



Immigration and  
Refugee Board of Canada

Commission de l'immigration  
et du statut de réfugié du Canada

2020–21

# Departmental Results Report

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The Honourable Sean Fraser, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Canada

2020–21 Departmental Results Report

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## From the Chairperson

I am pleased to present the 2020–21 Departmental Results Report for the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB, or the Board).

As Canada’s largest administrative tribunal, the IRB has the important mandate of resolving immigration and refugee cases efficiently, fairly and in accordance with the law.

With the arrival of COVID-19 in Canada in early 2020, fiscal year 2020–21 was marked by one of the most challenging and sustained set of disruptions to the Board’s operations over the course of its history. Throughout the year, our top priority was to protect the health and safety of employees and those appearing before the Board while maintaining access to justice to the extent possible.



The Board responded by immediately suspending almost all in-person hearings and taking the opportunity to finalize reserved decisions as well as claims that could be resolved without a hearing, while developing its recovery plans. The Board successfully recovered its operations by the spring, having expanded its IT infrastructure and equipped employees to work remotely, and having resumed in-person hearings with new health and safety measures implemented across its buildings by the summer. With efforts focused on response and recovery during the first part of the year, the Board then seized the opportunity to accelerate its digital strategy and began to re-imagine its paper-based and on-site hearings operating model. By the summer, the Board was piloting virtual hearings across all divisions. By early 2021, based on the lessons learned from those pilots and out of an early concern regarding potential new variants, the Board had adopted a virtual-by-default hearings operating model, with nearly all hearings since then being held remotely.

Despite the significant disruptions, the Board was able to advance its multi-year *Growth and Transformation Agenda* and its three strategic objectives: improved productivity and efficiency in support of greater access to justice for claimants and appellants; enhanced quality and consistency in decision-making; and strengthened management, including people management.

With respect to **growth**, Budget 2020 provided an extension, until April 2023, of recent government investments. These investments have allowed the Board to double the size of its organization to over 2,000 employees, successfully increase its capacity to finalize up to 50,000 refugee claims and 13,500 refugee appeals annually, and increase access to justice by reducing wait times from where they would otherwise have been.

In addition to continued growth, the Board advanced its **transformation** agenda:

Identifying opportunities in support of **improved productivity and access to justice** was especially important in 2020–21 given the pandemic-related impacts on our operations. Employees and decision-makers continued to identify and implement a range of measures across the entire decision-making continuum to maximize decision-making in the current context. These efforts, coupled with the Board’s transition to remote hearings and the lower intake of claims due to pandemic-related border restrictions, enabled the Board to reduce pending inventories and

wait times across all divisions. Specifically:

- The Refugee Protection Division finalized nearly 30,000 claims – 70% of the number of decisions finalized the previous year – and reduced the pending inventory of claims by approximately 25%.
- The Refugee Appeal Division finalized almost 10,000 appeals – 90% of the number of decisions finalized the previous year – and reduced the pending inventory of appeals by approximately 40%.
- The Immigration Division finalized over 4,300 detention reviews and over 1,000 admissibility hearings, exceeding case intake.
- The Immigration Appeal Division finalized over 2,700 appeals, also exceeding case intake and further reducing its inventory of appeals by 25%.

The Board also advanced its wide-ranging agenda in support of **quality decision-making**. Notable achievements included: finalizing the IRB’s Quality Assurance Framework, an overview of existing and recently introduced strategies that contribute to quality decision-making, which was independently reviewed and recognized as a model for administrative tribunals in Canada and abroad; establishing the Gender-Related Task Force and delivering related specialized training, in recognition of the unique issues involved in adjudicating gender-related refugee claims; as well as introducing strengthened adjudicative tools and guidance for decision-makers.

Significantly, this past year represented an inflection point in Canada and across the public service with respect to addressing issues in relation to diversity and inclusion, following high-profile incidents of racial injustice and a rising rate of hate crimes across communities. The Board recognized the inequities that continue to exist. It purposely set out to shape an organizational culture based on its values of civility, respect, diversity and inclusion in support of employee well-being, where everyone can contribute fully to the success of the organization. Among notable areas of progress, the Chairperson’s Advisory Committee on Diversity and Inclusion was established to harness the lived experiences, ideas and engagement of employees across the IRB and help develop the IRB’s first *Diversity and Inclusion Strategy*; awareness around unconscious bias and anti-racism was increased; and the IRB’s *Strategy for Psychological Safety and Mental Health in the Workplace* was launched, having benefited from broad consultations with staff throughout the year.

The Board’s strong performance in the context of a global pandemic demonstrates the agility, professionalism and commitment of all IRB staff. It also underscores the Board’s ability to innovate and advance its mandate during the most challenging of times. Throughout the fiscal year, the Board laid the groundwork for important organizational change, both operationally and culturally. I am sincerely proud of the Board’s accomplishments this past year and confident its plans and values will position it well for fiscal year 2022–23.

Richard Wex  
Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer

## Results at a glance

In 2020–21, the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada’s (IRB<sup>i</sup> or the Board) *Growth and Transformation Agenda* positioned the Board for success in the face of the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, the Agenda’s focus on a digital strategy allowed the Board to accelerate this already planned work and to pivot its operating model in response to the impacts of the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic impacts were nevertheless felt throughout the Board and are reflected in its performance results. In March 2020, the Board was predominantly a paper-based tribunal, which hindered its ability to process cases when employees and decision-makers were required to work remotely. Additionally, the pandemic reduced mobility around the world, and border closures resulted in lower intake levels across all four divisions (the Refugee Protection Division,<sup>ii</sup> the Refugee Appeal Division,<sup>iii</sup> the Immigration Division<sup>iv</sup> and the Immigration Appeal Division<sup>v</sup>). However, the IRB quickly responded to the pandemic and was guided by its dual objectives of protecting health and safety while ensuring meaningful access to justice.

Following the closure of all IRB offices and the postponement of all in-person hearings (excluding detention review hearings), the Board, in collaboration with Shared Services Canada, made significant investments to strengthen its information technology infrastructure. The Immigration Division was the first to transition from in-person to remote hearings. This was followed by successful pilot projects to conduct virtual hearings by the Immigration Appeal Division in June and by the Refugee Protection Division in July and August. In October, the My Case portal,<sup>vi</sup> a secure online application that provides registered counsel with current case status and other information on active cases, was expanded to allow for the electronic exchange of information. In the face of increasing measures to stem the spread of the pandemic, the Board moved to a virtual hearings only operating model, with limited exceptions, in January 2021.

### Did you know?

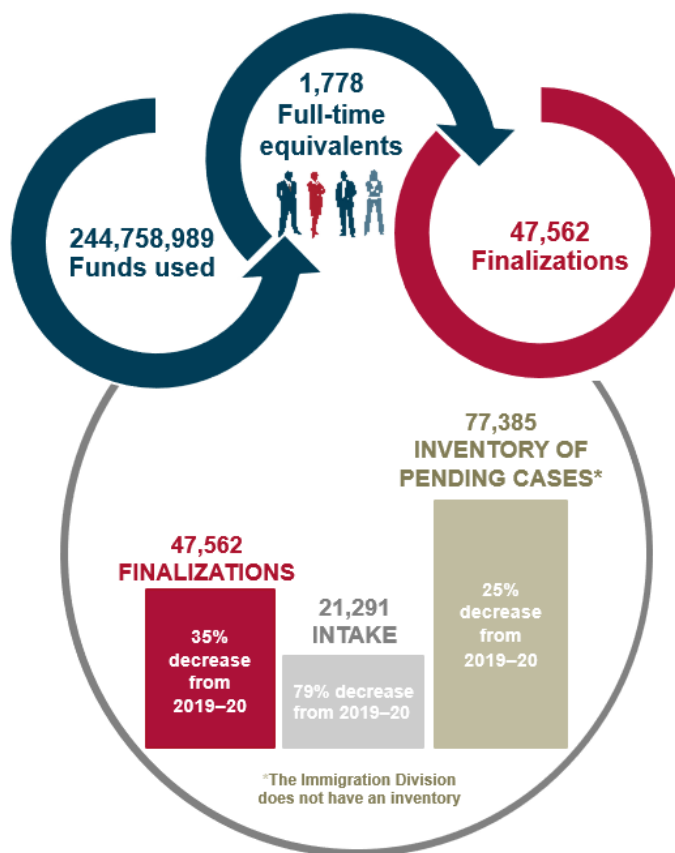
The IRB consists of four divisions, each rendering different kinds of decisions in support of the Board’s mandate: the Refugee Protection Division,<sup>ii</sup> the Refugee Appeal Division,<sup>iii</sup> the Immigration Division<sup>iv</sup> and the Immigration Appeal Division.<sup>v</sup>

**Growth:** Despite the challenges of hiring during the pandemic and of onboarding many of the new employees to a remote work setting, the Board welcomed a total of 252 new staff, including 40 new decision-makers, over the course of the fiscal year. As a result, the Board utilized 1,778 full-time equivalents in 2020–21, compared to 1,577 in 2019–20.

**Improved productivity:** The IRB navigated the challenges created by the pandemic by drawing from and focusing on its culture of operational awareness, performance and results. This included the introduction of tools such as a national productivity model and case management strategies (for example, the Task Force on Less Complex Claims, the Gender-Related Task Force<sup>vii</sup> and claim-type expertise). The IRB focused on finalizing decisions that did not require hearings while hearings were suspended and leveraged case management strategies throughout

the year to achieve efficiencies. In doing so, the Task Force on Less Complex Claims finalized nearly 6,300 claims through paper-based reviews or short hearings. The IRB<sup>i</sup> also shifted to virtual hearings and in the last quarter, more than 96% of hearings were being conducted remotely.

**Enhanced quality:** The Board continued its focus on high-quality decision-making. The IRB finalized its Quality Assurance Framework for Decision Making<sup>viii</sup> and a third-party review identified it as an international best practice. The Board also completed an evaluation of its member complaints process and is working to implement the recommendations. On guidance to decision-makers, the Board completed the review and publication of the revised Chairperson’s *Guideline 2: Detention*<sup>ix</sup> and progressed on reviewing *Guideline 4: Women Refugee Claimants Fearing Gender-Related Persecution*<sup>x</sup> and *Guideline 9: Proceedings Before the IRB Involving Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression*.<sup>xi</sup> The Board also implemented a suite of quality initiatives including new and ongoing professional development for decision-makers, adjudicative strategies, and updated tools and resources.



**Strengthened management, with a focus on people management:** In responding to the challenges of the pandemic, the Board made significant advancements on its digital agenda. Key infrastructure investments early in the year enabled employees to work remotely while setting the ground for shifting the IRB’s hearing operating model to one that is virtual. By summer 2020, all divisions had begun using virtual hearings, which became the default in January 2021. During this time, a significant portion of case inventories were digitized and new channels were created or expanded for parties to submit correspondence electronically, including My Case,<sup>vi</sup> email, and Canada Post’s epost Connect™ service. In addition, the IRB focused on psychological safety and mental health as an important aspect of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic and promoted an organizational culture around diversity, respect, civility and inclusion. This included engagement with employees and the establishment of a Chairperson’s Advisory Committee on Diversity and Inclusion.

For more information on the IRB’s plans, priorities and results achieved, see the “Results: What we achieved” section of this report.



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## Results: What we achieved

### Core responsibility: Adjudication of immigration and refugee cases

**Description:** The IRB<sup>i</sup> renders quality decisions and resolves cases in a timely manner regarding immigration and refugee protection cases. This includes determining refugee protection claims and appeals and applications to vacate or cease refugee protection. It also includes making decisions on immigration admissibility hearings and detention reviews, and appeals on certain immigration cases (e.g., family sponsorship applications, certain removal orders, applications based on meeting residency obligations and admissibility hearings).

#### Results

In 2020–21, the Board built on the successes of year one of its *Growth and Transformation Agenda* (highlighted in the 2019–20 Departmental Results Report<sup>xiii</sup>) through its three strategic objectives: improved productivity and efficiency in support of greater access to justice for claimants and appellants; enhanced quality and consistency in decision making; and strengthened management, including people management. The IRB adapted its processes, approaches and hearing models and continued to effectively fulfill its mandate during the pandemic.

#### The IRB undertook initiatives to sustain and improve productivity and to better monitor performance in support of access to justice:

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the IRB's operational plans were revised in July 2020 to account for the suspension of all in-person hearings (except for detention reviews and detained admissibility hearings) from April to July. Throughout the summer and fall, the Board introduced a gradual return to in-person hearings. However, in response to early concern about variants, in January 2021 the Board implemented a virtual hearings model, with only limited exceptions for in-person hearings. This allowed the Board to improve productivity and maintain access to justice, while minimizing the risk of COVID-19 transmission on IRB premises and stabilizing operations.

The Board's level of productivity, despite the suspension of in-person hearings for over three months, in combination with reduced intake of cases due to the pandemic, allowed for the reduction of case inventories across all divisions.

The Refugee Protection Division<sup>ii</sup> finalized nearly 30,000 refugee claims and reduced its backlog by 24%, bringing total claims in the inventory to approximately 70,000. The Refugee Appeal Division<sup>iii</sup> finalized almost 10,000 appeals and reduced its inventory of appeals by 41%. At the end of the year, with just under 5,000 cases in the inventory, the Refugee Appeal Division had its lowest inventory since October 2018.

The Immigration Division<sup>iv</sup> finalized over 4,300 detention reviews and over 1,000 admissibility hearings, exceeding intake. The Immigration Appeal Division<sup>v</sup> finalized over 2,700 appeals in 2020–21, which resulted in the inventory of pending appeals decreasing to approximately 2,800 as of March 31, 2021, 25% less than in March 2020. The remaining inventory represents

approximately 11 months of work for the Division at the target annual finalization rate of 3,000.

In addition to transforming its hearings operating model and adopting remote hearings, the Board implemented a number of new tools and expanded proven strategies in support of improved productivity and access to justice. The Board began implementation of its member productivity model to optimize the use of resources by considering claim complexity, experience of decision-makers and diversity of caseload. This included standard reports and visualization tools, and a self-serve and interactive reporting and analytics platform. This platform allows management to access timely information to optimize workload distribution, achieve strategic case management objectives, and inform improved planning and resource allocation. The Board also updated analytical tools as part of its national case triage system, which better optimizes scheduling and allocation of resources based on case characteristics. The Refugee Protection Division<sup>ii</sup> increased its use of case management conferences, which allow for better preparation of cases before they proceed to hearings. These conferences serve to ensure that self-represented refugee claimants are ready to proceed, address any necessary procedural accommodations, assess the need to appoint a designated representative, and appoint a designated representative where warranted. The Chairperson’s Task Force on Less Complex Claims, which has been successful in leading to shorter processing times overall for refugee claims, was once again successful in improving productivity. With in-person hearings temporarily suspended due to the pandemic, the Task Force on Less Complex Claims allowed the Refugee Protection Division to continue to work by focusing on files that could be decided without a hearing or through a short (virtual) hearing. The task force finalized nearly 6,300 claims (21% of the Refugee Protection Division’s finalizations in 2020–21).

#### Did you know?

In March 2021, the Refugee Protection Division finalized 6,431 claims, a record-breaking number of claims processed in one month since the Board’s creation in April 1989.

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of well-established relationships with the IRB’s<sup>i</sup> portfolio partners. To improve its processing of claims across the system, the Refugee Protection Division worked closely with partners on streamlining referrals through the Integrated Claim Analysis Centre (led by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada<sup>xiii</sup> and the Canada Border Services Agency<sup>xiv</sup>). To ensure that IRB decision-makers had access to detention facilities to conduct detention review hearings, the Immigration Division<sup>iv</sup> worked closely with the Canada Border Services Agency and provincial correctional authorities.

#### **To complement the focus on productivity, the Board put continued focus on the quality and consistency of decision-making:**

The Board’s first ever Quality Assurance Framework (QAF)<sup>viii</sup> was finalized in 2020–21. The Framework provides an overview of the activities, processes, strategies and structures that contribute to quality adjudicative decision-making, from recruitment, to training, to quality centres embedded in the Refugee Protection Division and the Refugee Appeal Division, to regular third-party reviews of decision-making. It provides a comprehensive range of initiatives that the Board has purposely identified and will, over time, individually strengthen as part of a strategic approach to support quality adjudicative decision-making on an ongoing basis.

*“I carefully reviewed the IRB’s impressive Quality Assurance Framework. International best practice in administrative justice involves ensuring that tribunals are set up to get decisions right, set processes right and put errors right. The QAF puts in place high quality, robust processes to maximize decisional accuracy, prepare members to render accurate decisions through a fair procedure and to oversee potential errors in decision-making. I would have no hesitation in recommending that other administrative tribunals in Canada and further afield use the IRB’s QAF as a model to optimize their own processes.”*

- Dr. Paul Daly, University Research Chair in Administrative Law and Governance at the University of Ottawa

During this reporting period, the Board focussed attention in a few key areas including strengthening training, professional development and capacity in respect of gender-based refugee claims. The Refugee Protection Division<sup>ii</sup> and the Refugee Appeal Division<sup>iii</sup> completed mandatory training to support decision-makers in adjudicating cases related to gender-based violence. The establishment of a Gender-Related Task Force<sup>vii</sup> in the Refugee Protection Division to specialize in gender-related cases demonstrated the IRB’s<sup>i</sup> commitment to respectful and trauma-informed adjudication and increased the efficiency and effectiveness with which these cases are managed.

Quality and consistency in decision-making was further achieved through the review and publication of adjudicative guidance including the revised Chairperson’s *Guideline 2: Detention*,<sup>ix</sup> and advancing work on reviewing *Guideline 9: Proceedings Before the IRB Involving Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression*,<sup>xi</sup> as well as *Guideline 4: Women Refugee Claimants Fearing Gender-Related Persecution*<sup>x</sup> and the rules that govern practices and required procedures in the Immigration Appeal Division.<sup>v</sup>

A third-party review of the Immigration Appeal Division’s services provided to self-represented appellants was completed and recommendations began to be implemented. This will enhance access to justice and help ensure that appellants are prepared for their hearings.

The Evaluation of the IRB’s process for making a complaint about a member<sup>xv</sup> was undertaken and completed and found that the 2017 complaints process was more transparent in terms of its annual reporting of statistics and complaint summaries, and communications with complainants, than the previous process. It also found that, when the IRB’s annual reporting on complaints<sup>xvi</sup> was compared to that of similar adjudicative bodies, the IRB’s was the most comprehensive. The evaluation outlined eight recommendations and work to address these will begin in 2021–22.

Monitoring the quality of decision-making is an important element of the Board’s Quality Assurance Framework.<sup>viii</sup> The Board confirmed the quality of its decision-making and obtained valuable insight to further improving it, through third-party quality reviews of its decision-making for the Refugee Protection Division, the Refugee Appeal Division and the Immigration Division.<sup>iv</sup> A third-party quality review for the Immigration Appeal Division<sup>v</sup> will be completed in the future, building on their last review conducted in 2019–20.

**To ensure a high-performing organization within a positive environment, the Board continued its focus on strengthening management:**

As a result of the pandemic, the Board accelerated its efforts to become a digital organization. The Board shifted from paper to digital files – including electronic intake and opening digital channels – piloted and then adopted virtual hearings, and undertook significant efforts to digitize its existing inventory of case files to facilitate remote work and its new virtual hearings operating model. The Immigration Division<sup>iv</sup> and the Immigration Appeal Division<sup>v</sup> scanned all paper working inventories, while the Refugee Protection Division scanned over 10,000 paper claims and continued their efforts into fiscal year 2021–22. At the onset of the pandemic, the Board immediately moved to facilitate the electronic exchange of information with its partners, counsel and clients through email and Canada Post’s epost Connect™ service, while accelerating the work on its My Case portal,<sup>vi</sup> a secure online application that provides registered counsel with case status and other information on active cases. As of October 2020, counsel were able to submit and receive private information electronically through the portal. The Board’s work to advance its digital agenda directly contributed to its successes during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the number of decisions finalized.

**Gender-based Analysis Plus: Program highlights**

The IRB purposely adopted a gender-based approach to its work in fiscal 2020-21, from strengthening adjudicative guidance in the form of Chairperson Guidelines to its members on how to approach gender based and related claims, to new institutional approaches to hearing gender-based refugee claims, including establishing a dedicated Task Force of members with experience and training to reviewing such claims.

The IRB<sup>i</sup> completed a review of the implementation of the Chairperson’s *Guideline 9: Proceedings Before the IRB Involving Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression*<sup>xi</sup>. The review was conducted to examine how the Guideline was being applied after it had been in place for a year, fulfilling a commitment made to stakeholders. Recommendations from the review addressed a variety of issues, including strengthening elements of the Guideline itself; enhancing training offered to IRB registry personnel, interpreters and designated representatives; ensuring more effective internal data capture; and, implementing additional safeguards to ensure adherence to principles of natural justice in the hearings process. It is expected that the recommendations, including the publication of the revised Guideline, will be implemented by the end of 2021.

Mandatory training was completed for all Refugee Protection Division<sup>ii</sup> and Refugee Appeal Division<sup>iii</sup> decision-makers to address issues related to gender-related violence.

The Board began its review of the Chairperson’s *Guideline 4: Women Refugee Claimants Fearing Gender-Related Persecution*<sup>x</sup> which was last updated in 1996. The objective of this review was to develop recommendations to modernize the Guideline by incorporating developments in jurisprudence, and knowledge and understanding of gender considerations to ensure high-quality adjudicative decision-making for gender-related issues by members of all of IRB’s divisions. A comprehensive case law review and environmental scan, as well as wide-ranging internal and external consultations, were conducted to identify gaps and outdated guidance. The revised Guideline is expected to be published in 2021–22.

The Refugee Protection Division established a Gender-Related Task Force<sup>vii</sup> dedicated to reviewing gender-related refugee protection claims.

The Board engaged with the Department of Justice on the revision of the Rules of Practice of the Immigration Appeal Division.<sup>v</sup>

## Results Achieved

Departmental result	Performance indicators	Targets	Date to achieve target	2018–19 Actual results	2019–20 Actual results	2020–21 Actual results
Fair and timely adjudication of immigration and refugee cases	Percentage of cases that meet quality standards <sup>1</sup>	At least 75%	March 2021	Not available <sup>2</sup>	Not available <sup>2</sup>	92% <sup>3</sup>
	Percentage of decisions overturned by the Federal Court	At most 1%	March 2021	0.5%	0.4%	0.8%
	Percentage of cases that meet legislated or internal timelines	At least 50% <sup>4</sup>	March 2021	Not available <sup>2</sup>	58%	17% <sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Indicator examines how well the member and registry prepare for the hearing, the respectful conduct of the hearing, its efficiency, whether the reasons logically link to the evidence adduced, and timeliness of the decision.

<sup>2</sup> Actual results are not available for 2018–19 or 2019–20 as the performance indicator was introduced in 2020–21.

<sup>3</sup> The IRB conducts quality reviews of the decisions of its divisions on a regular basis. In 2020–21, the IRB completed quality reviews for each of the Refugee Protection Division, the Refugee Appeal Division and the Immigration Division. A quality review for the Immigration Appeal Division will be conducted in 2021–22.

<sup>4</sup> While over 80% of legislated or internal timelines will be met across the immigration caseload, funding gaps between processing capacity and the size of the inventory for refugee protection claims, requires that the overall target be set at 50% for the entire IRB caseload.

<sup>5</sup> The Board met its legislative targets for timeliness. Additional internal targets for timeliness were not met.

Disruptions to operations related to the COVID-19 pandemic led to delays in the timely adjudication of decisions in the first few months of the year. As a result of lower claim intake due to the pandemic, and the adoption of a remote hearings operating model beginning in the second quarter, the Board reduced the inventory of cases across all Divisions by 25%–41%. The Board reached and, in some cases, exceeded baseline finalization rates by the last quarter of the year.

## Budgetary financial resources (dollars)

2020–21 Main Estimates	2020–21 Planned spending	2020–21 Total authorities available for use	2020–21 Actual spending (authorities used)	2020–21 Difference (Actual spending minus Planned pending)
\$200,028,835	\$200,028,835	\$205,856,580	\$158,302,185	(\$41,726,650)

Lower-than-planned spending is mainly due to the impact of COVID-19 on the IRB's efforts to acquire additional capacity and increase the number of refugee protection claims and appeals being finalized. Consequently, the IRB proactively identified funds that would otherwise not be spent, and reprofiled them to 2023–24. These reprofiled funds will serve to partially mitigate the significant decline in funding projected in 2023–24 and thereafter.

## Human resources (full-time equivalents)

2020–21 Planned full-time equivalents	2020–21 Actual full-time equivalents	2020–21 Difference (Actual full-time equivalents minus Planned full-time equivalents)
1465	1326	(139)

Financial, human resources and performance information for the IRB's Program Inventory is available in GC InfoBase.<sup>xvii</sup>

## Internal Services

**Description:** Internal Services are those groups of related activities and resources that the federal government considers to be services in support of programs and/or required to meet corporate obligations of an organization. Internal Services refers to the activities and resources of the 10 distinct service categories that support Program delivery in the organization, regardless of the Internal Services delivery model in a department. The 10 service categories are: Acquisition Management Services; Communication Services; Financial Management Services; Human Resources Management Services; Information Management Services; Information Technology Services; Legal Services; Material Management Services; Management and Oversight Services; and Real Property Management Services.

### Results

Internal Services are key to the IRB's<sup>i</sup> success and played a prominent role in supporting the Board's three strategic objectives. In 2020–21, the IRB continued to leverage its corporate services to strengthen accountability and results, including the monitoring of resources, accommodations, and information management and information technology. This was made possible by the additional funding provided by Budget 2019<sup>xviii</sup> and extended in the Economic and Fiscal Snapshot 2020,<sup>xix</sup> and supported the IRB's acquisition of additional decision-making capacity.

As previously mentioned, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated efforts that were already under way for the IRB to become a digital organization. In support of the four divisions' shift from manual, paper-based processes to digital processes, management structures were reviewed to ensure appropriate leadership to guide digitalization priorities.

The Board made significant investments in information technology infrastructure with Shared Services Canada. All IRB networks were upgraded, and laptops and mobile devices were deployed so employees were equipped to work from home. As a Government of Canada pathfinder for Microsoft 365, the IRB was one of the first to deploy Office 365 across its organization. This included collaborative tools such as the secure Microsoft Teams, a video conferencing and chat-based collaboration platform. Discussions about the Board's future operating model to become a more modern and digital organization were advanced as a result of the pandemic and significant progress was achieved against the IRB's digital strategy.

Robust COVID-19 pandemic health and safety measures were put in place to protect those who



had to access IRB buildings. These measures included Plexiglass barriers, hand sanitization stations and a three-layer masking requirement. In the rare cases where COVID-19 was identified, follow-ups were conducted as IRB committed to ongoing communications and transparency. Through the shift to digitized files and a virtual hearings model, with only limited exceptions, the Board operated primarily through remote operations with only 10% of its workforce in the office. Throughout the pandemic, in addition to keeping its employees up to date, the Board consulted with bargaining agents and engaged key stakeholders on all business resumption plans.

Resources and tools were provided to employees to promote and support positive mental health in the workplace throughout the pandemic. This included town halls, seminars and a “Going the Distance for Mental Health” newsletter that regularly provided information on available resources, including Employee Assistance Program services. Further to this, pulse-check surveys on workplace mental health, and business resumption and wellness-related pilot projects were developed and implemented. The Board also procured a corporate licence for a mobile application that specializes in mindfulness and meditation. A *Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention Policy* was also developed and implemented to maintain a safe work environment. In summer 2020, a Chairperson’s Advisory Committee on Diversity and Inclusion was established to help harness the lived experiences, ideas, and engagement of employees across the IRB<sup>i</sup> to promote building a more inclusive organization. The Committee made significant progress on the development of a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, including the establishment of a Diversity and Inclusion team. In anticipation of the Board-wide Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021 release, the IRB’s divisions also created programs and initiatives to support the Board’s commitment to Diversity and Inclusion. All executives received training on unconscious bias and anti-racism. In 2021–22, this training will be mandatory for all managers and be made available across the organization.

The Board continued to support its employees through workplace challenges. Pay-related issues were reduced by implementing a timeliness standard and improving pay processes.

### Budgetary financial resources (dollars)

2020–21 Main Estimates	2020–21 Planned spending	2020–21 Total authorities available for use	2020–21 Actual spending (authorities used)	2020–21 Difference (Actual spending minus Planned pending)
\$79,098,040	\$79,098,040	\$89,010,096	\$86,456,804	\$7,358,764

Higher-than-planned spending in Internal Services is mainly due to investments in information technology to implement virtual hearings, digital tools, equipment to better support remote work and leasehold improvements.

### Human resources (full-time equivalents)

2020–21 Planned full-time equivalents	2020–21 Actual full-time equivalents	2020–21 Difference (Actual full-time equivalents minus Planned full-time equivalents)
411	452	41



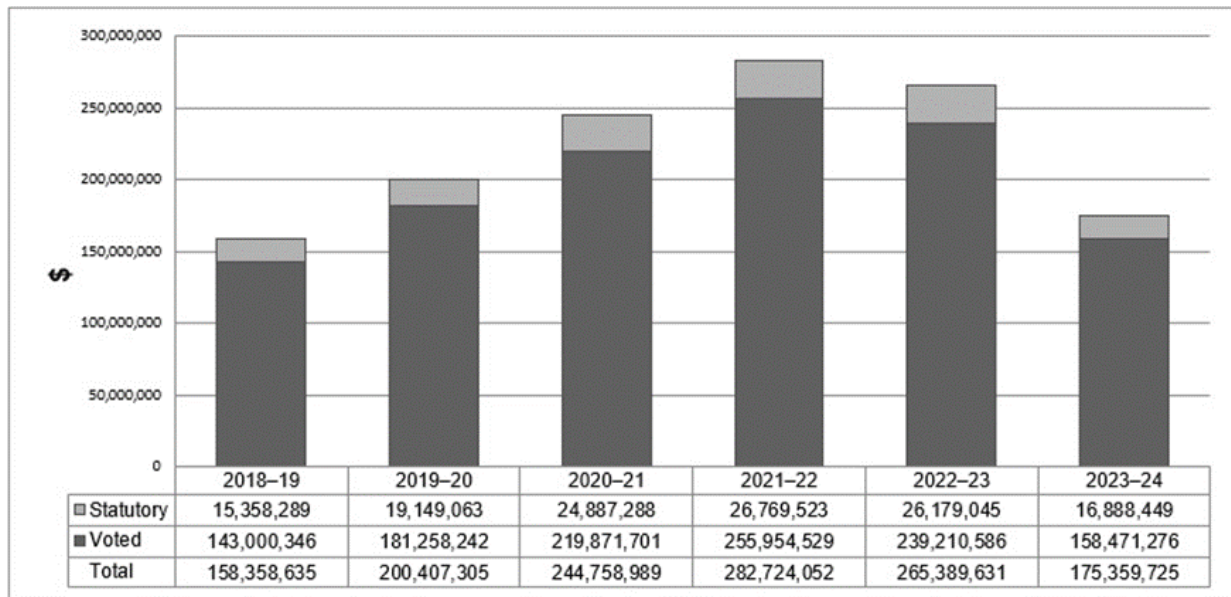


## Analysis of trends in spending and human resources

### Actual expenditures

#### Departmental spending trend graph

The following graph presents planned (voted and statutory) spending over time.



Planned spending from 2021–22 to 2022–23 includes temporary funding provided in the Economic and Fiscal Snapshot 2020<sup>xix</sup> to increase the number of refugee protection claims and appeals being finalized. This temporary funding is currently scheduled to sunset in 2022–23, returning to funding levels closer to those in effect in 2018–19 and prior, when capacity to meet demands was significantly lower.

#### Budgetary performance summary for Core Responsibility and Internal Service (dollars)

Core Responsibility and Internal Services	2020–21 Main Estimates	2020–21 Planned spending	2021–22 Planned spending	2022–23 Planned spending	2020–21 Total authorities available for use	2018–19 Actual spending (authorities used)	2019–20 Actual spending (authorities used)	2020–21 Actual spending (authorities used)
Adjudication of immigration and refugee cases	\$200,028,835	\$200,028,835	\$220,363,372	\$205,274,489	\$205,856,580	\$111,379,470	\$139,232,235	\$158,302,185
Subtotal	\$200,028,835	\$200,028,835	\$220,363,372	\$205,274,489	\$205,856,580	\$111,379,470	\$139,232,235	\$158,302,185
Internal Services	\$79,098,040	\$79,098,040	62,360,680	\$60,115,142	\$89,010,096	\$46,979,165	\$61,175,070	\$86,456,804
Total	\$279,126,875	\$279,126,875	\$282,724,052	\$265,389,631	\$294,866,676	\$158,358,635	\$200,407,305	\$244,758,989

The increase in expenditures through 2020–21 is due to costs incurred to add capacity to increase the number of refugee protection claims and appeals being finalized. This increase in expenditures has been funded by the Government’s temporary investments in the refugee protection system. Expenditures are forecasted to increase further over the next two fiscal years, funded from an extension of the temporary investment that will sunset in 2022–23. The IRB<sup>i</sup> will continue to work with asylum system partner departments and central agencies to secure a permanent source of funding beyond 2022–23 and maintain the gains achieved with temporary investments.

### 2020–21 Budgetary actual gross spending summary (dollars)

Core Responsibility and Internal Services	2020–21 Actual gross spending	2020–21 Actual revenues netted against expenditures	2020–21 Actual net spending (authorities used)
Adjudication of immigration and refugee cases	\$158,302,185	\$0	\$158,302,185
Subtotal	\$158,302,185	\$0	\$158,302,185
Internal Services	\$86,456,804	\$0	\$86,456,804
Total	\$244,758,989	\$0	\$244,758,989

### Actual human resources

#### Human resources summary for Core Responsibility and Internal Services

Core Responsibility and Internal Services	2018–19 Actual full-time equivalents	2019–20 Actual full-time equivalents	2020–21 Planned full-time equivalents	2020–21 Actual full-time equivalents	2021–22 Planned full-time equivalents	2022–23 Planned full-time equivalents
Adjudication of immigration and refugee cases	949	1195	1465	1326	1637	1605
Subtotal	949	1195	1465	1326	1637	1605
Internal Services	296	382	411	452	458	458
Total	1245	1577	1876	1778	2095	2063

The increase in full-time equivalents through 2020–21 is due to the hiring of temporary decision-makers and support staff to increase the number of refugee protection claims and appeals being finalized. This additional capacity has been funded by the Government’s temporary investments in the refugee protection system. Full-time equivalents are forecasted to continue to grow over the next two fiscal years, funded by the extension of temporary investments through 2022–23 to increase the number of finalizations.

### Expenditures by vote

For information on the IRB’s organizational voted and statutory expenditures, consult the Public Accounts of Canada 2020–2021.<sup>xx</sup>

## Government of Canada spending and activities

Information on the alignment of the IRB's<sup>i</sup> spending with the Government of Canada's spending and activities is available in GC InfoBase.<sup>xvii</sup>

## Financial statements and financial statements highlights

### Financial statements

The IRB's financial statements<sup>xxi</sup> (unaudited) for the year ended March 31, 2021, are available on the departmental website.

### Financial statement highlights

#### Condensed Statement of Operations (unaudited) for the year ended March 31, 2021 (dollars)

Financial information	2020–21 Planned results	2020–21 Actual results	2019–20 Actual results (Restated)	Difference (2020–21 Actual results minus 2020–21 Planned results)	Difference (2020–21 Actual results minus 2019–20 Actual results Restated)
Total expenses	\$314,713,192	\$274,760,888	\$226,139,612	(\$39,952,304)	\$48,621,276
Total revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Net cost of operations before government funding and transfers	\$314,713,192	\$274,760,888	\$226,139,612	(\$39,952,304)	\$48,621,276

Total expenses increased compared to previous year primarily due to retroactive salary increases and costs incurred to augment capacity to finalize more refugee claims and appeals. However, total expenses were lower than planned due to the impact of COVID-19 on the IRB's efforts to recruit additional resources.

#### Condensed Statement of Financial Position (unaudited) as of March 31, 2021 (dollars)

Financial information	2020–21	2019–20 (Restated)	Difference (2020–21 minus 2019–20 Restated)
Total net liabilities	\$42,801,983	\$36,391,585	\$6,410,398
Total net financial assets	\$26,659,313	\$ 25,025,662	\$1,633,651
Departmental net debt	\$16,142,669	\$11,365,922	\$4,776,747
Total non-financial assets	\$17,801,513	\$8,406,244	\$9,392,269
Departmental net financial position	\$1,658,844	(\$2,959,679)	\$4,618,523

Total net liabilities increased primarily due to a net increase in unused vacation leave credits and

an increase in amounts owed at year end to Public Services and Procurement Canada and Shared Services Canada. This increase was fully offset by an increase in non-financial assets, mainly due to investments in tangible capital assets, which resulted in an improvement of the departmental net financial position.

## Corporate information

### Organizational profile

**Appropriate minister:** The Honourable Sean Fraser

**Institutional head:** Richard Wex, Chairperson

**Ministerial portfolio:** Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

**Enabling instrument:** *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*<sup>xxii</sup>

**Year of incorporation / commencement:** 1989

### Raison d'être, mandate and role: Who we are and what we do

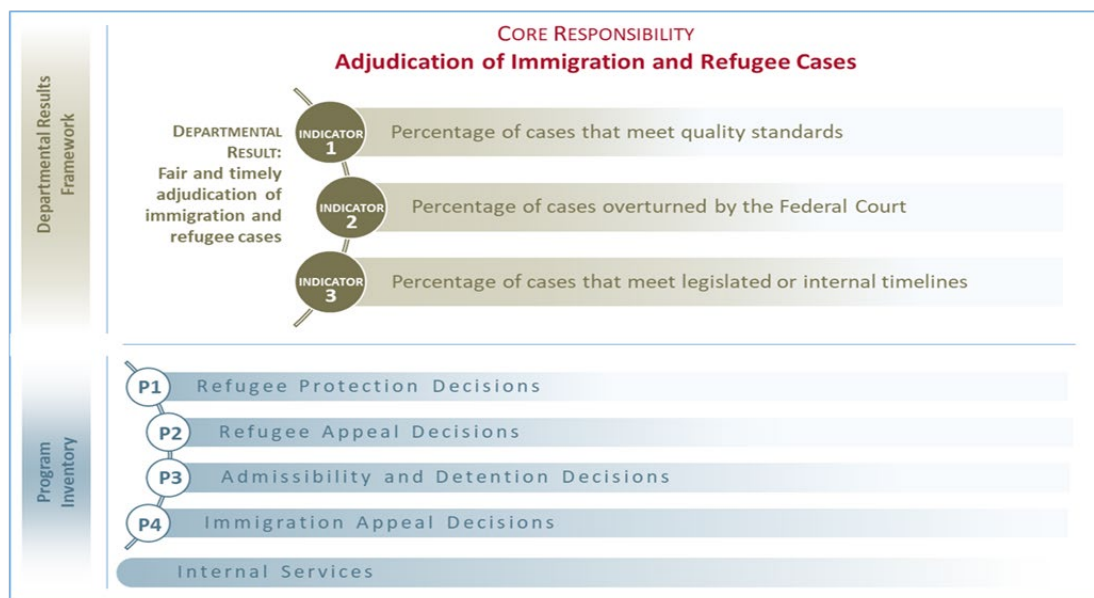
“Raison d'être, Mandate and Role: Who we are and what we do”<sup>xxiii</sup> is available on the IRB's website.

### Operating context

Information on the operating context<sup>xxiv</sup> is available on the IRB's website.

### Reporting framework

The IRB's Departmental Results Framework and Program Inventory of record for 2020–21 are shown below.



## Supporting information on the program inventory

Financial, human resources and performance information for the IRB's<sup>1</sup> Program Inventory is available in GC InfoBase.<sup>xvii</sup>

## Supplementary information tables

The following supplementary information tables are available on the IRB's website:

- ▶ Reporting on Green Procurement<sup>xxv</sup>
- ▶ Gender-based Analysis Plus<sup>xxvi</sup>
- ▶ Response to parliamentary committees and external audits<sup>xxvii</sup>

## Federal tax expenditures

The tax system can be used to achieve public policy objectives through the application of special measures such as low tax rates, exemptions, deductions, deferrals and credits. The Department of Finance Canada publishes cost estimates and projections for these measures each year in the Report on Federal Tax Expenditures.<sup>xxviii</sup> This report also provides detailed background information on tax expenditures, including descriptions, objectives, historical information and references to related federal spending programs, as well as evaluations and Gender-based Analysis Plus of tax expenditures.

## Organizational contact information

For more information, visit the IRB's website or Contact us.<sup>xxix</sup>

Follow the IRB on Twitter<sup>xxx</sup> or Facebook.<sup>xxxi</sup>

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada  
Minto Place, Canada Building  
344 Slater Street, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Canada  
K1A 0K1

## Appendix: Definitions

### **appropriation** (*crédit*)

Any authority of Parliament to pay money out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

### **budgetary expenditures** (*dépenses budgétaires*)

Operating and capital expenditures; transfer payments to other levels of government, organizations or individuals; and payments to Crown corporations.

### **core responsibility** (*responsabilité essentielle*)

An enduring function or role performed by a department. The intentions of the department with respect to a core responsibility are reflected in one or more related departmental results that the department seeks to contribute to or influence.

### **Departmental Plan** (*plan ministériel*)

A report on the plans and expected performance of an appropriated department over a 3-year period. Departmental Plans are usually tabled in Parliament each spring.

### **departmental priority** (*priorité ministérielle*)

A plan or project that a department has chosen to focus and report on during the planning period. Priorities represent the things that are most important or what must be done first to support the achievement of the desired departmental results.

### **departmental result** (*résultat ministériel*)

A consequence or outcome that a department seeks to achieve. A departmental result is often outside departments' immediate control, but it should be influenced by program-level outcomes.

### **departmental result indicator** (*indicateur de résultat ministériel*)

A quantitative measure of progress on a departmental result.

### **departmental results framework** (*cadre ministériel des résultats*)

A framework that connects the department's core responsibilities to its departmental results and departmental result indicators.

### **Departmental Results Report** (*rapport sur les résultats ministériels*)

A report on a department's actual accomplishments against the plans, priorities and expected results set out in the corresponding Departmental Plan.

### **experimentation** (*expérimentation*)

The conducting of activities that seek to first explore, then test and compare the effects and impacts of policies and interventions in order to inform evidence-based decision-making, and improve outcomes for Canadians, by learning what works, for whom and in what circumstances.

Experimentation is related to, but distinct from, innovation (the trying of new things), because it involves a rigorous comparison of results. For example, using a new website to communicate with Canadians can be an innovation; systematically testing the new website against existing outreach tools or an old website to see which one leads to more engagement is experimentation.

**full-time equivalent** (*équivalent temps plein*)

A measure of the extent to which an employee represents a full person-year charge against a departmental budget. For a particular position, the full-time equivalent figure is the ratio of the number of hours the person actually works divided by the standard number of hours set out in the person's collective agreement.

**gender-based analysis plus** (GBA Plus) (*analyse comparative entre les sexes plus [ACS Plus]*)

An analytical process used to assess how diverse groups of women, men and gender-diverse people experience policies, programs and services based on multiple factors including race, ethnicity, religion, age, and mental or physical disability.

**government-wide priorities** (*priorités pangouvernementales*)

For the purpose of the 2020–21 Departmental Results Report, those high-level themes outlining the government's agenda in the 2019 Speech from the Throne, namely: Fighting climate change; Strengthening the middle class; Walking the road of reconciliation; Keeping Canadians safe and healthy; and Positioning Canada for success in an uncertain world.

**horizontal initiative** (*initiative horizontale*)

An initiative where two or more federal organizations are given funding to pursue a shared outcome, often linked to a government priority.

**non-budgetary expenditures** (*dépenses non budgétaires*)

Net outlays and receipts related to loans, investments and advances, which change the composition of the financial assets of the Government of Canada.

**performance** (*rendement*)

What an organization did with its resources to achieve its results, how well those results compare to what the organization intended to achieve, and how well lessons learned have been identified.

**performance indicator** (*indicateur de rendement*)

A qualitative or quantitative means of measuring an output or outcome, with the intention of gauging the performance of an organization, program, policy or initiative respecting expected results.

**performance reporting** (*production de rapports sur le rendement*)

The process of communicating evidence-based performance information. Performance reporting supports decision-making, accountability and transparency.

**plan** (*plan*)

The articulation of strategic choices, which provides information on how an organization intends to achieve its priorities and associated results. Generally, a plan will explain the logic behind the strategies chosen and tend to focus on actions that lead to the expected result.

**planned spending** (*dépenses prévues*)

For Departmental Plans and Departmental Results Reports, planned spending refers to those amounts presented in Main Estimates.

A department is expected to be aware of the authorities that it has sought and received. The



determination of planned spending is a departmental responsibility, and departments must be able to defend the expenditure and accrual numbers presented in their Departmental Plans and Departmental Results Reports.

**program** (*programme*)

Individual or groups of services, activities or combinations thereof that are managed together within the department and focus on a specific set of outputs, outcomes or service levels.

**program inventory** (*répertoire des programmes*)

Identifies all of the department's programs and describes how resources are organized to contribute to the department's core responsibilities and results.

**result** (*résultat*)

A consequence attributed, in part, to an organization, policy, program or initiative. Results are not within the control of a single organization, policy, program or initiative; instead, they are within the area of the organization's influence.

**statutory expenditures** (*dépenses législatives*)

Expenditures that Parliament has approved through legislation other than appropriation acts. The legislation sets out the purpose of the expenditures and the terms and conditions under which they may be made.

**target** (*cible*)

A measurable performance or success level that an organization, program or initiative plans to achieve within a specified time period. Targets can be either quantitative or qualitative.

**voted expenditures** (*dépenses votées*)

Expenditures that Parliament approves annually through an appropriation act. The vote wording becomes the governing conditions under which these expenditures may be made.



## Endnotes

- <sup>i</sup> Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada: <https://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/>
- <sup>ii</sup> Refugee Protection Division: <https://irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/refugee-claims/Pages/index.aspx>
- <sup>iii</sup> Refugee Appeal Division: <https://irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/refugee-appeals/Pages/index.aspx>
- <sup>iv</sup> Immigration Division: <https://irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/hearings-reviews/Pages/index.aspx>
- <sup>v</sup> Immigration Appeal Division: <https://irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/immigration-appeals/Pages/index.aspx>
- <sup>vi</sup> My Case portal: <https://my-case-mon-dossier.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/Pages/login-connexion.aspx>
- <sup>vii</sup> Gender-Related Task Force: <https://irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/refugee-claims/Pages/gender-related-task-force-rpd.aspx>
- <sup>viii</sup> Quality Assurance Framework for Decision Making: <https://irb.gc.ca/en/transparency/qa-aq/Pages/qa-f-caq.aspx>
- <sup>ix</sup> Chairperson’s Guideline 2: Detention: <https://irb.gc.ca/en/news/2021/Pages/revise-chairperson-guideline-2.aspx>
- <sup>x</sup> Guideline 4: Women Refugee Claimants Fearing Gender Related Persecution: <https://irb.gc.ca/en/legal-policy/policies/Pages/GuideDir04.aspx>
- <sup>xi</sup> Guideline 9: Proceedings Before the IRB Involving Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression: <https://irb.gc.ca/en/legal-policy/policies/Pages/GuideDir09.aspx>
- <sup>xii</sup> 2019–20 Departmental Results Report: <https://irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/reports-publications/planning-performance/Pages/departmental-results-report-1920-r.aspx#>
- <sup>xiii</sup> Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship.html>
- <sup>xiv</sup> Canada Border Services Agency: <https://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/menu-eng.html>
- <sup>xv</sup> Evaluation of the IRB’s process for making a complaint about a member: <https://irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/transparency/reviews-audit-evaluations/Pages/eval-process-making-complaint-member.aspx>
- <sup>xvi</sup> Annual reporting on complaints: <https://irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/transparency/member-conduct/pages/index.aspx#toc1>
- <sup>xvii</sup> GC InfoBase: <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/ems-sgd/edb-bdd/index-eng.html>
- <sup>xviii</sup> Budget 2019: <https://www.budget.gc.ca/2019/home-accueil-en.html>
- <sup>xix</sup> Economic and Fiscal Snapshot 2020: <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/services/publications/economic-fiscal-snapshot.html>
- <sup>xx</sup> Public Accounts of Canada 2020–2021: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/index-eng.html>
- <sup>xxi</sup> Financial statements: <https://irb.gc.ca/en/reports-publications/finance/pages/index.aspx>
- <sup>xxii</sup> *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/I-2.5/index.html>
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Raison d’être, Mandate and Role: Who we are and what we do: <https://irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/reports-publications/planning-performance/Pages/2021-mandate.aspx>
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Operating context: <https://irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/reports-publications/planning-performance/Pages/2021-operating-context.aspx>
- <sup>xxv</sup> Reporting on Green Procurement: <https://irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/reports-publications/planning-performance/Pages/2021-reporting-green-procurement.aspx>
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Gender-based Analysis Plus: <https://irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/reports-publications/planning-performance/Pages/2021-gender-based-analysis-plus.aspx>
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Response to parliamentary committees and external audits: <https://irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/reports-publications/planning-performance/Pages/2021-response-parliamentary-committees-external-audits.aspx>
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Report on Federal Tax Expenditures: <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/services/publications/federal-tax-expenditures.html>
- <sup>xxix</sup> Contact us: <https://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/contact/Pages/index.aspx>
- <sup>xxx</sup> Twitter: [https://twitter.com/IRB\\_Canada](https://twitter.com/IRB_Canada)
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/IRBCanada>