Global Immigration alert

April 2026

Canada

Canada to extend certain work permit policies for Ukrainian nationals

Executive summary

The Canada Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) was introduced in March 2022 as a temporary humanitarian measure to allow Ukrainian nationals and their family members displaced by the conflict in Ukraine to reside and work in Canada on a temporary basis.

As the conflict in the Ukraine remains ongoing, on 31 March 2026, the Honourable Lena Diab, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, announced a further extension to work permit measures under CUAET and related public policies. Eligible individuals in Canada now have until 31 March 2027 to apply to extend their work authorization, with approved extensions permitting up to three additional years of work authorization, subject to eligibility and status requirements.

Key developments

- The CUAET policy extension applies to Ukrainian nationals and their accompanying dependents who:
  - arrived in Canada on or before 31 March 2024, or
  - were approved to travel earlier but, due to processing delays, were authorized to enter Canada and ultimately arrived between 1 April 2024 and 31 December 2024.
- Eligible individuals may apply for one work permit extension only under this policy. While the extension may be issued for up to three years, repeat renewals under this measure are not available.
- Applicants must be physically in Canada and must hold valid temporary resident status at both the time the extension application is submitted and when a decision is rendered. As current processing times are lengthy, it is recommended that eligible applicants submit their applications as early as possible.
- Work permits issued under the CUAET program will continue to be issued as open work permits.
- Ukrainians seeking to extend their stay as a visitor or student may continue to apply under the regular IRCC extension processes applicable to those categories.
- Further operational details are expected to be confirmed through the publication of a formal temporary public policy, including application instructions and implementation guidance.

Impact on employers

The extension of the CUAET program is beneficial to employers who have been relying on this talent pool. From a workforce planning perspective:

- Existing employees must still apply proactively to extend their work authorization; work permits do not extend automatically.
- Where an application is submitted before the current work permit expires, employees may generally continue working under maintained status, in accordance with IRCC rules. Note the extended policy requires an employee to have valid status at the time the application is adjudicated so it is recommended that extensions are filed early as processing times at the time of writing are posted at 253 days.

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- The availability of an open work permit extension reduces the need to transition affected employees to employer specific work permits in the near term, supporting labor market flexibility and continuity.
- Given the one-time nature of this extension, employers should consider longer term immigration planning for key employees whose future status may need to be addressed beyond this extension period.

Key steps

Employers and affected individuals may wish to consider the following actions:

- Identify employees currently working in Canada under CUAET or related temporary public policies.
- Confirm eligibility, including arrival dates and status validity.
- Track work permit expiry dates and plan extension filings well in advance.
- Update internal records once extensions are approved and reassess longer term pathways as appropriate.

EY Law will continue to monitor IRCC guidance as these measures are implemented. If you have questions regarding eligibility, timing, or strategic considerations for your workforce, please contact one of our immigration professionals.

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