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Bank layoffs in Canada: Here's what it could mean, according to experts

Inflation drops, will interest rates follow?

Job layoffs across the banking industry have been making headlines in recent weeks, but what exactly is driving the cuts, and where are things headed?

Just last week, Desjardins laid off nearly 400 employees and Scotiabank announced it would cut three per cent of its global workforce, or around 2,700 staff.

In September, the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) made a round of job cuts in its capital market operations, with plans to cut two per cent of its full-time equivalent staff in the coming quarter. The bank had 93,753 employees as of July 31.

But the rationale behind the layoffs isn't necessarily the same for all institutions.

For instance, Scotiabank says bank digitization, automation, streamlining efforts and shifting consumer preferences are driving its layoffs. Meanwhile, RBC's planned cuts come as a cost-saving strategy following the weight of high expenses in the third quarter.

Coming amid a year of high inflation, the layoffs are likely a domino effect of the aggressive interest rate hikes from the Bank of Canada, according to Jay Zhao-Murray, FX analyst at Monex Canada, a commercial foreign exchange firm.

"In the face of consumers spending less, you've got firms that have this weaker sales outlook, so they've decided to slow their employment intentions, as well as cut back on investments," Zhao-Murray said in a phone interview with CTVNews.ca.

"When you take a look at banks, you have this weak demand, especially in interest-rate sensitive goods, and that affects loans. On the business side, there are reduced investments. All of these things come together to weigh on profitability."

Despite the recent layoffs, he's doubtful these job losses will be permanent.

"It really is a cyclical thing. We're at the tail end of the economic cycle in Canada. With slowing demand, there's a greater potential for a recession next year," he said.

"It's just more or less the normal swings that come in the business cycle. Even though profitability has been eroded, companies are still earning a higher rate of profit now than they were during the entire five-year period preceding the pandemic," Zhao-Murray added.

"With the higher profits, firms don't necessarily need to fire workers and I don't think they want to."

Following the firing-and-hiring challenges during the pandemic, firms are now trying to hoard labor and not make layoffs until absolutely necessary, he adds.

And according to Nita Chinzner, associate professor in human resource management and business consulting at the University of Quebec, layoffs were often used in the past as a result of firms experiencing declines, such as a loss of customers or profit.

But today, layoffs are often used by

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre is blaming Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for diplomatic chill with India, saying Ottawa needs a "professional relationship" with the government of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Meanwhile, Modi's government says it is upset with the federal Liberals and not Canada as a whole.

Trudeau announced in the House of Commons last month that Canadian intelligence services are investigating a "credible link" between India's government and the killing of Sikh leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar in British Columbia.

"It's fine to have our disagreements and to hold each other accountable, but we have to have a professional relationship with the Indian government," Poilievre told Narendra Modi in a video posted online Saturday afternoon.

Poilievre also blamed Trudeau for the "aggression shown to Indian diplomats at public events."

Earlier this year, before Trudeau's revelation regarding the Nijjar case, India lashed out at Trudeau's government, saying it was "not a professional relationship" between the two countries.

New Delhi formally called on Canada to better uphold its duty to protect foreign diplomats and in late August, India's high commissioner to Canada, Sanjay Kumar Verma, said his country was "very satisfied" that the Liberal government had responded appropriately and that its diplomats were secure.

Poilievre claims in the interview that Trudeau is turning Canadians against each other, citing vandalism

Poilievre says Trudeau soured India relations, as Modi government laments Liberals

"I'm very disappointed to see His Majesty's loyal opposition leader siding with a hostile foreign government against Canadian intelligence. Five Eyes intelligence and frankly the memory of a dead Canadian citizen."

Singh said his group condemns calls for violence against Hindu people, but he said Poilievre is siding with New Delhi against Canadian interests.

"We shouldn't be playing politics with a matter of this gravity," he said.

"The situation is not a result of Prime Minister Trudeau's actions or individuals in the Sikh community who have spoken out against Indian diplomats."

Also this past weekend, India's foreign affairs minister Subrahmanyan Jaishankar said his country might end its freeze on Canadian visas if Canada better guarantees the safety of Indian diplomats.

"We stopped issuing visas in Canada because it was no longer safe for our diplomats to go to work to issue visas," Jaishankar claimed on Sunday, despite his own envoy to Ottawa saying otherwise.

"Our diplomats are not safe. If we see progress there, I would like very much to resume the issuing of visas. My hope would be that it would be something which would happen very, very soon."

Jaishankar also claimed that New

Delhi's decision to reduce Canada's diplomatic presence in India - leading to the majority being removed from the country - was the result of unspecified meddling by Canada in India.

"We invoked parity because we had concerns about continuous interference in our affairs by Canadian personnel," he said.

"We haven't made much of that public. My sense is over a period of time, more staff will come out and people will understand why we had that discomfort with many of them."

India's envoy to Canada said on Aug. 31 that "we feel very satisfied" with Ottawa's response to a request for better protection. "Our concerns have been taken on board. It has been well understood," Verma said.

Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly revealed on Sept. 14 that Indian diplomats in Canada "have 24/7 security," which is a service Ottawa offers to very few diplomatic missions.

Jaishankar also said Sunday he takes issue with the federal Liberals. "The problems we have are with a certain segment of Canadian politics, and the policies which flow from that," he said.

University of British Columbia professor Vira Nadibulla said that's the first time India has ever explicitly indicated its issues with Canada fall along political lines.

"It's quite surprising. For a (foreign affairs minister) like Jaishankar to say that essentially pointing at the Liberal government and at the prime minister himself," she said.

Nadibulla said she's seen "troubling" posters around Surrey, B.C., that call for violence toward Indian government officials.

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NDP leader wants meeting with Trudeau to discuss calls for Israel-Hamas ceasefire

Singh's letter follows one from more than 30 MPs calling for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas.

NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh is calling for an urgent meeting with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to discuss prospects for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas.

"I am asking for an urgent meeting between us to discuss how we can work together to end the bloodshed with a ceasefire, get Canadians out of the region, ensure the safe return of all hostages, and insist that international law be respected," Singh said in a letter to the PM.

The letter condemns the Hamas attacks on thousands of Israeli civilians. Singh's letter states the party is also alarmed by the suffering of Palestinians "on a scale we have never seen before as a result of the siege of Gaza."

A spokesperson from the Prime Minister's Office didn't say if Singh would be granted a meeting.



"We're ensuring all parties have access to all the necessary information," the spokesperson said in a statement.

Singh's letter follows one from more than 30 MPs—including Liberal caucus members—who are calling on the prime minister to advocate for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas.

"Canada has long been a voice for peace. The longer this conflict goes on, the more innocent civilians will pay with their lives. We demand that Canada join the growing international call for an immediate ceasefire. Canada must act before more innocent children are killed," said the letter,

signed by 33 MPs.

The signatories include former cabinet minister Omar Alghabra and six current parliamentary secretaries. Eight NDP MPs, including House Leader Peter Julian, and both Green Party MPs added their names to the list.

Some of the MPs who signed the letter said supporting a ceasefire is compatible with supporting Israel's right to defend itself.

Singh's letter on Monday cited the letter from the MPs.

"They [Canadian MPs] add their voice to that of the NDP, which has been calling for a ceasefire and the

release of the hostages for over a week now," Singh said.

Israeli aircraft struck southern Lebanon overnight and Israeli troops fought Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, residents said.

Bombardments continue in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip. Israel has amassed tanks and troops near Gaza's border for a planned ground invasion.

Israeli officials have said Hamas's Oct. 7 rampage in southern Israel killed 1,400 people, including several Canadians; roughly 212 people were taken into Gaza as hostages. Health authorities in Gaza said at least 5,087 people have been killed and over 15,200 injured in Israel's two-week bombardment, which began after the attack.

During a briefing with reporters from the United Arab Emirates, Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly was asked about Singh's letter and called for a ceasefire.

Joly did not address the question but said Canada is sending a clear call for de-escalation, peace and stability. She also spoke of Israel's need to protect its citizens while abiding by international law.

"Israel has a right to exist. Israel also has a right to defend itself, according to international law. And so we've been concerned with the protection of civilians," she said.

On the ground, the officer was taken to hospital with serious but non-life-threatening injuries.

"During the incident, another officer fired his gun at least twice," the SIU said. "A civilian vehicle was struck as was the Jeep."

A spike belt, which is used to stop fleeing vehicles, was also visible at the scene in Caledon.

The driver of the Jeep was able to successfully evade police on Tunns Road and the vehicle was later found abandoned in the area of Dixie and Mayfield roads in Brampton, police told CP24. The driver of the Jeep has not yet been located.

The OPP's K9 unit has been called in to assist with the search for the suspect, police said.

The SIU, which investigates all incidents involving police and civilians that result in serious injury, death, or allegations of sexual assault, has assigned three investigators and two forensic investigators to the case.

"The SIU is urging anyone who may have information about this investigation, including video or photos, to contact the lead investigator at 1-800-787-8529," the agency said.

How Canada has been helping China hunt for fugitives for decades

The Canadian government has given Chinese law enforcement assistance in their pursuit of fugitive Chinese nationals living abroad for decades, an investigation by CBC's The Fifth Estate has learned.

In Canada, that help has sometimes come as a result of quid pro quo deals, people with first-hand knowledge of the relationship, including two former Canadian ambassadors to China, told The Fifth Estate.

Calvin Christie, a former RCMP operations officer in British Columbia, said in an interview that he received direction "from Ottawa at the highest level" to "assist and collaborate with" Chinese officials regarding a "high-profile fugitive that they were after inside Vancouver area."

Christie said he refused to facilitate a meeting for the Chinese officials, who wanted to interview the fugitive and convince the person to voluntarily return to China to face prosecution.

China has ensured Canada's continuing co-operation by bartering on trade, offering assistance fighting illegal drugs and by negotiating the release of Canadians arbitrarily detained in China, The Fifth Estate found.

"Our economic interests sort of drove this," said veteran Toronto immigration lawyer Lorne Waldman, who represents a number of people now in Canada who are wanted by Chinese authorities.

"We turned a blind eye to the lack of rule of law in China and turned a blind eye to the fact that we should be more skeptical about the evidence coming from China. And as time went on, we turned a blind eye to the fact that Chinese agents were acting in Canada."

Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc declined to be interviewed for this story.

Earlier this year, politicians in Ottawa denied the reported existence of several alleged Chinese police stations in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. But Canadian officials were already well aware of Chinese police operations in Canada.

Since 2014, the Chinese government has aggressively pursued the return of alleged corrupt public officials and economic criminals living abroad through long-arm police operations it dubbed Sky Net and Fox Hunt.



According to the Chinese government, thousands of alleged fugitives have been returned to China to face prosecution. Many returns are highlighted on state television.

In its 2019 annual report, Canada's National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians found that "Chinese security officials have taken a number of measures to conduct Operation Fox Hunt, including diplomatic pressure on foreign states to co-operate with their investigations and covert trips to persuade or coerce fugitives to return. They employ these measures with Canada."

But critics say Canada co-operated with China's fugitive hunt for years while ignoring or downplaying issues in China around the lack of an independent judiciary and the use of coercion, including torture, to gather evidence.

"We've been successful in cases involving Chinese accusations in getting the evidence thrown out because it was the product of torture," Waldman said.

Waldman declined requests from The Fifth Estate to interview clients of his who are fugitives from China over fears that family members back home could face retribution from Beijing.

Waldman told The Fifth Estate that not only is the federal government still trying to remove his clients wanted by China, but CSIS officials have also interviewed some of those same clients to determine to what extent they are being harassed or threatened by Chinese authorities to return to face charges.

"Some of these were people that [the Canada Border Services Agency] was actively trying to send back to China," Waldman said.

CSIS declined to be interviewed for this story, but in an email, a spokesperson said that China uses "all elements of state power to carry out activities that are a direct threat to

Refugee Board is the final decision-maker."

Canada's co-operation The Fifth Estate found that over the past two decades, China made Canada's co-operation in its fugitive hunt conditional for co-operation on matters urgent to Canada.

For example, Guy Saint-Jacques, who served as Canada's ambassador to China from 2012 to 2016, says that the federal government was willing to co-operate on repatriation in return for Chinese government help curtailing the flow of fentanyl into Canada.

"A memorandum of understanding was signed between the RCMP and the [Chinese] Ministry of Public Security saying visits of Chinese inspectors will be allowed to Canada," Saint-Jacques said in an interview with The Fifth Estate.

He added that the Chinese investigators would be required to provide details in advance of the visits, including who officials would be speaking with and why. It was also required that a Mandarin-speaking RCMP officer be present for the meetings.

However, it appears there were instances when the Chinese flouted those requirements.

"The first visit took place in the spring of 2016," Saint-Jacques said, "and soon after that, the CSIS liaison officer at the embassy came to see me and he said, 'Mr. Ambassador, I have to report that we caught some members of the Chinese delegation doing extrajudicial activities.'"

Saint-Jacques would not say what those activities were. He brought the issue up, he said, with a Chinese counterpart who assured him this type of activity would not happen again, but Saint-Jacques said that is difficult to verify.

Christie was a senior operations officer in British Columbia when he said he was asked to facilitate an interview between Chinese officials and a high-profile fugitive that they were after in the Vancouver area."

Asked if he was a request or not, he said: "It was a request followed up by a strong reinforcement that it was coming directly from Ottawa at the highest level."

He did not feel comfortable facilitating that interview, he said.

"My understanding was China was one of those countries that didn't have a great track record for due process."

For years, the RCMP and CSIS participated in working groups with their Chinese counterparts in discuss various areas of collaboration, including repatriating fugitives in Canada back to China.

Cop hit by fleeing vehicle in Caledon incident captured on video



Video shows moment fleeing Jeep hit OPP officer.

One OPP officer was struck by a fleeing vehicle and another fired his pistol multiple times while investigating reports of a suspicious Jeep in Caledon early Monday morning, the province's police watchdog says.

In a news release, the Special

Investigative Unit (SIU) confirmed that it has invoked its mandate following an incident involving OPP officers on Tunns Road in Caledon.

According to the SIU, OPP officers were called to the residential area, located near Hurontario Street and Highway 410, at around 7:20 a.m. after receiving a call about a suspicious Jeep Wrangler.

Shortly after officers arrived, the driver of the Jeep hit an OPP officer while fleeing the scene, the SIU said.

Security camera footage from a home in the area shows the moment the Jeep speeds away, striking the officer. The officer is thrown several feet onto a nearby lawn. Another officer can be seen running to the aid of the injured officer, who is lying

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Bank of Canada expected to hold key interest rate at 5% amid 'sluggish' economy

The Bank of Canada is widely expected to hold its key interest rate steady on Wednesday as the Canadian economy shows signs of recovery and inflation resumes its downward trend.

The central bank held its key interest rate steady at five per cent last month but kept the door open to more rate hikes, citing concerns about the persistence of underlying price pressures.

Economic data releases since the Bank of Canada opted to forego an interest rate hike in September have been mixed, but we expect that they will not have made a hike at next week's decision unlikely. RBC assistant chief economist Nathan Jansen and economist Claire Fan wrote in a client note on Friday.

The annual inflation rate rose in both July and August, while core measures of inflation - which strip out volatile prices - have not eased in much in recent months.

But the September consumer price index report helped quell some of those anxieties as the pace of price growth slowed across the economy and the annual inflation rate fell back to 3.8 per cent.

"We were kind of breathing a sigh of relief a little bit after the last inflation numbers," said Andrew Grantham, CIBC executive director of economics.

"The recent inflation numbers suggest that it is starting to decelerate once again. And that, combined with the sluggish growth that we've seen, will probably keep (the Bank of Canada) on hold, not just this meeting, but really for the remainder of this year, and into next year as well."

The Canadian economy shrank in the second quarter. Economists anticipate that weakness will continue for the rest of the year and into 2024. The Bank of Canada's recent business outlook survey supported this expectation. It showed business

sentiment continued to weaken in the third quarter as companies said they expect sales growth to slow over the coming year.

On the jobs front, employment continues to rise as Canada's population continues to surge, but the job market is not as robust as it was in 2022. Job vacancies have fallen and the unemployment rate has edged higher to 5.5 per cent.

The pace of consumer spending has also slowed. New retail Canadian retail sales fell 0.1 per cent to \$66.1 billion in August as sales at new and used car dealers fell for the month, Statistics Canada said Friday.

These trends are expected to continue as the effect of previous rate hikes takes hold on the economy, pinching the pocketbooks of more Canadians and businesses.

In particular, as more households lose their mortgages, the effect of higher interest rates is expected to weigh on more people. "We know that there's more to come

because we know that actually, fewer than 50 per cent of mortgage holders in Canada have been exposed to higher interest rates," Grantham said.

Most economists expect these weaker economic and tighter financial conditions to eventually bring inflation back down to two per cent. And while sticky core inflation is likely a concern for the Bank of Canada, Grantham expects that concern to fade into the central bank's decision on when to cut rates, rather than whether rates should rise further.

On the international front, the global economy faces some uncertainty amid the Israel-Hamas conflict, which risks destabilizing the Middle East. "We're seeing, globally, the risks around inflation have risen. The conflict in the Middle East, if that escalates, you know, wars are inflationary. There's no other way around it," Grantham said.

Central banks know all too well what war can do to prices: the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 contributed significantly to the initial run-up in inflation as commodity prices skyrocketed.

Last week, Bank of Canada Governor Tiff Macklem said it was too early to tell what the economic repercussions of the Israel-Hamas conflict may be.

Officials said they still welcome Indian nationals who want to visit or move to Canada.

Mr Trudeau (left) and Mr Modi had a two-day meeting in Delhi recently.

"Canada-India relations have deteriorated to a historic low after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said in September there was credible evidence of a potential link between India and Nijjar's murder."

Mr Trudeau said this was based on Canadian intelligence, which suggested that "agents of the government of India" were behind the killing. This, Canada has said, is a violation of its sovereignty.

But the Global Affairs website which lists the Indian diplomats in Ottawa suggests they had about the same number.

India saying it would remove diplomatic immunity for Canadian envoys is a "violation of international law", Ms Joly said during a news conference in Ottawa.

She added that Canada will not reciprocate. "If we allow the norm of diplomatic immunity to be broken, no diplomats anywhere on the planet would be safe," Ms Joly

Is a teachers strike looming? What Ontario government and unions say

The showdown between teachers' unions and the Ontario government is heating up, as elementary and Catholic teachers have handed their respective unions overwhelming strike mandates.

On Wednesday, elementary teachers showed protected negotiations could escalate as 95 per cent of members gave the union a mandate to strike. The next day, the English Catholic teachers voted 97 per cent in favour of the same move.

The news was greeted cautiously by both union and government leaders, with the two sides stressing the mandates don't mean classrooms will shut down.

With two major teaching unions now one step closer to striking, here is what both sides are saying and where Ontario's other major unions stand.

What the government says: Soon after Ontario's elementary teachers voted in favour of a strike mandate, Minister of Education Stephen Lecce took questions from reporters at Queen's Park. He reportedly pointed to an agreement for binding arbitration the province reached with the union representing secondary school teachers as his preferred model.

"It's clear that 100 per cent of families in this province want us to insist that children remain in schools and we firmly agree," Lecce said.

"We just concluded a framework and agreement with OSSTF - that's the public high school teachers. We signed a deal that protects the in-person experience, ensures these children are in school. And it begs the question, fundamentally, if we can do an agreement with one of the largest unions for English public high school teachers, why can't we get that with English public elementary school teachers?"

Lecce said the strike mandate did not significantly change the bargaining situation in the eyes of the Ford government.

"Look, teacher unions have historically held strike votes all the time," he said, saying it does "not really" make a difference at the bargaining table.

Lecce said the vote was "not surprising," adding it was "common" for unions to vote for strike mandates.

The education minister did not say what the sticking points at the negotiating table were. In response to a question about salary, he said that



"historically, compensation is a challenge," before repeating his calls for binding arbitration. Lecce said that, from the government's point of view, there is still "flexibility" around negotiation timelines.

"My mission is very simple: it's to provide a deal that keeps kids in school," he said.

What CTV says: Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario president Karen Brown told Global News the strike vote was a sign the teachers she represents are losing patience.

"This vote means that our members are frustrated with the pace of negotiations," she said. "It's a strong message to the government to be serious about bargaining and to move on where they're not getting our contracts."

Brown said another day of bargaining had been scheduled for Friday, Oct. 20. The strike mandate will now be part of those discussions and a tool in the union's negotiations.

"Does that mean we're going out tomorrow? Absolutely not," she said. "There's a lengthy process."

In late August, ETFO announced it had asked the Ministry of Labour to appoint a conciliator to stick-handle the thorny negotiations, more than a year after the union's contract had expired. A ministry-appointed conciliator joined the negotiations and is scheduled to meet with the bargaining teams on Oct. 20 and 27.

The conciliation process is key to determining what happens next and whether students will experience more classroom disruption.

If the talks derail, the process would end with a "no-board" report - meaning the Ministry of Labour would not appoint a three-member conciliation panel to finalize the contract. That would effectively trigger a countdown to a strike.

Once the no-board notice has been released by the Ministry of Labour, the union would have to wait 17 full

days before educators could legally walk off the job after giving notice of strike action.

The 17-day period allows school boards the chance to prepare for the strike and gives parents a window to plan their children's education.

Brown said issues that persisted at the bargaining table with the province included compensation, benefits and violence in schools. She said an arbitration process would not address more holistic workplace issues than just salary.

Addressing the strike vote, Brown said "nobody wants to be on strike," calling the option a "last resort."

What OECTA says: The Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association said in its statement that the 45,000 teachers in the union represents are united and ready to do "whatever is necessary" to reach a deal with the Ford government.

Union president Renee Jansen in the deal. Wal said the strike mandate sent a strong message to the government with more bargaining dates between the union and province still to come.

"As we move forward with our next bargaining dates, the Ford Conservative government and Catholic teacher representatives need to understand that Catholic teachers ... are united in solidarity, and prepared to do whatever is necessary to reach an agreement," Jansen in a statement.

He accused Lecce of an "ongoing misinformation campaign" and reminded parents the strike vote does not mean a strike will take place.

"In fact, such a strong strike mandate may make job action less likely - but only if the Minister and Catholic school board representatives heed the message being sent," the union president said.

"And it will enable the Association to proceed forward in negotiations with the full confidence of Catholic teachers."

Ontario NDP tables motion calling on Doug Ford to release personal phone records

The Ontario NDP has put forward a motion calling on Premier Doug Ford to disclose the contents of his personal phone and email accounts.

The motion was tabled at Queen's Park on Thursday, and cites multiple investigations related to the Greenbelt and the government's plans for Ontario Place as reasons why the Legislative Assembly should vote in favour.

"Government members have applauded the premier's frequent use of his personal phone to conduct government business, a flagrant disregard for the information and privacy commissions' recommendation that the government members and political staff only use government devices and platforms," NDP Leader Matt Stiles said during Question Period. "This government should know better."

"Did the premier intentionally use his personal phone to communicate in secret with people who have business in front of the government?"

Ford sidestepped the question, talking instead about how his government has saved Ontarians money while questioning the NDP's priorities.

Government House Leader Paul Calandra answered all further questions and bluntly confirmed the premier regularly uses his personal phone to speak with Ontarians.

"As the premier has said, he's not going to stop working on behalf of his constituents, the Ms. Jones who might need a doctor or a pothole filled in front of her home. He's not going to stop doing that because the leader of the opposition demands he stop doing that," Calandra said.

"It might be why the people of this province trust this premier to get things done."

Canada withdraws 41 diplomats from India

Forty-one Canadian diplomats have recently left India amid a rift over the murder of a Sikh separatist leader on Canadian soil.

India asked Canada two weeks ago to withdraw dozens of its diplomatic staff and threatened to remove their immunity if they remained.

Canadian officials called the threat a "violation of international law".

Relations have been tense after Canada accused India of being behind the 18 June killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

India has denied the allegations, calling them "absurd".

On Thursday, Canada's foreign minister, Melanie Joly, confirmed that many Canadian diplomats and their dependents in India have now left the country.

She said India had said that immunity for "all but 21 diplomats" will be "unilaterally removed" by 20 October.

India's Ministry of External Affairs said it rejected suggestions that this was a violation of international norms.

"The state of our bilateral relations, the much higher number of Canadian diplomats in India, and their continued interference in our internal affairs warrant a parity in mutual diplomatic presence in New Delhi and Ottawa," it said.

Ms Joly said that the remaining 21 diplomats are still in India, but the withdrawal means Canada will have to limit its services in the country due to a shortage of staff.

Specifically, the move will put a pause on in-person operations in Bangalore, Mumbai, and Chandigarh, Ms Joly said. Officials said there is no timeline on when those services will resume.

Services will still be available out of the High Commission of Canada in Delhi, and applications centres - which are third-party-run and which also remain open, officials said.

However, the reduction of staff is anticipated to significantly slow down processing times for immigration applications, at least in the short term, said Canadian

immigration minister Marc Miller.

It will be primarily Indian citizens who will be affected, officials said, including international students looking to study in Canada.

Indian nationals made up the largest percentage of applicants for temporary and permanent residency in Canada in 2022.

India says Canada had many more diplomats in Delhi than India has in Ottawa, and has demanded parity ever since the row between the two countries erupted.

But the Global Affairs website which lists the Indian diplomats in Ottawa suggests they had about the same number.

India saying it would remove diplomatic immunity for Canadian envoys is a "violation of international law", Ms Joly said during a news conference in Ottawa.

She added that Canada will not reciprocate.

"If we allow the norm of diplomatic immunity to be broken, no diplomats anywhere on the planet would be safe," Ms Joly

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