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## Service Canada received 500,000 passport applications in March and April

The federal government has received nearly 500,000 passport applications over the last two months, as scores of Canadians prepare to travel internationally for the first time since the start of the pandemic.

The numbers were provided by Employment and Social Development Canada, which provides passport services across the country, in response to questions about the long lines and lack of available appointments at many Service Canada locations.

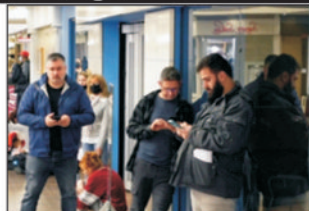
By comparison, the government issued just 363,000 passports for the entire first year of the pandemic, from April 2020 through March 2021.

There were 1.27 million passports issued over the 12 months that followed, including 960,000 from September 2021 through March 2022 alone.

To manage the increased demand, the government hired 500 new employees "specifically to support the processing of passport applications," ESDC communications manager Natalie Huneault told CTV News in an email statement.

"Service Canada continues to hire and train more passport officers and teams are working overtime every day and on weekends to increase processing capacity," she added.

The overloaded system has left many would-be travelers with few



options but to wait in long lines at passport offices, sometimes overnight in the cold.

The queues have become so daunting, several people have started offering to hold passport-seekers' places in line for hundreds of dollars.

"If you don't have an appointment to get your passport, you need to be lining up at night," reads an ad for one of the services, which was posted on Facebook Marketplace last week. "I will keep your place in the line for you so you can show up at 8:30 a.m. and sleep the night."

Huneault said Service Canada has strict rules when it comes to picking up passports on behalf of a third-party, but those "do not apply to clients simply waiting in line."

"Our focus is on serving those clients at our counters, who deserve the best support we are able to offer," she said.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said a surprise visit to Kyiv on Sunday, meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, touring a blackened, bombed-out suburban community and pledging enduring support for the embattled country.

He also repeated the Canadian Embassy and welcomed the ambassador back to the capital, Kyiv. Trudeau was accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland, Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly and armed security detachment.

Trudeau visited the city of Irpin, on the outskirts of Kyiv, which was the scene of some of the heaviest fighting in March as Russian forces attempted to storm the capital.

Ukrainian troops effectively halted the advance in the area and pushed back the invasion force.

At a news conference with Zelensky, Trudeau praised Ukraine's president for his leadership and the courage of Ukrainians in defending their country, including those in Irpin.

"It was a true inspiration to see people step up to defend their lives, defend their community, defend a bright future for themselves and their families in the country they love," the prime minister said.

He joined a parade of other leaders, dignitaries and celebrities who've visited Ukraine to show their support. Rock musicians Bono and The Edge of U2 gave a surprise concert at a Kyiv subway station several blocks from the presidential palace on Sunday.

Trudeau's visit came on the same day that Russian missiles pounded the southern port city of Odessa, and as rescuers combed the ruins of a school in the eastern Luhansk district, where more than 60 people are thought to have perished in a Russia strike. There was heavy fighting in other eastern portions of the country, including around Kharkiv, the

## Trudeau says Canada backs Ukraine in seeking justice for Putin's 'heinous war crimes'

second-largest city in Ukraine.

As Trudeau met with Zelensky on Sunday, air raid sirens sounded in the district near the presidential palace, an area of newly trimmed hedges and gardens that are now cut with giant, jagged trenches and sandbagged barriers.

Trudeau said it was clear that Russian President Vladimir Putin was responsible for "heinous war crimes" and that Canada would support Ukraine in seeking justice.

At the news conference, he also announced military aid in the form of additional drone cameras, satellite imagery, small arms and more artillery shells for the M-777 howitzers Canada has provided.

"I don't think it much matters what Putin says anymore," Trudeau said in an exclusive interview with Reuters. "He has demonstrated that he does not have a clear understanding of what's going on."

"He so profoundly miscalculated by not understanding the extent to which Ukrainians would fight for the heroes they are to defend their language, their identity, their territory. Nor did he understand the resolve with which Western countries would come together to stand up for our democracy and give Ukraine the tools needed to win this war against Putin."

"Ukraine will prevail!"

At the news conference, the prime minister also announced that all duties on Ukrainian imports to Canada would be removed for the next year and that the federal



government would place sanctions on Russian individuals and entities.

Asked whether NATO countries were concerned about threats of Russian nuclear war, Trudeau said that "no amount of irresponsible sabre-rattling" will deter Ukraine's supporters.

"Putin and his accomplices will fail. Ukraine will prevail," Trudeau said at the end of his remarks.

During the news conference, Zelensky said he welcomed Canadian support, referring to Trudeau as the leader of a country from which Ukraine could not ask for more support.

Zelensky noted, however, that Canada could be influential in persuading other, more heavily armed NATO members to provide more advanced weaponry to Ukraine.

He also pressed Trudeau to support Ukraine's call for a modern-day Marshall Plan - a reference to an Allied program to reconstruct the economies of western and southern

Ukraine. Seventy-seven years after the end of the war, the G7 leaders said, "President Putin and his regime now chose to invade Ukraine in an unprovoked war of aggression against a sovereign country. His actions bring shame on Russia and the historic sacrifices of its people."

There is concern that Russia will use its Victory Day event on Monday to mobilize its population in support of escalating the war in Ukraine.

The G7 leaders also promised on Sunday "further commitments to help Ukraine secure its free and democratic future," including action on military aid, sanctions, cyber defence, financial support and human rights violation investigations.

"We remain united in our resolve that President Putin must not win his war against Ukraine. We owe to the memory of all those who fought for freedom in the Second World War, to continue fighting for it today, for the people of Ukraine, Europe and the global community."

Earlier on Sunday, Trudeau took part in a low-key flag-raising at the reopened Canadian Embassy in Kyiv, a symbolic moment that went slightly awry when it was discovered the mechanism to raise the flag on the clothes pole was not working. The flag ended up getting raised on a pole at a metal stairwell on the side of the building.

"This flag came down on Feb. 13th, and we're really glad to be raising it again above the Canadian embassy," Trudeau said.

The prime minister made a point of thanking and shaking hands with Sergiy Meier, the Ukrainian head of the security team that kept watch over the embassy while it was closed.

Meier took the gesture in stride and said he was only doing his job.

The U.S. Embassy in Ukraine's capital also reopened on Sunday.

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## Where the Ontario election race will be run - and won

Possibly the chugrin of the rest of Ontario, much of the provincial election race will be run - and won - in and around Toronto.

You can expect to see the leaders of the three major parties spend the bulk of their time in and around the provincial capital, say pollsters, and for good reason: the Greater Toronto Area, plus the Hamilton region, make up more than half of the 124 seats up for grabs on June 2.

"They're already always going to struggle in urban areas - so if they're not winning the suburbs, they can't win the seats that they add to their rural base to form a government," said Grenier. "So for the PCs, I think that's largely where they're going to be sticking around."

That doesn't mean the New Democrats and the Liberals will code up more than half of the 124 seats up for grabs on June 2.

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factor at this time in this election. Ford doesn't suffer from that."

Other areas to watch

Even though the Toronto area is where the main action will be, it's not to say there aren't other interesting races elsewhere in the province.

Parts of northern and southwestern Ontario may also see some action, particularly from the NDP, which have held the majority of seats in these regions for several terms, and the PCs. Pollsters say that workers in those riding can swing between the New Democrats, with whom they align on labour issues, and the Progressive Conservatives who tend to reflect their social values.

"It's more about who people feel they can connect with," said Bricker, of Ipsos, suggesting that Ford could have had a tough time.

For Horwath, said Grenier, it might mean forging ridings where the NDP isn't very competitive to focus on hanging onto just her party already holds.

Here are just a few of the areas outside of Toronto to keep an eye on:

Peterborough-Kawartha: This riding has been a bellwether since 1977, so it's always one to watch for hints of where the political winds are blowing. Del Duca had already dropped in on Wednesday.

## Canada is confronting a massive immigration backlog. This is what it looks like for those facing delays

One-on-one with Immigration Minister Sean Fraser

Canada continues to be one of the top destinations for immigrants around the world. But the increasing backlogs, exhausting processing times and lack of communication and transparency are causing mounting frustrations among those seeking their Canadian dream.

According to data from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) published by the immigration news website CIC News, the backlogs have increased to more than 2 million applications across all categories in April, compared to 1.8 million in March.

CTVNews.ca received over 100 responses to our callout from people caught up in this backlog, from those facing delays in visa processing times to those waiting to become permanent residents.

Meghrajsh Solanki, a business and compliance analyst based in Windsor, Ont., is one of the two million applicants still in limbo. He's been waiting nearly three years on his family's permanent residence application. In September 2019, he and his wife applied under the Canadian Experience Class (CEC) program designed for skilled workers with Canadian work experience.

But Solanki hasn't heard any updates from immigration officials on the status of his application for more than four months and has no idea how much longer he'll need to wait.

CEC invitations remain paused since September 2021 but IRCC plans on resuming them in early July of 2022.

"We saw so many dreams together to have a good life here in Canada, raise our kids, get careers. But it's just been delayed, delayed and yet, we have nothing in hand at all," he told CTVNews.ca over the phone on Tuesday.

Meghrajsh Solanki and his wife have been waiting for three years to hear back on their PR application.

While Solanki is living in Canada under a work visa, his wife is still living in India and they can't be reunited until they receive their permanent resident status. He applied for a visitor visa for his wife in September last year but says it was denied. He has applied again this

month and is waiting to hear back.

Solanki says his experience with the Canadian immigration system was so frustrating, he even considered giving up on his application and moving back to India permanently, despite having already bought a house in Canada.

"Of course, no matter how much of a thing that you have, if you don't have your loved one with you, it just makes no sense to live apart," he said.

"A PERFECT STORM"

When COVID-19 first hit, IRCC closed many in-person offices and cancelled interviews, citizenship ceremonies, and other appointments, while its staff shifted to working from home.

"I can tell you ... that sort of transition to work from home, it's not easy," Daniel Levy, a senior attorney at Cohen Immigration Law, told CTVNews.ca in a phone interview.

On top of all that, the federal government introduced new immigration programs that have only added to the already backlogged immigration system.

In April of last year, the government created a new pathway to permanent residency for 90,000 essential temporary workers and international graduates.

Last September, following the collapse of the Afghan government and the takeover by the Taliban, Canada introduced special programs to resettle at least 40,000 Afghan refugees. Back in March, the Trudeau government also introduced the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel, allowing an "unlimited" number of Ukrainians fleeing the Russian invasion to arrive in Canada on temporary resident visas.

All of this created a "perfect storm" for the ongoing immigration

backlogs, according to Stephen Green, a senior partner at the immigration law firm, Green and Spiegel LLP.

"We have an amazing immigration policy. I think we have the best in the world, I really do. But the problem is, we don't have the ability right now, because of that perfect storm, to deal with any increase in numbers," he told CTVNews.ca in a phone interview. "We've got to resolve that urgently."

CTVNews.ca took a deeper look at the processing time at some of the popular visa categories to understand the timelines of immigration backlogs. Please note these processing times are subject to change as IRCC continues to add fresh data.

Green says there are over 5,000 permanent resident cards currently at the Etobicoke, Ont. immigration centre waiting to be distributed and some of these permanent residents are overseas and have been waiting for more than a year.

The time to process PR applications is taking so long that many people are missing their appointments, he says.

Even for permanent residents about to acquire their Canadian citizenship, the processing times have also been dismal, taking an average of 27 months, according to the data retrieved by CTVNews.ca on May 1, 2022.

But for some Canadians-to-be, like Montreal resident Carolina Maracci, it's taken even longer. She sent her citizenship application in September 2019 and passed her citizenship exam last August but has no idea when she'll be invited to take her oath.

"It's frustrating not being able to communicate with them and not knowing if there is a timeline or if I'm going to have to wait for another three years," she told CTVNews.ca over

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# Munawar Faruqi wins the reality show 'Lock Up' after Kangana Ranaut's seal of approval



He was in jail not long ago for "insulting Hindu gods and goddesses", a charge he denies, but will past Sunday/Sunday midnight, controversial comedian Munawar Faruqi was released from Ekta Kapoor and Kangana Ranaut 'Lock Up' with a Rs 20 lakh cheque and handover.

He was declared winner of the show, whose finale also featured popular reality show regulars Payal Rautani, Angeli Anon, Azma Fateeh and Shivam Sisera.

Director and producer Kamn Johar newly started a frenzy when he teased that Koffee with Karan, his iconic celebrity talk show won't return for another installment. Shortly after, he shared an announcement revealing that Koffee with Karan Season 7 isn't returning to TV because it's arriving on an OTT platform this time. And now, he has shared yet another exciting update.

This weekend, Karan Johar shared a photo on his Instagram stories with a coffee mug. He captioned the pic "And so, it begins..." indicating that filming for the show has started.

So far, the list of celebrities attached to appear on the show has not been confirmed. But some reports have revealed that the first episode may feature Alia Bhatt and Ranveer Singh. The stars are set to appear in Karan Johar's next directorial Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani. The Dharma Productions-backed film which also

# It's official! Farhan Akhtar will now be a part of the Marvel Cinematic Universe

While there were talks of Bollywood joining the Marvel Cinematic Universe, it is now confirmed that Farhan Akhtar is part of the cast for the upcoming Ms. Marvel. Even though his character in the movie is still unconfirmed, Farhan Akhtar is now officially a part of the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

Farhan Akhtar will be joining Iman Vellani, a Canadian-born teen actor who will be playing the role of a superhero Kamala Khan. She will also be playing a role in the second Captain Marvel movie. The Marvel Studios' Beyond proud of you @farhanakhtar (@farhanakhtar) for making his happy @marvelcinematicuniverse for being there always #msmarvel #disneyplus

Later Farhan Akhtar shared the story on his social media to confirm the news. He wrote, "Guess that the universe gives these opportunities to grow, learn, and in this case have a ton of fun while doing it."

# Hetmyer: Jaiswal's knock was one of the best I've seen in a while



Rajasthan Royals (RR) middle-order batsman Shimron Hetmyer scored a crucial 166-ball unbeaten 31 (3x4, 2x6) to help the team outpace Punjab Kings (PBKS) by six wickets at the Wankhede Stadium on Saturday.

However, the West Indian hard-hitter went out of the way to praise RR opener Yashvir Jaiswal's 68 off 41 balls which laid the foundation of the win. "His [Jaiswal] knock was brilliant. I'm really happy to see him get some runs. It was one of the best knocks that I've seen in a while," Hetmyer said during a post-match virtual press conference on Saturday.

# IPL 2022: Lucknow Super Giants hammer Kolkata Knight Riders by 75 runs

A clinical all-round performance helped Lucknow Super Giants thrash Kolkata Knight Riders by 75 runs in the 53rd match of the IPL 2022 at Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium, here on Saturday.

# IPL 2022: Delhi Capitals players forced into isolation after net bowler tests positive for Covid-19

Delhi Capitals players were once again forced into isolation in the ongoing IPL-15 after a net bowler of the franchise tested positive for covid-19.

On the other hand, Andre Russell (222) was the most successful bowler for KKR, while Sunil Narine (120), Tim Southee and Shivam Mavi (150) also chipped in with one wicket each.

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## Canada dumps billions of litres of raw sewage into natural waterways annually. How can we stop?

Last summer, three Metro Vancouver beaches were closed to swimmers after high levels of E. coli were detected in the water.

And this is a pretty common occurrence. Almost every year, beaches, lakes, and other water bodies are closed to swimming across Canada because there is faecal matter mixed into the water. Our poop? So how did that poop get there?

Well, it's because of something called the combined sewer and stormwater system.

Mixing sewage with stormwater. When you flush your stuff, it flows into a network of sewage pipes that lead to a sewage treatment plant where it is cleaned and treated before the remaining water is dumped into the ocean.

Pretty straightforward, right? But in a combined sewer and stormwater system, sewage isn't the only thing that goes into those pipes. There's also stormwater.

In a combined system, rain that



hits a hard surface like asphalt, glass or concrete also flows into our sewage system to be cleaned and treated.

And this is where we find the root of this problem: The amount of sewage flowing in a city at any given time is pretty consistent, but the amount of rainwater a city receives fluctuates wildly. So when there's a bad storm, there ends up being far too much water flowing through our pipes for the sewage treatment plant to handle.

The result? All the excess stormwater and sewage overflow into a nearby body of water, whether it's

streams, lakes, or beach.

Grey and green infrastructure. This combined system has historically been the system of choice for most older cities in North America, which means this is a problem pretty much everywhere.

In 2017, over 167 billion litres of combined sewage and stormwater leaked into water bodies across Canada. In every province except for P.E.I., Newfoundland, and Saskatchewan.

So how do we stop doing that? Well, there are many different solutions and they roughly fall into

two categories: Grey infrastructure and green infrastructure.

"Grey infrastructure" is a more heavy-duty approach to dealing with excess stormwater. One example is in Tokyo, where the city has constructed enormous underground caves to hold excess liquid during typhoon seasons.

Another popular solution is to completely separate stormwater and sewage into different pipe networks, so sewage can be taken to sewage treatment plants, while stormwater can just flow out into the ocean.

But these solutions are incredibly complicated, expensive and don't always work. And that's where green infrastructure comes in.

Easier being green? Out in the wild, there are no pipes. When it rains, water is absorbed into the ground or pooled into streams and rivers that flow into lakes and oceans.

"Green infrastructure" is what happens when cities try to mimic that process in an urban area. This includes making green roofs or other permeable spaces that collect and absorb rainwater. It can even be as simple as planting more trees, which can absorb a lot of rainwater.

But this approach isn't perfect, either. Green infrastructure doesn't make sense everywhere and the science behind it is admittedly less predictable than simply directing water into a pipe.

Every Canadian will be impacted by the high cost of diesel, not just those who own diesel vehicles, said Rodney Anasakis, a professor at the Rotman School of Management.

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## As cost of living soars, affordability becomes top Ontario election issue



In every Ontario election poll that's publicly available, the number one concern of voters is the rising cost of living.

Affordability has rocketed past the perennial top issues of health - even after two years of a global pandemic - and jobs, with the unemployment rate at record lows.

While the Ontario party leaders are often talking on the campaign trail about making life more affordable, it's a wonder that they're not hammering the issue even harder, given how strongly it's resonating with voters.

"The smart politicians won't just talk about the cost of living as an issue, they will understand it's a character test," said Greg Lyle, a veteran pollster and president of Innovative Research Group.

"People want to hear them talk about the issue in a way that says that those politicians understand the problem that the voters are facing," Lyle said in an interview with CBC News.

Recent polling by Lyle's firm, as well as by Earncliffe Strategies, Ipsos and Abacus Data clearly shows cost-of-living concerns mattering most to Ontario voters right now.

Trips to the supermarket are hitting Ontarians with sticker shock, making the rising cost of living the top provincial election issue, according to several recent polls. (Frank Gumm/The Canadian Press)

"It's on the minds of so many people," Lyle said. "If you [as a politician] miss this issue, then it sounds like to the average voter that you're not listening to them."

What's not clear from the polls is which party voters believe can best tackle it.

Lyle's polling suggests Doug Ford's Progressive Conservative Party has an advantage on the issue over the Ontario Liberals and the NDP. He believes this is as much or more a legacy of the parties' long-term reputations among voters than a reaction to any particular measures the parties had offered on affordability prior to his late April polling.

"Part of the problem that the Liberals have is that they're blamed for high electricity prices, as Ontarians perceive it, and so they have to beat that history to get ahead on the issue," said Lyle.

Yet, when asked which party would do a better job on affordability, the most common response was none of the parties, which suggests there is some opportunity for the Liberals and the NDP to gain some ground on the PCs.

Similarly, polling by Earncliffe Strategies suggests the PCs have only a slight lead among voters who named the cost of living as their top concern.

"There is no one party that really owns this issue," said Doug

previously announced.

main affordability measures Ford has to offer apply to drivers: the scrapping of annual vehicle registration fees, the removal of tolls on provincially owned highways in the Greater Toronto Area and a promised six-month reduction of Ontario's gasoline tax by 5.7 cents per litre.

All the parties need to fight the election is the issue of affordability, said Glynn Roth, a former Ontario PC strategist who now works in government relations for Creative Strategy.

"It's incredibly crucial, and they've got to do it in a way that differentiates," Roth said in an interview.

She understands why the NDP is promoting dental care and pharmacare but questions whether they're communicating clearly to voters how it will make their lives more affordable.

"I don't think they're cutting through in the way that Del Duca Liberals have had some success in cutting through on the messaging side," Roth said.

She thinks Del Duca's \$1 transit fares promise succeeded by being "politically appetizing."

An affordability outlook COVID-19 as the top issue only late last year after the worst of the pandemic appeared to be behind Ontario. It's almost as if from March of 2020, people accepted that the pandemic had to be the priority, but then their post-up concerns over the cost of living burst forth.

Mix in home prices skyrocketing by 44 per cent in just two years, plus a spike in inflation with Ontarians confronting record-high gas prices and soaring grocery bills daily, and you've got voters demanding to know what the parties will do to make life easier on their wallets.

It's been uncommon to see one issue dominate Ontario politics of late, said Lyle.

"This is now compared to, say, the last decade of Ontario election campaigns," he said. "The last couple of elections, we've had crowded issue agendas where it was very hard to address an issue that everyone would be interested in."

Now, that issue "everyone is interested in" is raising the Ontario political parties right in the face. It will be fascinating to see how they handle it over the rest of the campaign.

## Think gas prices are high? Diesel is even higher. Here's why that matters

Canadians are paying much attention to the record cost of regular gasoline, but the price for another fuel should also be raising eyebrows, experts say.

Diesel prices are soaring higher than gas, averaging \$2.22 a litre on Monday, according to GasBuddy.com. In comparison, regular gas averaged around \$1.89 per litre in the country. Diesel drivers have no doubt been impacted, but that doesn't mean every other Canadian should disregard its record price at the pump, said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.com.

"Diesel is really the fuel that powers the economy: semi-trucks, trains, ships in some instances, are all using diesel," he told Global News.

"This is going to be something that will affect you at the grocery store, at the hardware store, clothing store, electronic store, etc. This is something that will very much become an economic pinch point with the higher cost of fuel to get all of these various goods to the market."

GasBuddy.com data for May 9 shows the average price for diesel a litre in Canada. Diesel is likely to impact all Canadians, even those who don't drive, experts say. Global News Graphic

Why is diesel so expensive? Diesel demand has increased as the economy reopens from COVID-19 shutdowns. The Haan said, and oil producers haven't been able to keep up.

It's a similar story with gas prices, which have shot up due not only to demand, but also to the impact of the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, a major oil producer that many western nations have punished economically for launching the war on Feb. 24.

But also, several refineries have closed down over the years, resulting in less diesel supply on the market, added De Haan. He cited an example a Come By Chance refinery in Newfoundland that scaled down operations in 2020. It was bought by a Texas-based equity firm in November with plans to produce renewable diesel and sustainable aviation fuel beginning this year.

"Not only that, but diesel is also competing in a way with jet fuel. Jet fuel, diesel and heating oil are essentially all products that come from

the middle of a barrel of oil," he said. "They're similar in ways and they're different, but they all compete with each other. So, as more planes are taking to the sky, there may be more jet fuel demand and the refinery may produce more jet fuel at the cost of diesel."

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