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We can help with a specific immigration problem or develop your business immigration plan. We provide services on a fixed fee basis or bill hourly, in US or Canadian currency, as per our clients' request.

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ACCOUNTABILITY

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BEREZOWSKI'S BORDERLAW®

*** UPDATE ***

Spousal Sponsorship Will the Canadian Government 'Speed up' Processing?

**From: Nan Berezowski, Barrister & Solicitor (Ontario),
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As the COVID-19 pandemic shifts from an urgent crisis to an ongoing one, the Canadian government is now addressing its backlog of Spousal Sponsorship files. On September 24, 2020, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, the Honourable Marco E. L. Mendicino, announced a plan to speed up spousal application processing:

First, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) has increased the number of decision makers on spousal applications by a reported 66%;

Second, IRCC is implementing new technology designed to facilitate the application review process. This technology will include:

- a pilot for digitizing paper applications,
- remote interviews, and
- facilitative biometrics measures.

The IRCC announcement is in response to growing concern over the challenges that cross-border couples face, as a result of COVID-19 and related travel restrictions, that have limited their ability to reunite. Usually, IRCC publishes its standard processing times for spousal sponsorships; as it has not done so since the pandemic began, it is difficult to say how much processing has slowed. However, given the lag in application 'Acknowledgements', I imagine government storage rooms overflowing with untouched spousal sponsorship applications.

Are there any signs of IRCC's new plan? My office has recently received a new IRCC email acknowledging receipt of the application. The email indicates that the application has *not* had its initial review 'for completeness' and provides a *temporary* file number. This email arrives anywhere from 3 weeks to 3 months after filing. What about the digitizing pilot? It seems that IRCC will scan the paper applications that it requires and email them to decisions makers who are working from home. My concern is that, to appear responsive, IRCC is adding additional steps to its existing process at the expense of reducing its backlog.

Nonetheless, IRCC aims to finalize approximately 6,000 spousal applications each month from October through December 2020. Accordingly, its plan should lead to close to 50,000 decisions by the end of the year. By comparison, in 2019 it adjudicated approximately 68,000 spousal sponsorship applications.

Nan Berezowski (BA, LL.B, LL.M) compiled this Update with the latest available information for the general information of Berezowski Business Immigration Law clients and other interested parties. This Update is not comprehensive and should not be relied upon without appropriate legal advice.