economic immigrants can access these services at any point after obtaining permanent residence and before becoming Canadian citizens, with no time restriction. That is now changing. As of April 1, 2026, the Government of Canada reports that access will be limited to six years after obtaining permanent residence, further reduced to five years as of April 1, 2027.

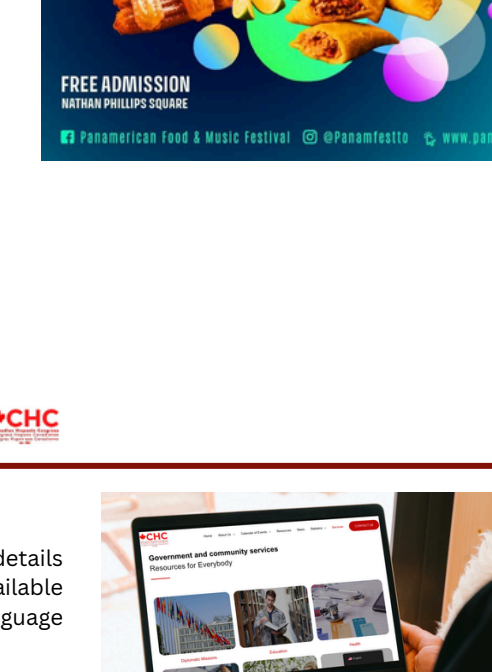
Settlement services are a vital resource for newcomers, helping them find employment, learn official languages, and integrate socially and culturally into Canadian communities. The Government of Canada states that the goal of these limits is to encourage earlier use of services and ensure they remain available for those who need them most.

Immigrants are encouraged to make use of these services as soon as possible.



Canadian Passport Fees Are Going Up – But a New Refund Guarantee Is Coming Too

Canadians planning to renew or apply for a passport should be aware of important changes taking effect this March. According to CIC News, passport fees increased on March 31, 2026, for the first time since 2013, reflecting inflation and the rising cost of producing secure travel documents.



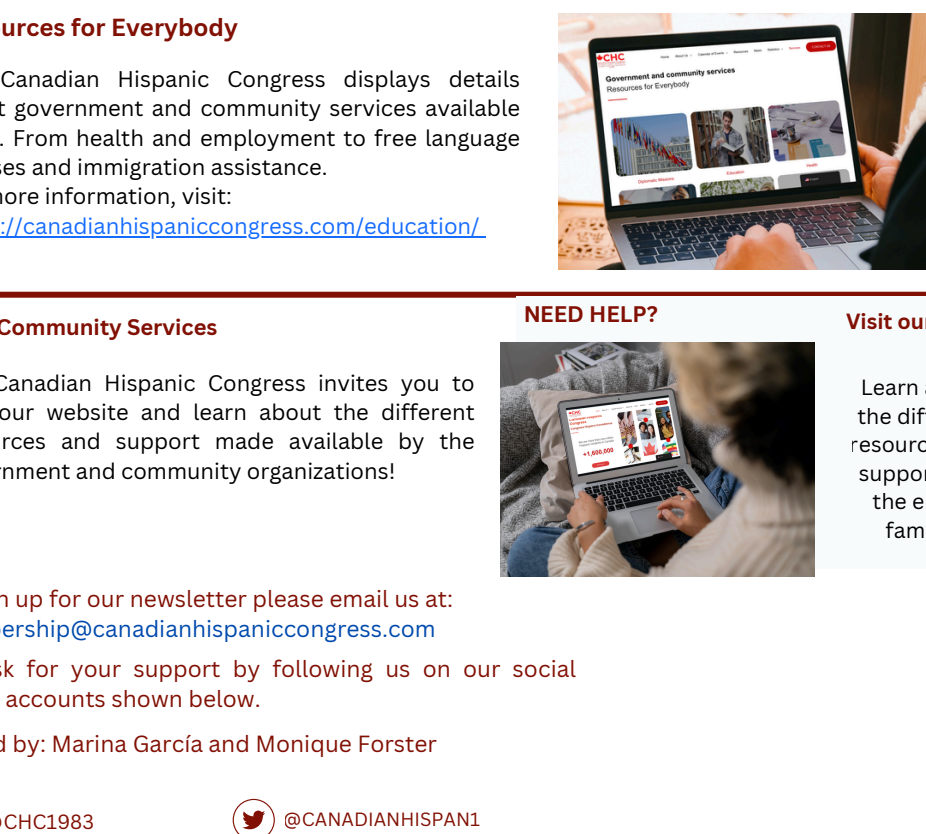
CIC News reports that the most common fee changes include the 10-year adult passport rising from \$160 to \$163.50, the 5-year adult passport from \$120 to \$122.50, and the child passport from \$57 to \$58.50. Fees for urgent and weekend services also saw steeper increases.

However, CIC News notes that the fee hike comes with a silver lining. Starting April 1, 2026, the Government of Canada is introducing a 30-business-day processing guarantee. If a complete application is not processed within that timeframe, applicants will automatically receive a full refund; no action is required.

Perhaps most notably, CIC News explains that this March increase is not a one-time adjustment. Passport fees will now be updated annually in line with Canada's Consumer Price Index, meaning Canadians can expect small but regular increases going forward. Those planning to travel should apply sooner rather than later.



IRCC Processing Times Update: Mixed Signals for Immigrants in March 2026



Immigrants and newcomers tracking their applications should pay close attention to the latest data released this month. According to Immigration News Canada, IRCC published updated processing times on March 24, 2026, revealing a mixed picture across all major immigration streams.

On the positive side, Immigration News Canada reports that citizenship grant processing improved by one month to 13 months, and citizenship certificates also dropped by one month to 10 months. Parents and grandparents sponsorship also showed encouraging progress, with non-Quebec processing falling to 34 months and Quebec to 46 months, two consecutive months of improvement.

However, Immigration News Canada warns of growing concerns in economic immigration. The Canadian Experience Class (CEC) queue surged by over 10,100 people to approximately 44,300 applicants, the largest single-month jump of the year, while processing times remained frozen at seven months.

Perhaps most alarming, Immigration News Canada flags that to extend their visitor status is strongly advised to file well in advance. Overall, the March data suggest IRCC is making progress in some areas while falling behind in others.

Canada Invests in Francophone Immigration to Strengthen Minority Communities

On International Day of La Francophonie, the Government of Canada reaffirmed its commitment to French-speaking immigrants across the country. According to the Government of Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada announced approximately \$1.5 million in new funding on March 20, 2026, to support three new projects under the Francophone Immigration Support Program.

The Government of Canada explains that these initiatives aim to strengthen the Francophone presence in the information and communications technology sector, attract and retain French-speaking talent in Northern Ontario, and inform French-speaking candidates about employment and settlement opportunities in Francophone communities outside Quebec.

Additionally, the Government of Canada highlights that the Université de l'Ontario français will receive up to \$275,000 over three years to develop a micro-certificates in Francophone immigration management, helping strengthen the three-sector's capacity across Canada.

The Government of Canada notes that in 2025, 8.9% of permanent residents admitted outside Quebec were French-speaking, reflecting steady progress toward its Francophone immigration goals.

This investment is part of a broader \$25 million commitment over five years to support Francophone minority and linguistically and ensure French-speaking immigrants successfully integrate economically, socially, and linguistically into their new homes.

First-Time Home Buyers Can Now Save Up to \$50,000 on New Homes

Newcomers and immigrants dreaming of owning their first home in Canada have important news to celebrate this March. According to the Government of Canada, the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) is now accepting applications for the new First-Time Home Buyers' GST/HST Rebate, a measure designed to make homeownership more affordable.

The Government of Canada explains that eligible first-time home buyers can receive a full or partial rebate of the GST or the federal part of the HST paid on newly constructed or substantially renovated homes, with a maximum rebate of up to \$50,000.

According to the Government of Canada, the rebate applies to homes purchased from a builder or owner-built homes where construction began on or after March 20, 2025. In many cases, builders can apply the rebate directly at closing, reducing the total amount payable. Where this is not possible, buyers can apply directly through their CRA account or by mailing the appropriate form.

The Government of Canada reminds applicants that there is a time limit to apply, generally within two years of taking ownership or completing construction. Interested buyers are encouraged to visit their CRA account to check eligibility and apply.

Ontarians right to disconnect from work outside regular working hours

Ontario's Employment Standards Act (ESA) includes an important provision for workers in the province. The legislation requires employers with 25 or more employees to implement a written policy addressing expectations around work-related communications outside regular working hours, covering emails, phone calls, video meetings, and other forms of messaging.

This "disconnecting from work" requirement is particularly relevant for immigrant workers who may feel pressure to remain constantly available to prove their commitment in a new workplace. The policy obliges employers to be transparent about their expectations, giving employees a clearer understanding of their rights and boundaries.

For newcomers building their careers in Ontario, understanding these workplace protections is an important part of integrating successfully into Canada's labor market. Workers are encouraged to request their employer's written policy and familiarize themselves with it.

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