



Canadian Association of Professional Immigration Consultants
L'Association Canadienne des Conseillers Professionnels en Immigration

From the Bottom Up

A Newsletter for CSIC members about their issues.

Issue #246

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*Welcome to our Newsletter **From the Bottom Up**. Our articles and postings will cover immigration matters that affect your business and lives.*

In this issue:

CSIC Levies \$800 Fee on All Members: Members Want Money Put in Trust

Dear CSIC Members:

Re: \$800 Levy for CPD Videos

On July 19, 2010, CSIC imposed an \$800 fee on all members, including all new members who join before August 15th, to purchase an online video program from CSIC.

The videos were produced from a "mandatory" education conference CSIC held in Montreal in May 2010. Despite it being compulsory, many members stayed away as CSIC's programming was not seen of value to them - only about 220 of the 1800 members attended.

Now CSIC demands that all members who did not attend the conference must pay the conference fee anyway - \$800 plus tax. For this, a member will get 5 points for Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Given that each member needs 40 points, at this rate it would cost \$6400 per member on top of our fees! This is a whopping \$160 per point - the highest CSIC has ever charged -- and many times more than the cost of programs from other organizations willing to offer education.

Members must complete the online program by October 31, or be suspended.

The fees collected will add \$1.3 million to CSIC's coffers. And this at a time when the government process is underway to replace CSIC!

Members cannot afford this. Nor has the \$1.3 million been justified to us. CSIC members have every right to demand answers:

(1) What did the Montreal conference actually cost? Past conferences cost between \$200 - \$400,000 - for larger conferences. Here, CSIC has already collected \$176,000 from the 220 who attended in Montreal. So why is another \$1.3 million demanded from members who did not see the conference as useful?

(2) How will these funds be spent? CSIC is a non-profit, so all funds must be spent. From past performance, we expect the funds will go to:

- more fees paid to Directors - (which already rose about 35% in 2009)
- covering the \$1.0 million loss incurred by CMI Inc last year
- running questionable ads to convince people that CSIC is effective
- paying lobbyists and consultants to convince CIC to let CSIC stay the same (just yesterday CMI announced they have hired a polling company to survey members to see if they would help by contacting MPs; will CMI pay these members for their efforts?)

(3) What do members get for the \$800? Many who attended the Montreal conference report nothing was learned that could not have been learned at other seminars presented for much less. In fact, much of the seminar material was and is available for free on both the CIC and MICC websites. We note the MICC website contains up to date information about the Quebec Government's proposed changes concerning immigration consultants, which is lacking from this seminar.

It is simply not acceptable for the Board, at this time of transition, to compel members to pay further large sums over and above our fees without a shred of transparency or accountability to members. If this is "business as usual" at CSIC, members have had enough.

PUT THE MONEY IN TRUST

As CSIC members, we are required to maintain separate accounts for unearned revenues. Members have every right to expect their regulatory body will act responsibly with our funds as well.

We are concerned that any money left in CSIC after it is wound down can be disposed of by the Board of Directors *as they see fit*. This includes *all of the profit* from the seminars plus all membership fees collected by CSIC in excess of operating costs. Is it fair to members to enhance the coffers at this time? Is this good governance?

We call on CSIC to either cancel this levy immediately, or put all funds collected into a special trust fund, and withdraw only the amount required to pay for the actual costs of the Montreal seminar. We also call on CSIC to inform members now of those specific costs.

Any balance should be reserved for use by the new regulator once it is identified by the bid process. If CSIC wins the bid to form the new regulator, it can keep the money.

This high levy also works against proper consumer protection. The directors only need to consider its impact on the ranks of ghost agents. Recent graduates are especially vulnerable, as they struggle to pay their first year's fees after paying for their education and CSIC exams. With this added levy, many may not be able to join at all. No doubt CCICs who have also struggled to stay in the profession during tough times will also look very hard at this extra burden, and may decide, as has happened so often recently, to join the ranks of the ghost agents too.

It is time for CSIC members to act. The CSIC board is meeting in Toronto this weekend.

CAPIC calls on every member to contact ***their elected CSIC Directors*** and request that ALL monies received from this levy be placed in a special trust account. CAPIC will post the contact information for CSIC directors on our website shortly. Please call, email or visit them in person their office.

Also, you can write to your Member of Parliament, the Minister and CIC to protest this cash grab. It is not acceptable for an organization which does not have the confidence of the public or its members, and is in fact in the process of being replaced, to demand large sums from its membership while steadfastly refusing to be accountable. This is the kind of behaviour that landed CSIC in trouble in the first place. It is time once

again for members to make our voices heard!

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