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New Requirement for Certain Travellers to Canada - Electronic Travel Authorization (eTA)

By Jennifer McRae



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As of March 15, 2016 most visa-exempt foreign nationals, including tourists, business people, foreign workers and students, travelling to or transiting through Canada by air must have an Electronic Travel Authorization (eTA) electronically linked to their passport in order to board a plane.

Exemptions from the eTA Requirement

There are certain foreign nationals who are exempt from the eTA requirement. The most significant exemption being for U.S. citizens. Note that this exemption does not extend to U.S. green card holders.

Also, citizens of countries that require Temporary Resident Visas to enter Canada are exempt from the eTA requirement.

Further, visa-exempt foreign nationals who are travelling to Canada by land or sea are not required to obtain an eTA.

There are other exemptions which are not mentioned in this article.

Automatic Issuance of eTA

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) (formerly called Citizenship and Immigration Canada) has indicated that visa exempt foreign nationals who received a work permit or study permit after July 31, 2015 will have automatically been issued an eTA. Therefore, these individuals would not be required to apply for an eTA.

Applying for an eTA

The eTA application process is an online process. In order to apply for an eTA, a foreign national must have:

1. a valid passport;
2. a credit card; and
3. a valid email address.

Note that separate applications must be submitted for each person travelling to Canada.

Information Required for eTA Application

A foreign national must include the following information on the eTA application form:

1. passport details
2. personal details

3. occupation and previous travel
4. answer questions to assess health, criminality and other immigration-related concerns
5. contact information

eTA Processing Fee

The processing fee for an eTA is \$7 CAD and is paid at the time of online submission of the eTA application.

Processing of eTA Application

When an eTA application is approved, IRCC will send an email to the applicant confirming approval. Upon approval the eTA will be electronically linked to the applicant's passport. IRCC will not issue any further official documentation to evidence the approval.

Generally, the eTA processing time is very quick with most eTA applications being approved within minutes of applying. If an application is taking longer to process, IRCC will send an email within 72 hours telling an applicant what the next steps are which may include requests for additional information or documents.

Validity Period of eTA

An eTA is valid for five years or until the applicant's passport expires, whichever occurs first. The passport that the eTA is linked to must be used for all travel during the validity period. If a new passport is obtained then a new eTA is required. A designated officer may cancel an eTA.

Enforcement of eTA Requirement

Airlines will be required to confirm on the Interactive Advance Passenger Information (IAPI) system of the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) that the person has an eTA linked to his/her passport before authorizing entry onto the flight. If a person is required to have an eTA and does not, the airline will deny the person entry onto the flight.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jennifer McRae

Phone: 204.934.2374 | Email: jem@tdslaw.com | Web: www.tdslaw.com/jem



Jennifer's practice focuses primarily on corporate and commercial law, business immigration, intellectual property and commercial real estate transactions including sales, purchases and mortgage financing. Jennifer's practice in business immigration focuses on assisting businesses and their executives with a wide variety of immigration and citizenship matters including, temporary resident visas, work and study permits, permanent residence and Canadian citizenship.