

## **NEWS RELEASE – An Immigration Framework for Canada**

**GATINEAU, November 15, 2004** – Federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for immigration met today for the third time since 2002, and agreed to work together to develop a shared vision for the future course of Canada’s immigration program.

“Today’s realities demand an approach with early input from our immigration partners, stakeholders and non-governmental organizations, as well as much greater levels of involvement and commitment from every corner of this great land,” said Judy Sgro, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. “We’ve made good progress over the last few months. Today we’ve agreed to explore even more innovative and collaborative ways in which we can continue to build an even stronger immigration program for the 21st century.”

The ministers agreed to work together on an Immigration Framework for attracting, settling and retaining newcomers in all regions of Canada. The Framework will lay the foundation for a more responsive immigration program, which includes stronger partnerships between federal and provincial/territorial governments, and opportunities for increased participation from cities and communities, large and small, and from employers and others.

The Framework will help identify and link labour market needs to immigration, and share the benefits of immigration more evenly across the country. It will build on provincial-territorial initiatives and strategies. Ministers agreed to continue working collaboratively to enable immigrants to succeed and Canada to realize its economic potential.

Discussions also focused on ways in which all partners can improve the integration of foreign-trained professionals and other workers into the labour market. Studies indicate that many newcomers face barriers—such as language, and the recognition of foreign credentials and foreign work experience—when immigrating to Canada. These barriers have prevented them from fully contributing to Canada’s national growth.

Recent progress has been made by federal and provincial governments in the medical profession, where foreign-trained doctors and other health professionals are gaining necessary accreditation in Canada.

“We need to find ways to address potential gaps in knowledge and capabilities to ensure that newcomers with skills needed by Canadian businesses are able to play an important role in ensuring the competitiveness of Canada’s cities and communities, large and small,” Minister Sgro said. “One of my priorities is to work with my provincial and territorial colleagues to reduce many of the social and economic barriers that newcomers face when they arrive in this country.”

Quebec participated in the third meeting in order to share its expertise and best practices in immigration. Quebec is especially interested in developing partnerships with the other provinces and territories and working with them. It was agreed that Canada’s Immigration Framework will respect the letter and spirit of the Canada-Quebec Accord on immigration matters. The Accord acknowledges Quebec’s exclusive responsibility for the selection of immigrants and its control over the reception and integration of newcomers to the province.

Federal and provincial/territorial governments have signed a number of new bilateral agreements, including those to attract more foreign students and skilled workers. Canada's Immigration Framework will respect the letter and spirit of bilateral agreements and letters of intent between the federal, and provincial/territorial governments

The proposal for Canada's Immigration Framework will be discussed by a federal-provincial-territorial working group over the coming months. Ministers agreed to meet again in June 2005 to review progress.