



**FREDERICTON
CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE**
— The Voice of Business —

364 York Street, Suite 200
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10 December 2019

Hon. Marco E. L. Mendicino
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
365 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 1L1

Via email: marco.mendicino@canada.com

Dear Minister Mendicino:

Re: The Startup Visa Program

Congratulations on your recent appointment as Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship. As I'm sure is true across the country, the immigration file is one of the most important to our community, province and the Atlantic Region as a whole.

I'm am writing today to bring your attention to a specific issue within your department, namely the timeliness of the Startup Visa program.

The SUV was designed to attract innovative foreign entrepreneurs who would contribute to the innovation needs of the Canadian economy and facilitate entry of innovative entrepreneurs who would actively pursue business ventures in Canada. To receive permanent residency under the program, applicants must receive support from a designated organization (such as Ignite Fredericton in our area) under one of 3 streams: venture capital, angel investment, or business incubation.

On 11 April 2018 the SUV program shifted from a pilot to a permanent program. Leading up to this shift, processing times for applicants had decreased from 2013 to 2015, from an average of 6.7 months to 4.1 months for most applicants. Since then, processing times have steadily increased and are now advertised at 12-16 months for new applicants with many taking even longer, with little to no explanation for the delay. As stated in a review of the pilot program: "The importance of timely processing for this client group was frequently highlighted by key informants, with the majority stating that the success of a business (especially those in mobile technology) often depends on how fast it can be launched."

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With the program being made permanent, many designated organizations placed significant time and resources into streamlining their SUV activities expecting reciprocity from IRCC, but that has not been the case. The bottleneck created by IRCC's drastic increase in processing times has hindered designated organizations' ability to attract and retain potential high-growth, high-impact immigrant entrepreneurs and their firms.

Earlier this year, our chamber of commerce submitted a policy resolution to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce annual general meeting and conference that aims to address these issues. That resolution passed with 99% of delegates in support and is now part of the national chamber's advocacy efforts.

The resolutions call on the federal government to:

1. Ensure IRCC processing times fall into the original 6-8 month timeline while maintaining program integrity;
2. Provide a mechanism for effective communication on file processing times between designated incubation centres and IRCC to manage client expectations;
3. Provide transparent and detailed reasons for disapproved files within 30 days upon a client's request or to an IRCC designated organization if approved by the client.
4. Introduce a mechanism that allows minor corrections to SUV applications without restarting the process.

Our organization asks that your department put resources into ensuring that the Startup Visa program is running smoothly and efficiently as intended so that communities such as ours can take advantage of its benefits to attract the people we need to grow. If the program cannot move at closer to the speed of business, the program will continue to suffer and not fulfill its great potential.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Krista Ross".

Krista Ross, CEO, Fredericton Chamber of Commerce

cc: Leah Nord, Director, Skills & Immigration Policy, Canadian Chamber of Commerce
cc: Larry Shaw, CEO, Ignite Fredericton

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