

NEWS RELEASE – Ministers agree to work together to share the benefits of immigration

WINNIPEG, October 16, 2002 – Federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for immigration agreed that today's inaugural meeting in Winnipeg is the beginning of a new partnership on immigration. They will meet again on a regular basis to discuss common interests.

It is the first time that federal, provincial and territorial ministers have met formally to discuss immigration, which is an area of shared jurisdiction.

Ministers agreed to work more closely together on issues of importance to jurisdictions, including annual immigration targets and integrating immigrants and refugees into Canadian society. They noted that immigrants play an important role in Canada's economic strength and cultural and social diversity, and make valuable contributions to every aspect of Canadian life.

Ministers agreed on the need for stronger federal-provincial-territorial partnerships on a multi-lateral and bilateral basis. These partnerships would enhance Canada's ability to compete internationally to help address critical skills shortages by attracting the skilled immigrants required to further develop the Canadian labour market and economy.

A number of approaches to increase the benefits of immigration in all parts of Canada were discussed. Presently immigrants tend to choose large urban centres, with the Greater Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver areas receiving three quarters of all new immigrants to Canada. Ministers agreed that attracting immigrants to smaller centres and other regions requires flexible approaches that respond to provincial and territorial priorities.

Ministers identified the need to develop broad principles to guide the implementation of regional strategies. They established a working group to guide implementation of the strategies, in consultation with Human Resources Development Canada, on a full range of mechanisms that could be used to support them, e.g., temporary foreign worker permits, and provincial nominee agreements. Ministers also underlined the importance of building new partnerships with communities, including official language minority communities.

Ministers discussed the important role that immigration can play in building an innovative and sustainable economy. They agreed to work towards removing the barriers that many immigrants face in integrating into the labour market. They also noted the need to work with employers to maximize the skills and knowledge that immigrants can contribute to Canada's economy.

It was also agreed that the federal, provincial, and territorial governments would work to enhance and develop partnerships with the private and voluntary sectors to:

- break down the barriers to the recognition of foreign credentials;
- attract and select highly skilled workers;
- expedite the entry of foreign students, including transition to permanent status for those who choose to remain;

- enhance settlement services to facilitate newcomers' full participation in Canadian society and,
- share best practices.

These initiatives will respect existing federal-provincial territorial agreements and jurisdiction while exploring new directions.

Ministers will review progress on these initiatives and plan future work together at their next meeting, which will be held in 2003 in British Columbia.

Although it shares many of the concerns outlined in the communiqué, Quebec will issue its own communiqué.

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Conference

[Federal-Provincial-Territorial Meeting of Ministers responsible for Immigration](#)

(830-766)

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Winnipeg, Manitoba