

## **Backgrounder Progress Since October 2002**

In the 15 months since the inaugural meeting of federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for immigration, progress has been made in many areas. The following is a sample of some of the initiatives undertaken since October 2002.

### **British Columbia**

- Agreement for Canada-British Columbia Cooperation on Immigration extended for one year in May 2003. The agreement includes the continuation of the transfers of settlement services and the administration of the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP).
- International student component added to PNP.
- Significant growth in the B.C. International Qualifications Program, including development of Web-based resources and loan program, completion of various pilot projects for trades and professions, including engineers and nurses, and partnerships with government and private sector to assist skilled immigrants in accessing the labour market.
- Study completed to identify gaps in settlement services for French-speaking immigrants. B.C. newcomer guide translated into French and distributed to French-speaking immigrants to B.C.
- B.C. and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) work together to engage new partners in using immigration as a tool to support development of smaller communities. Regional business immigration component of PNP introduced to help attract new business to B.C.'s regions.

### **Alberta**

- Two foreign student agreements between CIC and Alberta will help the province attract and retain more foreign students. The first pilot project will fast-track the processing of study permit applications for foreign students from selected countries. The second will allow foreign students who have graduated from an Alberta post-secondary institution and who are currently working in Alberta on a post-graduate visa, to stay and work for an extra year.
- Alberta's existing PNP agreement was extended and its number of nominees increased to 800 until 2005.
- Alberta is developing a strategy to integrate skilled immigrants into the Alberta economy. The strategy will address barriers to integration and the recognition of foreign qualifications. This framework will complement the work being done by Alberta's International Qualifications Assessment Service.

### **Saskatchewan**

- Canada-Saskatchewan Immigration Agreement amended and extended for one year in August 2003. Negotiations proceeding on a new long-term framework agreement.
- New PNP agreement signed with CIC in November 2002, extending the cap on nominees to 200 a year.

## **Manitoba**

- New Canada-Manitoba Immigration Agreement signed in June 2003. Agreement includes new approach to PNP. Manitoba and CIC to work together to determine number of nominees, and to develop new initiatives to meet regional immigration and settlement needs and support official minority language communities.
- Immigration to Manitoba up by 40 percent in 2003, to approximately 6,470 arrivals, highest number in over a decade. The goal of Manitoba's Action Strategy for Economic Growth is 10,000 immigrants annually, with strengthened settlement services, qualifications recognition processes and community partnerships.
- Framework established for Manitoba's qualifications recognition (QR) initiative to develop a fair and efficient QR system that enables highly skilled immigrants to enter into occupations for which they have training and experience.
- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed in October 2003 to support two-year pilot program to allow international post-secondary students studying in Manitoba to work off campus. Pilot will strengthen international studies in Manitoba and provide valuable work experience for students applying for the PNP.
- Canada's first tri-level MOU on Winnipeg private refugee sponsorship in November 2002.
- Since November 2003, under the new federal initiative for group processing of refugees, Manitoba has received more than 190 of the first arrivals from the Sudan.

## **Ontario**

- The Ontario and federal ministers met and agreed to negotiate a federal-provincial agreement to benefit the province and its newcomers. Ontario is conducting consultations with immigration stakeholders and municipalities for input on the agreement.
- Ontario is working with the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council, which includes public, private and community-based sector representatives, to provide better labour market outcomes for immigrants.
- Additional bridge training projects being developed to assess skills and competencies of immigrants, provide training and Canadian workplace experience, and help qualified individuals move quickly into the labour market.
- Expansion of international medical graduate assessment and training programs to help foreign-trained doctors become eligible to practise medicine.
- Passport to Business Success program expanded to encourage small and medium business start-ups by new business immigrants.
- Collaborative work with CIC to evaluate settlement and integration programs for immigrants.

## **Quebec**

- Minister Courchesne toured Quebec in the fall of 2003 to consult with representatives of cultural communities, community organizations and socioeconomic partners on immigration issues, integration and intercultural relations.

- The Minister will release an action plan soon to help immigrants and members of cultural communities participate fully in Quebec society.
- The Minister is awaiting advice from the *Conseil des relations interculturelles du Québec* on religious diversity, an issue that has had an important impact on immigration over the last 15 years. The report is expected by March 2004.

### **Nova Scotia**

- Nova Scotia is working with its business, education and labour partners, settlement organizations and others to develop an enhanced immigration strategy that will focus on attracting, integrating and retaining immigrants to help meet demographic and skill needs. A director of immigration and settlement services has been hired to help develop the strategy.
- Nova Scotia and Citizenship and Immigration Canada will work towards an agreement for a pilot project that will allow international students who graduate from public post-secondary institutions in Nova Scotia to apply for extension of their post-graduation work permits from one to two years for jobs related to their field of studies. Nova Scotia will continue to explore opportunities to increase the recruitment of international students to provincial post-secondary institutions.
- Discussions are under way with New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island on the possibility of establishing a single foreign credential assessment portal for the three provinces.
- *Le Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse* was part of the Nova Scotia team that took part in a Francophone promotion and recruitment campaign in Paris in November 2003.

### **New Brunswick**

- Agreement signed in March 2003 with CIC makes it easier for foreign students who graduate from N.B. colleges and universities to work in the province for an extra year if job is related to their studies. Work permits can also be renewed for a second year.

### **Newfoundland and Labrador**

- Newfoundland and Labrador leads an initiative directed by the Atlantic premiers to conduct a regional review of immigration policy and programs to increase recruitment and retention of immigrants in the region.

### **Northwest Territories**

- N.W.T. and CIC work together to increase support for the diamond mining industry by facilitating the entry of temporary foreign workers and increasing the number of permanent skilled workers employed in the sector. Work is ongoing.

## **Canada**

### **Settlement Conference**

- CIC and settlement sector organized the second National Settlement Conference in Calgary in October 2003. Conference allows 350 front-line practitioners and program managers to discuss improving services for immigrants with federal, provincial and municipal officials.

### **Immigration Consultants**

- Creation of the Canadian Society of Immigration Consultants (CSIC), an independent, self-regulating body for immigration consultants, in October 2003 following review of long-standing problems in the immigration consulting industry by an advisory committee.
- CIC proposes regulations that require immigration consultants to be members in good standing of the CSIC or a provincial or territorial law society.

### **Francophone Minority Communities**

- Government of Canada commits to increasing efforts to attract immigrants to Francophone minority communities (FMCs) outside Quebec and integrate them.
- CIC-Francophone Minority Communities Steering Committee releases strategic framework to foster immigration to FMCs in November 2003. Framework will ensure that FMCs share the economic and social benefits of immigration.
- Action Plan on Official Languages provides \$9 million over five years to promote immigration in Francophone communities outside Quebec.

### **Enhanced Language Training**

- Government of Canada is currently developing a program to provide higher levels of language training in Canada's two official languages. Program will provide work placement, and mentoring or networking opportunities for immigrants and refugees.

### **Foreign Students**

- CIC is currently developing a strategy to make Canada a destination of choice for foreign students. Pilot projects being developed with provinces.

### **Group Processing for Refugees**

- Arrival in November 2003 of the first group of refugees selected to come to Canada through group processing. Group processing identifies entire refugee populations, as opposed to individuals, and resettles them in the same community.

### **Provincial Nominee Program**

- Canada recognizes the value of strengthening the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) and commits to implementing many of the recommendations in a report from the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.
- Establishment of a federal/provincial/territorial working group on the PNP.
- PNP enables provinces and territories to nominate immigrants who will contribute to that province or territory's economic and social development.

### **Settlement**

- CIC works with other federal departments to develop a comprehensive, one-stop on-line source of information for prospective immigrants and newcomers to Canada.

### **Biometrics Forum**

- In October 2003, CIC hosted a Forum entitled "Biometrics: Implications and Applications for Citizenship and Immigration." The Forum featured presentations from a cross-section of Canadian and international experts and senior public officials who discussed how biometrics might be used to enhance policy work in the areas of document integrity, immigration, and verifying the identity of newcomers and citizens in Canada.