

[2023 Budget](#)

Economic Overview:

1. Recent Economic Development

A Growing Workforce Benefits All Canadians

Immigration is a significant driver of economic growth and helps to build a stronger economy for everyone. Canada continues to post the fastest population growth in the G7, with strong immigration levels pushing population growth to its fastest pace since the 1950s (Chart 6).

Together, higher immigration and higher labour force participation are expanding the pool of available workers, and offsetting population aging more than in other G7 economies. The resulting boost to employment has helped maintain real household disposable income per capita, even as it declined in peer economies (Chart 7). This is expected to continue to support the Canadian economy throughout 2023.

Chapter 1:

Making Life More Affordable and Supporting the Middle Class

1.2 An Affordable Place to Call Home

Budget 2022 announced significant investments to make housing more affordable, including by helping people buy their first home, tackling unfair practices that drive up costs, and working with provincial and territorial governments, municipalities, and both the private sector and non-profits to double the number of new homes that Canada will build by 2032. Budget 2023 proposes new measures to build on this progress and continue the government's work to make housing more affordable from coast to coast.

Chapter 4:

Advancing Reconciliation and Building a Canada That Works for Everyone

Key Ongoing Actions

- \$1.6 billion over six years and \$315 million ongoing to welcome 500,000 new permanent residents each year by 2025, as well as an additional \$50 million to address immigration application backlogs;
- \$100 million since 2020 to increase the federal contribution to legal aid services (for Dory's reference for the immigration aid lobbying project).

4.5 A Stronger Immigration System

Canada is a country that has been shaped by immigration. Our communities and our economy are made stronger every day by people who chose to move to Canada and start a new life.

By 2025, Canada will welcome 500,000 new permanent residents each year—the majority of whom will be skilled workers who will help address the labour shortages that so many Canadian businesses are experiencing today.

In the years to come, Canada's proud history of immigration must be matched with a modern, efficient immigration system that welcomes people from around the world, strengthens our communities, and supports Canada's continued economic growth.

Safe and Efficient Citizenship Applications

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As Canada welcomes record numbers of newcomers, a safe and efficient immigration system is essential. Applications for citizenship currently rely on name-based searches for screening, rather than biometric tools, such as fingerprints, that are used in visa and permanent residence applications. Name-based searches are slower and less accurate, and lead to increased processing times.

- Budget 2023 proposes to provide \$10 million over five years, starting in 2023-24, with \$14.6 million in remaining amortization for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to implement biometrics, which will help expedite the processing of citizenship applications.

This funding will build on important progress made in 2022, including the processing of 5.2 million applications for permanent residence, temporary residence, and citizenship. Additionally, further steps have already been taken to move key immigration services online, including the confirmation of permanent residence status and the introduction of online citizenship testing and ceremonies.

Supporting Legal Aid for Asylum Seekers

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Access to legal representation, information, and advice ensures that Canada's asylum process is fair for everyone, and makes the process more efficient. For asylum seekers who are unable to pay for legal support, the federal government helps fund legal aid services in partnership with provinces and territories.

- Budget 2023 proposes to provide \$43.5 million in 2023-24 to Justice Canada to maintain federal support for immigration and refugee legal aid services.

Chapter 6: Effective Government and a Fair Tax System

Key Ongoing Actions

- Reducing call centre wait times with \$574 million for Service Canada and \$400 million for the Canada Revenue Agency;
- Improving services at the border with a \$137 million investment in the Canada Border Services Agency;
- Speeding up immigration application processing by hiring 1,250 new staff and investing in more efficient technology;

6.2 Improving Services for Canadians

Faster Passport Processing and Improved Immigration Services

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Canadians are eager to travel abroad again, and people from around the world continue to want to come to Canada to work, study, and build their lives. Whether someone is renewing their passport, immigrating to Canada, or reuniting with their family, everyone should be able to count on fast and efficient service.

Last year, as the world opened up and people began to travel, too many Canadians and newcomers were forced to deal with unacceptable wait times. To address this, the federal government has adopted new technologies, streamlined processing, and made significant new investments, including \$135 million in 2022-23 to address immigration application backlogs. This has resulted in:

- The elimination of passport application backlogs and the return to pre-pandemic processing times of 10 days for in-person applications at specialized passport offices, and 20 days for applications received by mail or dropped off at a Service Canada Centre;
- The processing of 5.2 million applications for permanent residence, temporary residence, and citizenship in 2022—double the number of applications processed in 2021; and,
- The government moving more key services online, including the confirmation of permanent residence status and the introduction of online citizenship testing and ceremonies, as well as addressing backlogs of paper-based applications through digitization.

Improving Canada.ca and 1 800 O-Canada

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All Canadians should have quick and easy access to information on government programs and services—whether they are a senior who prefers to call, a person with a disability who requires a more accessible website, or someone who prefers to look for information on their phone. After a sharp rise in inquiries during the pandemic, requests for information through Canada.ca and 1 800 O-Canada (622-6232) remain at nearly double their pre-pandemic levels.

- Budget 2023 proposes to provide \$17.7 million over four years, starting in 2023-24, to Employment and Social Development Canada to increase capacity at 1 800 O-Canada call centres, improve Canada.ca, and ensure that Canadians can access information they need about government benefits and services.

Annex 3:

Legislative Measures

- **Better Protecting Immigration and Citizenship Clients:** In Budget 2023, the government proposes to amend the *College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants Act*, the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* and the *Citizenship Act* to strengthen the regime governing the profession of immigration and citizenship consultants. These amendments would allow the College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants to better function as a public interest regulator, including by implementing a more effective complaints and discipline process, improving overall governance and enhancing protection from unethical or fraudulent representation.



- **Citizenship Act Modernization:** In Budget 2023, the government proposes to amend the *Citizenship Act* to enable: the electronic administration of the citizenship program; automated and machine-assisted processing; and the collection and use of biometric information. This would allow for faster and more efficient citizenship application processing.
- **Improving Client Service in the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program:** In Budget 2023, the government proposes to amend the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* to improve application intake in the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program, resulting in shorter and more predictable processing times, helping sponsors to plan and prepare for the arrival of refugee families.
- **Electronic Submission of Asylum Claims:** In Budget 2023, the government proposes to amend the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* to allow Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to require electronic submission of asylum claims.
- **Traveller Modernization:** In Budget 2023, the government proposes to introduce amendments to the *Customs Act* that will allow the Canada Border Services Agency to transform how low-risk travellers are processed when entering Canada through enhanced use of technology.