

[Français \(/français/ministere/media/communiques/2012/2012-10-26.asp\)](#)



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[BUSINESS](#)

[BENEFITS](#)

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[\(HTTP://CANADA.CA/EN/SERVICES/BENEFITS/INDEX.HTML\)](http://CANADA.CA/EN/SERVICES/BENEFITS/INDEX.HTML)

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→ [Citizenship and Immigration Canada \(english/department/index.asp\)](#) → [News \(english/department/media/index.asp\)](#) → [News Releases – 2012 \(index.asp\)](#)

News Release — "The Jig is Up on Marriage Fraud," says Minister Kenney

Mississauga, October 26, 2012 — In an ongoing effort to deter people from using marriages of convenience to cheat their way into Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) introduced a new regulation that requires certain sponsored spouses live in a legitimate relationship with their sponsor for two years or they risk losing their permanent resident status.

"There are countless cases of marriage fraud across the country," said Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Minister Jason Kenney. "I have consulted widely with Canadians, and especially with victims of marriage fraud, who have told me clearly that we must take action to stop this abuse of our immigration system. Sometimes the sponsor in Canada is being duped and sometimes it's a commercial transaction. Implementing a two-year conditional permanent residence period will help deter marriage fraud, prevent the callous victimization of innocent Canadians and help us put an end to these scams."

The new regulations (<http://www.gazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p2/2012/2012-11-07/html/sor-dors227-eng.html>) apply to spouses or partners in a relationship of two years or less and who have no children in common with their sponsor at the time they submit their sponsorship application. The spouse or partner must live in a legitimate relationship with their sponsor for two years from the day on which they receive their permanent resident status in Canada. The status of the sponsored spouse or partner may be revoked if they do not remain in the relationship.

Minister Kenney was joined at today's announcement by representatives of Canadians Against Immigration Fraud (CAIF). Sam Benet, President of CAIF (Canadians Against Immigration Fraud) (Canadians Against Immigration Fraud) stated: "We applaud Minister Kenney for taking bold steps to address the growing problem of marriage fraud and for protecting the integrity of our immigration system."

"I think it is a very good measure," added Palwinder Singh Gill, founder of the Canadian Marriage Fraud Victims Society. "Canada's generous family sponsorship program was being abused because many people were marrying only to get a permanent resident card and then leave their partners. With this rule, those abusing the system will think twice."

The regulations include an exception for sponsored spouses or partners suffering abuse or neglect. The conditional measure would cease to apply in instances where there is evidence of abuse or neglect by the sponsor or if the sponsor fails to protect the sponsored spouse or partner from abuse or neglect. This abuse or neglect could be perpetrated by the sponsor or a person related to the sponsor, whether or not the abusive party is living in the household or not during the conditional period. The exception would also apply in the event of the death of the sponsor.

The conditional measure is now in force, which means that it applies to permanent residents in relationships of two years or less, with no children in common, whose applications are received on or after October 25, 2012.

Conditional permanent residence does not differ from regular permanent residence other than the need to satisfy the two-year requirement.

These regulations bring Canadian policy in line with that of many other countries including Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom, all of whom use a form of conditional status as a deterrent against marriage fraud. The lack of such a measure increased Canada's vulnerability to this type of unlawful activity. It is expected that by implementing a conditional permanent residence measure of two years as a means to deter marriage fraud, Canada will no longer be considered a "soft target" by individuals considering a marriage of convenience to circumvent Canada's immigration laws.

"Canadians are generous and welcoming, but they have no tolerance for fraudsters who lie and cheat to jump the queue," said Minister Kenney. "This measure will help strengthen the integrity of our immigration system and prevent the victimization of innocent Canadians."

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In addition to conditional permanent residence, CIC (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) introduced, in March of this past year, a measure that promotes sponsored spouses from sponsoring a new spouse for five years following the date they become a permanent resident. Along with a multilingual advertising campaign, CIC (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) released a short video warning people not to be duped into committing marriage fraud. The video directs people to the website www.immigration.gc.ca/antiifraud (<http://www.immigration.gc.ca/antiifraud>) for advice on how to immigrate to Canada "the right way."

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- [Conditional Permanent Resident Status \(/english/department/media/backgrounders/2012/2012-10-26a.asp\)](http://www.immigration.gc.ca/english/department/media/backgrounders/2012/2012-10-26a.asp)
- [Exceptions from Conditional Permanent Residence for Victims of Abuse or Neglect \(/english/department/media/backgrounders/2012/2012-10-26b.asp\)](http://www.immigration.gc.ca/english/department/media/backgrounders/2012/2012-10-26b.asp)

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Transparency

- Government of Canada (<http://www150.computer.org/2012/2012-10-26a.asp>)
- Reporting (<http://canada.ca/en/transparency/reporting.html>)
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News Release – Minister Kenney introduces sponsorship restriction to address marriage fraud

Toronto, March 2, 2012 — The Government of Canada has put in place a bar on sponsorship in an ongoing effort to deter people from using a marriage of convenience to come to Canada, Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Minister Jason Kenney announced today.

Regulatory changes now in force mean sponsored spouses or partners will have to wait five years from the day they are granted permanent residence status in Canada to sponsor a new spouse or partner. Until now, a sponsored spouse or partner arriving in Canada as a permanent resident could leave their sponsor and sponsor another spouse or partner themselves, while their original sponsor was still financially responsible for them for up to three years.

"I held town hall meetings across the country to hear from victims of marriage fraud," said Minister Kenney. "In addition to the heartbreak and pain that came from being lied to and deceived, these people were angry. They felt they had been used as a way to get to Canada. We're taking action because immigration to Canada should not be built upon deceit."

Minister Kenney was joined by representatives of Canadians Against Immigration Fraud (CAIF) at today's announcement.

"We welcome the steps taken by the Honourable Jason Kenney to stop marriage fraud," said Sam S. Benel, President of CAIF (Canadians Against Immigration Fraud) (Canadians Against Immigration Fraud). "These measures will definitely protect the integrity of our immigration system."

Spousal sponsorship is open to abuse when a person enters into a relationship – such as a marriage or a common law partnership – in order to circumvent Canada's immigration law. Concerned with the problem, the Minister held online consultations in the fall of 2010 to gather public opinion and ideas on how to best address marriage fraud.

"Many of the people who took part in the consultations made it abundantly clear that marriage fraud poses a significant threat to our immigration system," added Minister Kenney. "Our government has listened to the victims of marriage fraud and all Canadians, and acted to crack down on those who engage in fraud and abuse Canadians' generosity and our immigration system."

Barring such sponsorships is consistent with similar restrictions imposed by Australia, New Zealand and the United States

The proposal for a five-year sponsorship bar was pre-published in the *Canada Gazette* on April 2, 2011, and was open for a 30-day public comment period. The changes coming into force today, March 2, are posted on Citizenship and Immigration Canada's website ([/english/department/media/backgrounders/2012/2012-03-02.asp](#)) and will be published in Part II of the *Canada Gazette* on March 14, 2012.

To show it is serious about cracking down on marriage fraud, CIC (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) is taking a number of steps to deter it. For example, in addition to the sponsorship bar, further public consultations are also expected to begin in the coming weeks on a proposed conditional permanent residence measure. A *Notice of Intent* (<http://www.gazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p1/2011/2011-03-26/html/notice-avis-eng.html#d114>) proposing the development of this conditional measure was published in the *Canada Gazette* on March 26, 2011. The measure aims to deter people in newer relationships from using their relationship to gain quick entry to Canada as permanent residents when they have no intention of staying with their sponsor

In addition, legislation to crack down on crooked consultants came into force in June 2011 and last spring, CIC (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) launched an anti-fraud campaign, which will be relaunched this month. This includes a short video warning people not to be duped into committing marriage

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fraud. The video directs people to a special link on the CIC (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) website (www.cic.gc.ca/en/immfraud) to find out how to immigrate to Canada the right way.

[Photo of Minister Kenney \(/english/department/media/photos/high-res/index.asp\)](http://www.cic.gc.ca/en/immfraud)

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News

Newsroom
([/english/department/media/index.asp](http://canada.ca/en/gov/dep/media/index.asp))

News releases
([/english/department/media/releases/index.asp](http://canada.ca/en/gov/dep/media/releases/index.asp))

Media advisories
(<http://news.gc.ca/web/nwprdc-en.do?mthd=ip&ctrlp1D=3>)

Speeches
([/english/department/media/speeches/index.asp](http://canada.ca/en/gov/dep/media/speeches/index.asp))

Statements
([/english/department/media/statements/index.asp](http://canada.ca/en/gov/dep/media/statements/index.asp))

Feedback


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([/english/helpcentre/index.asp](http://canada.ca/en/gov/dep/helpcentre/index.asp))

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A SPECIAL INFORMATION FEATURE FOR CANADIAN SECURITIES ADMINISTRATORS

POLICY: New rules aim to stamp out marriage fraud

Content provided by Canadian Securities Administrators

Published Monday, Mar. 18 2013, 1:01 PM EDT

Last updated Tuesday, Mar. 26 2013, 3:10 PM EDT

It's been a problem for years: Canadians duped into phony marriages by citizens of other countries only to be left in the lurch as soon as their spouse is granted Canadian residence rights.

Federal action to crack down on perpetrators, however, has garnered applause from the fraud-prevention community.

Sam Benet, president of Canadians Against Immigration Fraud (CAIF), a non-profit organization that helps victims of immigration fraud and works to promote its prevention, says marriage fraud has been a growing problem in Canada.

Mr. Benet describes new federal regulations introduced last October as "bold steps to address the growing problem of marriage fraud." In an announcement, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Jason Kenney introduced a new regulation that requires certain sponsored spouses to live in a legitimate relationship with their sponsor for two years or risk losing their permanent resident status.

"There are countless cases of marriage fraud across the country," said Mr. Kenney when he announced the changes. "I have consulted widely with Canadians, and especially with victims of marriage fraud, who have told me clearly that we must take action to stop this abuse of our immigration system.

Mr. Kenney said sometimes the sponsor in Canada is being duped and other times a phony marriage is a commercial transaction.

"Implementing a two-year conditional permanent residence period will help deter marriage fraud, prevent the callous victimization of innocent Canadians and help us put an end to these scams," said Mr. Kenney.

The new regulations apply to spouses or partners in a relationship of two years or less and who have no children in common with their sponsor at the time they submit their sponsorship application. The regulations affect people whose applications were received on or after October 15, 2012.

The spouse or partner must live in a legitimate relationship with their sponsor for two years from the day they receive their permanent resident status in Canada. The status of the sponsored spouse or partner may be revoked if they do not remain in the relationship.

The measure was also supported by Palwinder Singh Gill, founder of the non-profit Canadian Marriage Fraud Victims Society.

"Canada's generous family sponsorship program was being abused because many people were marrying only to get a permanent resident card and then leaving their partners. With this new rule, those abusing the system will think twice," says Mr. Gill.

Conditional permanent residence does not differ from regular permanent residence other than the need to satisfy the two-year requirement.

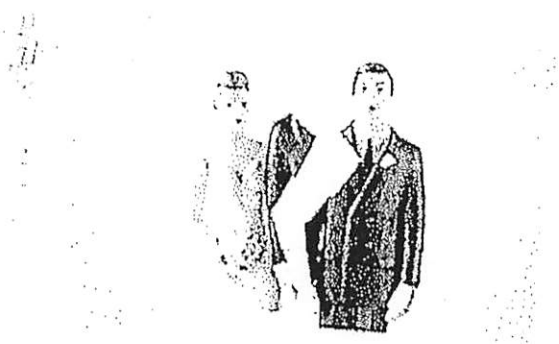
The regulations brought Canadian policy into line with those of many other countries including Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom, all of which use a form of conditional status as a deterrent against marriage fraud.

"Canadians are generous and welcoming, but they have no tolerance for fraudsters who lie and cheat to jump the queue," according to Mr. Kenney. "This measure will help strengthen the integrity of our immigration system and prevent the victimization of innocent Canadians."

The new regulations introduced in October followed a measure announced in March last year that prohibits sponsored spouses from sponsoring a new spouse for five years following the date they become a permanent resident.

"Canada's generous family sponsorship program was being abused because many people were marrying only to get a permanent resident card and then leaving their partners. With this new rule, those abusing the system will think twice."

Palwinder Singh Gill
*is founder of the non-profit
Canadian Marriage Fraud Victims Society*



HOW TO AVOID THE MARRIAGE FRAUD TRAP

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) provides the following advice for Canadians to help them stay alert to the dangers of marriage fraud.

If you are a Canadian citizen or permanent resident and you meet someone from another country on the Internet or while travelling, you should take care if you are considering marrying them and sponsoring them to Canada.

Sponsors must financially support their spouse for three years, even if the marriage or relationship fails. If your spouse uses social assistance, you will have to repay the money, and you won't be able to sponsor anyone else until the debt is repaid. Sponsorship is a legally binding financial commitment with the Government of Canada.

Sponsors: Do not be tempted by offers of money or other rewards to enter into a marriage of convenience just so the person can immigrate to Canada. If you do this, you can face serious criminal charges, and you will still have to meet the terms of the sponsorship. Do not feel you are obligated to help somebody by being part of a marriage of convenience, no matter what the reason. It is not worth the risks.

Visa applicants: Don't get involved in a marriage of convenience. You will be refused a visa and may be banned from travel to Canada for two years. This will remain permanently on your CIC record. CIC recognizes that even genuine marriages can fail. However, if you enter into a marriage of convenience and come to Canada as an immigrant, enforcement action can be taken against you. This enforcement action could end with your being deported by the Canada Border Services Agency.

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News Release – Conditional permanent residence proposed to deter marriages of convenience

Ottawa, March 9, 2012 — Today, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Jason Kenney announced measures to further strengthen the Government of Canada's ability to crack down on marriage fraud.

Under the new proposal, now open for further public input, a spouse or partner being sponsored by a Canadian or permanent resident would be required to live together with their sponsor in a legitimate relationship for two years following receipt of their permanent resident status in Canada. If these steps are not pursued, the sponsored spouse or partner's status could be revoked, possibly leading to their removal and in some instances, criminal charges could also be laid. For all legitimate relationships, the condition would cease to apply once the conditional period has elapsed.

The proposed conditional measure would help deter people from engaging in a relationship, such as a marriage or a common law partnership, for the purpose of acquiring status or privilege under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*. This measure would apply to all spouses in relationships of two years or less who have no children with their sponsor at the time of the sponsorship application.

"Our objective is to weed out people trying to use a phony marriage as a quick and easy route to Canada," said Minister Kenney. "In town hall meetings I held in 2010 with victims of marriage fraud, I heard first-hand from victims who were still suffering the consequences years later. They implored me to do something to stop this from happening to others."

This follows on the heels of a separate measure last week. Effective March 2, sponsored spouses or partners are ineligible to sponsor a new spouse or partner for five years from the day that they are granted permanent residence status in Canada.

"The problem of marriage fraud is serious and will only get worse if we don't put measures in place that protect the integrity of our immigration system while deterring people from trying to use a marriage of convenience to cheat their way into Canada," added Minister Kenney.

Other countries, such as Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom, use a form of conditional status as a deterrent against marriage fraud and the lack of a similar measure increases Canada's vulnerability to this type of unlawful activity.

The proposed regulations, which were prepublished today on the *Canada Gazette* (<http://www.gazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p1/2012/2012-03-10/html/reg1-eng.html>) website (<http://www.gazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p1/2012/2012-03-10/html/reg1-eng.html>) will appear in the March 10 edition of the *Canada Gazette* (Part I) and are open for further public input for a 30-day comment period, ending April 9, 2012.

A Notice of Intent proposing the development of this conditional measure was published in the *Canada Gazette* on March 26, 2011. A number of respondents expressed concern that a conditional measure could increase the vulnerability of sponsored spouses and partners who are in abusive relationships.

Given these concerns, the proposed condition would cease to apply in instances where there is evidence of abuse or neglect, or of a failure to protect from abuse or neglect by a person related to the sponsor, whether that person is residing in the household or not, during the conditional period. Working with stakeholders and other interested parties, Citizenship and Immigration Canada is also developing guidelines to assist spouses and partners who could be victims of abuse or neglect in such situations.

For additional information on the proposed conditional permanent residence measure or to provide comments, please visit the *Canada Gazette* (<http://www.gazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p1/2012/2012-03-10/html/reg1-eng.html>).

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(<http://canada.ca/en/newsite.html>)

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Government-wide reporting
(<http://canada.ca/en/transparency/reporting.html>) (<http://english/department/media/index.asp>)

Open government
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(<http://news.gc.ca/web/wws/prdt-un.do?mthd=tp&ctrl.tp1D=3>)

Speeches
(<http://english/department/media/speeches/index.asp>)

Statements
(<http://english/department/media/statements/index.asp>)

Contact information

Enquiries (<http://english/contact/index.asp>)

Help Centre
(<http://english/helpcentre/index.asp>)

CIC (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) offices
(<http://english/information/offices/index.asp>)

Media contacts
(<http://english/department/media/contacts.asp>)

Feedback


(<http://canada.ca/en/contact/feedback.html>)

Social media


(<http://english/department/media/social.asp>)

Mobile centre


(<http://canada.ca/en/mobile/index.html>)



[Français \(/francais/ministere/consultations/fraudemariage/index.asp\)](http://francais/francais/ministere/consultations/fraudemariage/index.asp)



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([HTTP://CANADA.CA/EN/SERVICES/BENEFITS/INDEX.HTML](http://CANADA.CA/EN/SERVICES/BENEFITS/INDEX.HTML))

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→ [Consultations \(/english/department/consultations/index.asp\)](http://canada.ca/en/department/consultations/index.asp)

Summary Report: Consulting the Public on Marriages of Convenience

Background

Marriages of Convenience

One of the goals of Canada's *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA) is to help reunite families. For this reason, Canadian citizens and permanent residents can sponsor their spouse or partner to become a Canadian permanent resident.

Some people abuse spousal sponsorship by entering into marriages of convenience so that they can sidestep Canada's immigration law. Marriages of convenience usually take one of two forms:

- A couple pretends to be in a genuine relationship so that the sponsored partner can come to or stay in Canada. In some cases, the sponsor may be given a financial or other kind of benefit in exchange for the sponsorship.
- One of the partners enters the relationship in good faith, while the other is using the relationship only to gain permanent status in Canada. This victimizes the sponsor.

In both cases, the relationship often ends shortly after the sponsored person arrives in Canada. These relationships weaken our immigration system and make the process more difficult for genuine immigrants.

Consulting the Public

In Fall 2010, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) invited Canadians to participate in an online consultation on the issue of marriage fraud, also known as "marriages of convenience." This consultation aimed to gather input on the magnitude of the problem, as well as opinions and ideas on how to best address it. Over 2,300 general public respondents and more than 80 who self-identified as representatives from stakeholder organizations responded to CIC (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) (Citizenship and Immigration Canada)'s call for feedback through the online consultations.

In addition to the online consultation, the Honourable Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, hosted in-person town hall meetings in Brampton, Vancouver and Montreal in fall 2010 to discuss marriages of convenience with members of the public. During these meetings, participants described the impact of marriages of convenience on their lives.

CIC (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) also consulted with the provinces and territories on the marriage of convenience issue.

This report focuses on the outcomes of the online consultations.

Methodology

On September 7, 2010, CIC (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) launched an online consultation with stakeholders and the general public to seek views on marriages of convenience. The consultation was open from September 7 to November 10, 2010.

An e-mail was sent to approximately 50 stakeholders inviting them to participate and share within their networks. Stakeholders invited included representatives from national and local organizations such as industry and professional associations, private sector employers, chambers of commerce, immigration lawyers/consultants, immigration-service organizations, civil-rights organizations, ethno cultural organizations and other non-government organizations. The general public was informed of the consultation through a prominently-placed link on the CIC (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) web site, promoted via news release (see [Appendix A](#)

(<http://www.consultations.gc.ca/cic/cic-publications.aspx?lang=en>) web site. Minister Kennedy also invited participation in the online consultations during his town hall meetings.

Participants were asked to read a background document ([Appendix B](#)) before completing the questionnaire ([Appendix C](#)). The questionnaire consisted of a mix of multiple-choice and open-ended questions that allowed respondents to provide further comment. The general public and stakeholders completed the same questionnaire, with the only exception being the type of demographic information requested from the two different groups.

The findings summarized in this report reflect only the views of those who responded to the online consultation. These views cannot be projected to the overall Canadian population or CIC (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) stakeholder community.

Respondents

The online questionnaire generated 2,342 responses from the general public and 89 from self-identified stakeholder organizations, for a total of 2,431 respondents.

Among the general public, 37% indicated that they had sponsored a spouse or common-law partner to come to Canada. A total of 11% of participants self-identified as victims of marriage fraud, and a further 11% indicated that they had been sponsored.

The consultation was open to anyone in Canada, as well as people in other countries. Of the responses received from the public, 73% were Canadian citizens, 20% permanent residents, 6% temporary residents and 1% people who live outside of Canada.

Among representatives of stakeholder organizations, the majority that identified the nature of their organizations (57 of 89) were immigration consultants (19 in total, or 33%) and community organizations (14 in total, or 23%). Other organization types were settlement/integration service providers (8 in total, or 14%), employer or employee associations (6 in total, or 11%) and business/professional associations (4 in total, or 7%) and labour/union group (3 in total, or 5%). The scope of organizations was divided between international (29%), national (29%) and local (22%) service-delivery. Respondents also identified as provincial/territorial organizations (10%) and regional organizations.

Key Findings

Responses from stakeholders and the general public were comparable on many issues. Overall, responses from the public did not vary greatly based on demographic differences, including individuals who identified as victims of marriage fraud, sponsors or sponsored partners.

The following summary of findings presents overall results from both the general public and those who self-identified as stakeholder organization groups. Any notable differences or commonalities between stakeholders and the public, or among sub-groups of the public are noted. Due to the very small sample size of stakeholders, sub-group (i.e. type of organization, scope, location) responses are not reported.

Marriage fraud and Canada's immigration system

Overall, respondents indicated that fraudulent marriage is a threat or problem to Canada's immigration system. Three-quarters (77%) who reported it to be a *very serious* or *serious* threat. Notably, the general public perceived marriages of convenience to be slightly more of a threat than stakeholders; and among the public, victims of marriage fraud identified this as a threat slightly more than non-victims.

When asked to explain the ways in which marriage fraud can or does pose a threat, responses cited include: effects on the immigration system (longer waiting times, people taking advantage of the immigration system); effects on individuals (potential financial or emotional effects on either the Canadian partner or on sponsored partner), and general effects on Canadian society (social/health benefits).

Members of stakeholder organizations largely commented on the negative effects on Canada's immigration system and negative consequences to Canadian society, whereas members of the general public expressed more concern for effects on individuals.

Public awareness

A perceived need for more public awareness and education about marriages of convenience was stated by three-quarters (77%) of respondents, with a slightly higher proportion (88%) stated by victims of marriage fraud.

The majority of respondents noted specific areas which required awareness as follows:

- the issue overall (a significant number of comments suggested that Canadians are generally unaware of the issue);
- Canadians being taken advantage of or misled by foreign partners aiming to immigrate to Canada;

- the negative consequences on Canada's immigration system; and
- how to report marriage fraud.

Feedback

Responses from stakeholder organizations included a slightly higher proportion of comments focused on raising awareness of victims of violence or raising awareness of abuse in sponsored relationships (<http://www.canada.ca/en/contact/feedback.html>)

Social media

Sponsor responsibilities

A strong majority (nearly 80%) of respondents felt that a sponsor should bear either a *strong* or *moderate* (24%) degree of personal responsibility for ensuring that they are entering into a genuine relationship. A slightly higher proportion (70%) of individuals who had been sponsored through marriage expressed that the sponsor should bear a lot of responsibility.

Mobile centre

When asked to explain this statement, half of the responses provided noted that the sponsor is primarily responsible for determining the genuineness of marriage. The remaining half of responses expressed that the Government of Canada is responsible for protecting Canadians and should take measures to investigate and prevent fraudulent relationships. (<http://www.canada.ca/en/mobile/index.html>)

Beyond determining the legitimacy of marriage or carrying the onus of reporting suspected or actual fraud, some respondents (4 in 10) also noted specific responsibilities that should be held by the sponsor, such as the sponsor's need to care for their partner's social and financial well-being.

Measures and actions

The consultation found strong support for measures and actions by the Government of Canada to address marriages of convenience. Respondents were asked in two separate open-ended questions to provide their opinions on measures the Government of Canada should take to address this issue.

The most frequently mentioned were measures related to the punishment of fraudulent applicants and/or sponsors (including stricter enforcement of laws, deportation of fraudulent spouses and the introduction of financial penalties). Comments also called for a form of conditional status/probationary period, increased screening and follow-up investigations to detect fraud; some also mentioned the need to increase public awareness about marriages of convenience.

Processing times for spousal immigration applications

Views on longer processing times to allow more investigation into potential fraud were almost evenly split. Just over half of respondents (52%) indicated that they were not prepared to tradeoff longer processing times for more investigations into potential cases of fraud.

Respondents opposed to longer processing times noted that the application process is already too long, that more investigation time would likely not improve the situation, or that an increase in processing time would be unfair to legitimate marriages. Those in favour of longer processing times stated that lengthier investigations could deter fraudulent applicants and allow more time to uncover illegitimate relationships, and would not negatively affect legitimate relationships.

Sponsorship bars

The questionnaire found general support for the introduction of new federal measures to address relationships of convenience. When asked about sponsorship bars, 7 in 10 respondents (73%) indicated support for this measure. The questionnaire did not include a question which asked how long the bar should be in duration, and few respondents offered comments in this regard.

Approximately 15% were not supportive of sponsorship bars, as they felt such measures can be unfair, and/or victimize or assign blame to the sponsored spouse. Stakeholder organizations expressed slightly more opposition (25%) to sponsorship bars than the general public.

Conditional status

The majority of respondents (68%) felt that conditional status measures were appropriate, while two in 10 (21%) were opposed. A slightly higher (29%) opposition was expressed by stakeholder organizations than the general public.

Among those who supported the idea of a conditional status measure, close to half (46%) believed the probationary period should be two years or less. Three in 10 (31%) favoured a three-year probationary period, and just under one quarter (23%) indicated that the conditional period should be between five and 10 years in length.

Acceptable exceptions suggested for a conditional measure included reasons related to family circumstances – i.e. if the couple had established a relationship or lived outside of Canada together for a significant period, if the couple had or was expecting a child/children, situations of violence or abuse of partner, illness or criminal convictions.

Federal spending and resources to address marriages of convenience

More than half of respondents (58%) indicated that they would support more federal resources to investigate, police and hear cases related to marriages of convenience. Justifications given by supporters included the need to uphold immigration laws and prevent people from abusing the immigration system, as well as the need to increase resources to improve investigations and screening processes.

Among those opposed to increasing federal resources to address the issue (32%), respondents commented that devoting more time and/or money to this issue would not reduce instances of marriage fraud, the government should not be involved in determining whether marriages are legitimate (citing that marriage is a personal issue), or that marriages of convenience are not a major problem.

Conclusion and next steps

In sum, those who participated in the consultation acknowledged concern about marriages of convenience. Most considered the issue to be a threat to the integrity of Canada's immigration system, and the majority expressed a need for greater public education and awareness. A strong majority felt that the sponsor should bear considerable personal responsibility for ensuring that they were entering into a genuine relationship.

Of the suggested measures proposed to address marriages of convenience, the leading option was for punishment of individuals found to be committing fraud (i.e. deportation, fines, legal action). Respondents also strongly supported increased investigative or screening measures, while just over half indicated that they were not prepared to tradeoff longer processing times for more investigations into potential cases of fraud. There was broad support for both the introduction of a sponsorship bar and for a conditional measure. For a conditional measure, the appropriate length suggested by most was for two years or less, followed by moderate support for a period of three to five years.

Responses to this consultation, along with messages collected from in-person meetings and existing research data on the issue, will be used to help inform future actions taken by the Department to address marriage fraud.

[Appendix A: News Release \(/english/department/media/releases/2010/2010-09-27.asp\)](#)

[Appendix B: Backgrounder \(/english/department/media/backgrounders/2010/2010-09-27.asp\)](#)

Appendix C: Questionnaire

Consulting the Public on Marriages of Convenience

This questionnaire will take about 15 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary and only the totals for each question will be reported. We appreciate your time and input.

Before you start, please read the [background document, Marriage Fraud – Have Your Say \(/english/department/media/backgrounders/2010/2010-09-27.asp\)](#). It will help you respond to the questions as it explains the purpose of the consultation process as well as the issue and considerations.

1. Consider the information you read about marriages of convenience. Overall, how serious a threat or problem do you think fraudulent marriages are to Canada's immigration system?

- Very serious
- Serious
- Not very serious
- Not at all serious
- Do not know

Please explain:

2. In your opinion, is there a need for better public awareness about marriages of convenience?

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

Please explain: