Government of Canada Announces Termination of the eTA Leniency Period

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Important Note: *Since this article was published, the Government of Canada announced an extension of the eTA leniency period until November 9, 2016.*

I previously reported that Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada ("IRCC"), formerly known as Citizenship and Immigration Canada, had published regulations implementing its Electronic Travel Authorization ("eTA") program. The eTA program requires visa-exempt persons who were entering Canada as temporary residents (i.e. visitors, students, workers) to register in advance for an eTA. It is similar to the ESTA program implemented by United States Customs and Border Protection, which is required for foreign nationals entering the United States under the Visa Waiver Program.

The regulations initially required eTAs to be mandatory as of March 15, 2016. However, the new Liberal Government decided to delay the enforcement of the eTA requirement by implementing a "leniency period."

At the time, the no fixed termination date was announced for the leniency period; the official notices merely stated that the leniency period would end sometime in the Fall of 2016. IRCC has now announced that the leniency period will end on September 29, 2016. After this date, visa exempt temporary residents will require an eTA if they intend to enter or re-enter Canada by air.

Temporary residents who obtained a study or work permit on or after August 1, 2015, were automatically issued an eTA at the time. No further action is required in such cases as long as the temporary resident travels to Canada using the same passport that they used to apply for their study or work permit. However, temporary residents who obtained a study or work permit

on or before July 31, 2015, will need to apply for an eTA if they wish to enter or re-enter Canada by air.

Further information on the eTA program appears at the IRCC website.