

They came to Canada to build a life. Can they stay?

By Jana Zalmanowitz, LJI Reporter

Israeli newcomers who arrived in Canada following October 7 have built homes, careers and community in Alberta. For some, however, their future here remains uncertain.

If you were told today that your new Jewish neighbours might have to leave Canada, what would you say?

For some Israeli families who came to Canada following October 7, 2023, that possibility is becoming increasingly real.

They came on a temporary status. They found jobs, bought homes, enrolled their children in daycare and schools, made friends and became part of their local Jewish communities. Now, as their temporary permits approach expiry, they are trying to find a way to stay.

One of them is Calgary resident Idan Shmuel.

Idan arrived in Calgary with his wife and young daughter in March 2024. Their daughter was born in June 2022. Before she was even 18 months old, she had already experienced three security escalations in Israel that involved waking up in the middle of the night to rocket sirens and going to a shelter. The couple became increasingly concerned about raising her amid the threat of war, so they came to Canada looking for safety and a chance to build a future.

For four and a half months, they lived off their savings while waiting for work permits. Once they were able to work, they started their search for jobs.

The couple had done their homework before coming to Calgary. They spoke with an international consultant who assured them that their professional backgrounds as a software developer and IT manager could translate into opportunities for them in Calgary's technology sector.

Idan found a job after two weeks. His wife had a more difficult time finding steady employment but after 18 months had secured a position.

In the meantime, the family put down roots. They bought a house. Their daughter, has been attending the same daycare for the last two years. They have developed friendships in both the Israeli and the broader Jewish community.

For Idan this is no longer simply a place where his family came to work temporarily. It's home.

But this home comes with an expiry date.

The government of Canada introduced temporary

measures that allowed eligible Israeli nationals already in Canada to apply for open work permits. These were introduced in response to the conflict and have since expired for new applications. Families who received permits under the measures can remain only as long as their individual status allows. For Idan and his wife, this means their work permits will expire in 2029.

For families hoping to remain permanently, the path forward can be complicated. One route is through Canada's Express Entry system, which uses the Comprehensive Ranking System, or CRS, to rank candidates according to factors including age, education, language ability and Canadian work experience.

The system can feel like a game, but the stakes are not.

In March 2025, the federal government removed points for job offers from the CRS. Previously, qualifying job offers could add points, depending on the position. For experienced professionals, age can also become a significant disadvantage in a points-based system.

"Most of the people that have come, already have lots of experience in their field of work," Idan says. "But this experience comes hand in hand with age."

At 37, Idan is trying to improve his score wherever he can. "I never thought as a 37-year-old, with a career and young daughter I would be learning French," he says. He has spent the past eight months doing exactly that.

Idan is not giving up on the options currently available to him. At the same time, he is advocating for a broader solution for Israelis who have established lives in Canada but may not have a viable path to permanent residency.

The Immigration Collaboration Alliance Network (I-CAN) is a Toronto non-profit providing support to Israelis across Canada. When their findings suggested



Like many Israeli newcomers, Idan Shmuel and his family are looking for ways to make Alberta their permanent home.

a Canada-wide approach may not achieve results, Idan stepped up to be a local and provincial representative of I-CAN.

As part of this role, he has been meeting with Jewish organizations in Alberta, seeking a partner to help advocate for pathways that would allow Israeli newcomers to remain in Canada.

For Idan, the issue is about more than his own family. It is about the educated, experienced and hardworking Israelis who want to continue contributing to the communities they have become a part of.

When he thinks about what happens if he cannot find a path forward before his status expires, he struggles to imagine it.

"I can't even think about it," he says. "Our daughter has her life here."

That is where the question becomes a communal one.

Jewish communities across Canada have spent decades thinking about how to grow, sustain and strengthen Jewish life. Winnipeg offers one example.

For 25 years, GrowWinnipeg has helped Jewish newcomers settle in Manitoba by connecting them with Jewish organizations, employment opportunities, social networks and other supports. The program has welcomed more than 6,800 people since 2000.

The program was created in part to address a community facing decline and an aging population. Today, its work continues to bring newcomers into Jewish life in Winnipeg. Could Alberta do something similar?

Perhaps the opportunity here is slightly different. The community does not need to convince these people to come. They are already here.

They have jobs. They have homes. Their children have friends and routines. They are members of synagogues and Jewish organizations. They are building their lives in Alberta and they want to stay.

The question is whether the community can help make that possible.

How you can help

1. Make a connection.

Know an elected official, government decision-maker or immigration advocate? Help connect them with Israeli newcomers who are trying to find a pathway to remain in Canada.

2. Ask your Jewish organizations.

Ask local and national Jewish organizations whether they are advocating for Israeli newcomers facing the expiry of their temporary status, and what community members can do to support that advocacy.

3. Help someone put down roots.

A job connection, professional introduction, French-language conversation partner, community connection or simply a welcoming invitation can make a difference to a family building a life in Alberta.

The goal is not simply to welcome people when they arrive. It is to help those who have chosen to build their lives here have the opportunity to stay.

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Alanna B. Caplan, CPA (Canada), CPA (CO, USA)
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