

Canada Open Work Permits: 2025 Changes And Eligibility Requirements



Important Update on Open Work Permits for Family Members of Foreign Workers in Canada

As of **January 21, 2025**, significant changes are being implemented to the eligibility requirements for **open work permits (OWPs)** for family members of foreign workers and certain **international students in Canada**. These changes also impact the eligibility of **dependent children**, making it crucial for families to stay informed.

At **Sobirovs Law Firm**, we understand the importance of staying updated on immigration policies. We want to ensure our clients are fully aware of these changes and how they may impact their family members' ability to work in Canada.

Who Can Apply?

Eligible family members of foreign workers and international students can apply for open work permits, enabling them to work for **any employer** in Canada. However, as of **January 21, 2025**, the eligibility criteria will change significantly.

Key changes include:

- Spouses of foreign workers will only qualify if the primary worker holds a job in specific **high-skilled occupations** under **TEER 0, 1**, and select occupations in **TEER 2 and 3**, and his/her work permit must have the remaining validity of **at least 16 months**.
- **Spouses of international students** will only qualify if the student is enrolled in a **Master's, PhD, or select professional degree program**.
- **Dependent children will no longer be eligible** for open work permits.

If you apply **before January 21, 2025**, your application will be processed under the previous eligibility criteria.

If you **already have an open work permit**, it will remain **valid until its expiration**, and its status will not change.

Updated Eligibility Criteria (Effective January 21, 2025)

To be eligible for an **open work permit**, foreign nationals and their family members

must meet updated conditions based on the **primary worker's status and occupation in Canada**.

1. Spouses of Foreign Workers

Eligibility Requirements:

The primary worker must be employed in one of the following categories:

- **TEER 0 and 1 occupations** (e.g., senior management, IT professionals, engineers, architects, university professors)
- **Select TEER 2 occupations** (e.g., engineering technicians, healthcare technologists, electrical and mechanical technicians)
- **Select TEER 3 occupations** (e.g., nurses, paramedics, dental assistants, bus drivers, truck drivers, heavy equipment operators)
- The primary worker must have **at least 16 months remaining** on their valid work permit at the time of application.

These changes will significantly impact [temporary foreign workers](#) and their families, especially those in lower-skilled occupations.

2. Spouses of International Students

Eligibility Requirements:

The student must be an international student enrolled in a **Master's, PhD, or professional degree program** in Canada.

Eligible programs include:

- **Doctor of Medicine (MD)**
- **Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS, DMD)**
- **Bachelor of Law or Juris Doctor (LLB, JD, BCL)**
- **Doctor of Optometry (OD)**
- **Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM)**
- **Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BScN, BSN, BN, BNSc)**
- **Bachelor of Education (BEd)**
- **Bachelor of Engineering (BEng, BE, BASc)**

Proof of enrollment (e.g., a valid **letter of acceptance or transcript**) must be provided.

3. Dependent Children

No longer eligible for an open work permit under the new rules. While this change removes a significant benefit for families, it aims to streamline the work permit process.

Application Process

Applying for an open [work permit in Canada](#) involves several key steps:

Step 1: Determine Eligibility

- Ensure you meet the criteria for **spouses of foreign workers or international students** under the new rules.

Step 2: Gather Required Documents

- **A valid passport**
- **Recent photographs**
- **Proof of status in Canada** (if applicable)
- **Proof of relationship** (e.g., marriage certificate, proof of common-law relationship)
- **Proof of enrollment for students' spouses** (if applicable)
- **Medical exam results** (if required)
- **Police clearance certificate** (if required)

Step 3: Submit Application Online

- Applications must be submitted through **Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)**.
- **Fee: \$255** (includes a \$155 work permit application fee + \$100 open work permit holder fee).

Step 4: Await Decision & Work Permit Issuance

- If applying from outside Canada, applicants will receive a **letter of introduction**.
- If already in Canada, a new work permit will be issued.

Obtaining an open work permit can open up numerous employment opportunities across various sectors in Canada.

Required Documents

When applying for a Canadian work permit, it is essential to provide the required documents to support your application. The documents needed may vary depending on the type of work permit you are applying for and your individual circumstances. Here are some of the common documents required for a Canadian work permit application:

- **A valid passport:** Ensure your passport is up-to-date and valid for the duration of your stay in Canada.
- **A job offer from a Canadian employer:** If applicable, provide a formal job offer letter from your prospective [employer in Canada](#).
- **A Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA):** If required, include a positive LMIA from Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC).
- **Proof of language proficiency:** Submit test results from approved language tests such as IELTS or CELPIP.
- **Proof of education:** Provide copies of your educational credentials, such as diplomas or degrees.
- **Police certificates:** Obtain police clearance certificates from all countries where you have lived for six months or more.
- **Medical exam results:** If required, undergo a medical examination by an approved panel physician and include the results.
- **Proof of sufficient funds:** Demonstrate that you have enough money to support yourself and your family members during your stay in Canada.
- **Proof of relationship with family members:** If applicable, provide documents such as marriage certificates or proof of common-law relationships.

It is crucial to ensure that all documents are accurate, complete, and up-to-date to avoid delays or rejection of your application.

Fees and Funding

The cost of applying for a Canadian work permit can vary depending on the type of

permit and the applicant's circumstances. Here are some of the common fees associated with Canadian work permit applications:

- **Work permit application fee:** \$155 CAD
- **Open work permit holder fee:** \$100 CAD
- **Biometrics fee:** \$85 CAD
- **Medical exam fee:** Varies depending on the doctor and location
- **Police certificate fee:** Varies depending on the country and issuing authority

Applicants may also need to demonstrate sufficient funds to support themselves and their family members during their stay in Canada. The amount of funds required varies depending on the applicant's circumstances, but generally, applicants must show that they have enough money to cover their living expenses, tuition fees (if applicable), and return transportation.

Processing Time and Status Updates

The processing time for Canadian work permit applications can vary depending on the type of permit, the applicant's circumstances, and the workload of the immigration authorities. Here are some general guidelines on processing times:

- **Online applications:** 2-4 weeks
- **Paper-based applications:** 4-6 weeks
- **Applications requiring a medical exam:** 6-8 weeks
- **Applications requiring a police certificate:** 8-12 weeks

Applicants can check the status of their applications online through the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) website or by contacting the IRCC call center. It is essential to keep track of your application status and follow up with the immigration authorities if there are any delays or issues with it.

Note: The processing times and fees mentioned above are subject to change, and applicants should always check the official IRCC website for the most up-to-date information.

Benefits of Open Work Permits

- **Flexibility to work** for any employer in Canada
- **Financial stability** for foreign workers' families
- **Pathway to permanent residence** for eligible applicants under applicable immigration program(s)
- **Enhanced job mobility** for foreign workers, allowing them to switch employers without needing a new permit

What Happens After January 21, 2025?

- Foreign nationals and family members of foreign workers and students **must meet the new eligibility rules** to apply for an OWP.
- Spouses of most foreign workers **will no longer automatically qualify**—only those in **high-skilled occupations** can apply.
- Applications submitted **before January 21, 2025**, will still be processed under the old rules.

If your family member **is not eligible**, alternative options include:

- Applying for a **Temporary Resident Visa (TRV)** to stay in Canada
- Applying for a **study permit**
- Applying for an **employer-specific work permit** (if they secure a job offer with

an LMIA)

How Sobirovs Law Firm Can Help You

At **Sobirovs Law Firm**, we specialize in [business immigration](#) and work permits. Our experienced team provides **personalized legal guidance** to ensure a smooth application process.

Talk to us to assess your eligibility under the new rules, **prepare and submit your application** under an applicable category, and **explore alternative options** if you do not qualify for an OWP

The content of this article is intended to provide a general guide to the subject matter. Specialist advice should be sought about your specific circumstances.

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