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Canada Stops Issuing Visas Inside Russia

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The Canadian Embassy in Moscow. **Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency**

Canada said Monday that it stopped issuing visas at its processing centers in Russia last month as part of a broader government effort to cut costs and modernize operations rather than as a shift in its immigration policy toward Russian citizens.

"The decision to close the immigration office in Moscow was made as part of a government-wide exercise to modernize government operations and reduce overall costs," a Canadian government spokesperson told The Moscow Times.

"This review looked at how to run programs more sustainably and consistently around the world," the spokesperson added.

Canada announced last week that it had stopped issuing visas at its processing centers in Russia as of Jan. 28. Previously, Russians could apply for and receive Canadian visas at centers

in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Vladivostok, Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk and Rostov-on-Don.

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Russians can still apply for visas online and submit their biometric data at one of the six visa application centers operating in Russia, the Canadian government spokesperson said. However, once a visa is approved, they must travel to centers outside the country to collect it.

Neighboring Armenia, Georgia and Kazakhstan all have Canadian visa processing centers. There are no Canadian centers in Belarus.

Separately, Canada's immigration department warned last month that foreign nationals could be refused visas or denied entry at the border if they are suspected of planning to claim asylum during the 2026 FIFA World Cup, which Canada will host alongside the United States and Mexico this summer.

"Events such as FIFA tournaments are not an avenue to seek asylum," department spokeswoman Isabelle Dubois told Canadian media.

Canada has imposed sanctions on Russia since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

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