

NEWS RELEASE – Ministers agree on Strategic Direction on Immigration

Ottawa, November 4, 2005 – Federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for immigration have adopted a strategic direction on immigration that will build on the success of Canada’s current immigration program and prepare us to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

The strategic direction builds on Canada’s celebration of diversity and the principles of inclusion and equal opportunity. Together, ministers are fulfilling a November 2004 commitment to work to chart the future course of Canada’s immigration program. (A copy of the [Federal, Provincial and Territorial Strategic Direction on Immigration](#) is attached.)

“Immigration has always been, and will continue to be a vital tool for nation building in Canada, and a successful immigration program is essential to our continuing economic and social prosperity,” said the Honourable Joe Volpe, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. “Today, we have strengthened Canada by building the foundation on which we will develop and deliver programs to enable refugees and immigrants to maximize their opportunities and contributions in every region of the country.”

Canada faces many sectoral and regional labour shortages. Within the next decade newcomers are expected to account for all net labour force growth. As population growth declines in Canada and in most of the developed world, global competition for the skills and talents of immigrants will intensify. While Canada has been successful in attracting and retaining immigrants, federal, provincial and territorial governments will have to collaborate further to promote Canada as a destination, recruit immigrants and ensure their integration into Canadian society.

The ministers reaffirmed their commitment to a flexible immigration program that will continue to meet the unique needs of each province and territory, and that respects existing bilateral agreements and each government’s area of jurisdiction.

"Our economies depend on immigration," said the Honourable Mike Colle, Ontario Minister of Citizenship and Immigration on behalf of the provinces and territories. "That's why my provincial and territorial colleagues and I are committed to working with the federal government to make sure our newcomers have every opportunity to succeed. We will continue to share our unique perspectives to help build stronger, diverse communities in all regions of Canada."

The ministers also identified five key priorities for the coming year. Jurisdictions may pursue them by working collaboratively on joint projects, or by working independently. The priorities are:

- Improved selection, including multi-year levels planning and better promotion to recruit immigrants;
- The development of an in-Canada economic class, to better retain those who have Canadian experience or training;

- Improved outcomes to ensure immigrants' skills are used to full potential;
- Increased regionalization, to share the benefits of immigration with local economies; and
- Improved client service, including shorter waiting times, reduced inventories and streamlining the in-Canada refugee determination system. Ministers agreed to consult collaboratively with partners and stakeholders on immigration matters as appropriate.

The Government of Quebec recognizes the initiative of the federal government and of the governments of the other provinces and territories to develop strategic directions in the area of immigration. Quebec has already established its own directions in compliance with its jurisdiction under the Canada Québec Accord. While it will pursue its work with the federal government on a bilateral basis, Quebec will continue to share its best practices with other provinces and territories.

Quebec has a wealth of experience in consultation on immigration and on multi year planning according to which it consults with its citizens on all aspects of immigration, based on the objectives it has set. It will therefore continue to use that approach, which has yielded excellent results so far.

“My counterparts and I are pleased with the progress made during our meeting. Now, more than ever, collaborative work with provincial and territorial ministers is crucial for the success of the immigration program,” said Minister Volpe.