

New Brunswick

Delays in visa processing worry immigrants

It can take as long as six months to process an application

[Lauren Bird](#) · CBC News · Posted: Jan 20, 2021 5:00 AM AT | Last Updated: January 20



Rayanne Ribas and husband Amauri Ribas lost Medicare coverage while waiting months to have a work permit renewed. (submitted)

Long wait times are still affecting hundreds of immigrants applying to renew their visas here in New Brunswick.

Rayanne Ribas says she and her family have prepared for a months-long wait to have their visas renewed.

The Ribas family came to New Brunswick in 2019 and will make their third visa application under the Atlantic Pilot Program while they wait for permanent residency.

The Ribas had to reapply for the visa last year, and have to do it again this year.

- **Immigrants left in limbo as permit processing takes months**

By April of 2021, all of their visas will have expired.

But according to Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada, it could take 6 months to process the application.

"I'm kind of shocked, to be honest, that I have to extend one more time," said Ribas, "and spend that much money one more time and be at the same situation like one more time."





Amauri Ribas, Rayanne Ribas, and their son. (submitted)

IRCC says the pandemic has complicated processes and led to the delays. In a statement, a spokesperson said IRCC has prioritized vulnerable people, family members seeking to reunite, and essential workers. It said it is also working to process more applications virtually.

But Rayanne Ribas worries that because of the delays, she won't have her visa renewed before her current one expires and she or her husband will fall into "implied status" again.

Under "implied status", people waiting for new visas risk losing their legal status in the country, said Ginette Gautreau, interim executive director for the New Brunswick Multicultural Association, making it harder to find employment, rent housing, and make any purchases requiring credit checks. It can also impact Medicare coverage.

Last year, Ribas' husband Amauri had to have surgery while he was in implied status and didn't have coverage. The provincial government agreed to cover that bill.

"The delays at IRCC and the impacts that it has on implied status and access to Medicare are continuing," said Gautreau. "They're looking at addressing those and hopefully trying to catch up. But there hasn't been -- I would say -- any significant progress from (last) year."

The New Brunswick Multicultural Council estimated in October that there could be between 3,500 and 4,000 people living under implied status in the province. Gautreau said those numbers haven't changed much.

She also said there's not much that can be done to help people in that situation.

"But if there are emergency cases where people's lives are at risk or excessive costs related to access to medical support, we try to support where we can in terms of escalating those requests up," she said.

Ribas said the provincial government is working to provide some medical coverage to people who fall under implied status, but CBC has been unable to confirm that.

Ribas applied for permanent residency in 2019, but hasn't heard anything about her application since April 2020.

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