

Canada to Lift Visa Requirements for Mexican Citizens

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On June 28, 2016, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau [formally announced](#) that the Temporary Resident Visa ("TRV") requirement for citizens of Mexico travelling to Canada will be eliminated as of December 1, 2016. However, the existing TRV requirement will continue until November 30, 2016. Mexican citizens who wish to travel to Canada before December 1, 2016, will still need to obtain a TRV from a Canadian consular post.

This announcement reverses Canada's prior decision to impose TRV requirements on Mexican citizens, which became effective on July 14, 2009. At the time, Citizenship and Immigration Canada ("CIC") indicated that Mexican refugee cases had almost tripled since 2005, making it the number one source country for refugee claims. In 2008, more than 9,400 claims filed in Canada came from Mexican nationals, representing 25 per cent of all claims received. Of the Mexican claims reviewed and finalized in 2008 by the Immigration and Refugee Board, an independent administrative tribunal, only 11% were accepted.

Just prior to the Prime Minister's announcement, [the media reported](#) that the Trudeau government was still prepared to re-impose the TRV requirement if the number of refugee claims from Mexico jumped above a certain level. It also reported that CIC officials had opposed the move, warning that Mexico's low standard of living, poor human-rights record, and high crime rates would drive Mexican citizens to seek refuge in Canada. They also expressed concern that refugee claimants in other Latin American countries, wishing to gain entry to Canada, could take advantage of Mexico's weak passport system without having to undergo Canada's rigorous visa screening.

CIC officials apparently advised the Federal Cabinet that removing the TRV requirement for Mexico would result in 3,500 asylum claims in 2017, up to 6,000 the following year and 9,000 in 2019. According to the media, the Federal Cabinet disregarded CIC's recommendations but set specific conditions for Mexico to satisfy, including a partial re-imposition of the TRV requirement if refugee claimants from Mexico reach a threshold of 3,500 within any 12-month period.

Even after December 1, 2016, visa-exempt Mexican citizens will still be required to register under Canada's [Electronic Travel Authorization](#) ("eTA") Program. The eTA requirement was supposed to become mandatory for almost all visa-exempt travellers on August 1, 2015. However, CIC later [announced a leniency period](#) and indicated that the eTA requirement would not become mandatory until Fall 2016. Of course, the eTA requirement should be in place by the time Mexican citizens become TRV-exempt on December 1, 2016.