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Immigration tied to population and labour market needs

Canada's new Immigration Act and Regulations, which will be proclaimed on April 10, will link the number of immigrants to long-term demographic planning and the needs of the labour market through changes in selection criteria and the establishment of a closer working arrangement with the provinces.

The regulations, tabled in the House of Commons by Employment and Immigration Minister Bud Cullen on March 8, outline changes in the selection criteria which shift the emphasis from education to practical training and experience in the assessment of immigrants according to the point system. Factors related to employment now make up almost half the total possible rating points that can be awarded. For example, vocational training and job experience combined account for a maximum of 23 points, while the maximum for education has dropped from 20 to 12 points.

Highlights of legislation

The new act:

- states, for the first time in Canadian law, the basic principles underlying immigration policy — non-discrimination, family reunion, humanitarian concern for refugees, and the promotion of national goals;
- links the immigration movement to Canada's population and labour market needs;
- provides for an annual forecast of the number of immigrants Canada can comfortably absorb, to be made in consultation with the provinces and other groups;
- establishes a "family class", allowing Canadian citizens to sponsor a wider range of close relatives;
- confirms Canada's commitment and responsibilities to refugees under the United Nations Convention and establishes a new "refugee class";
- requires immigrants and visitors to obtain visas or authorizations abroad, and prohibits visitors from changing their

status from within Canada;

- introduces security measures to protect Canada from international terrorism and organized crime;
- safeguards the civil rights of immigrants and visitors through an improved inquiry and appeal system;
- provides less drastic alternatives to deportation for cases involving minor violations of immigration law; and
- states in specific terms the powers granted to the Government and its officials.

Mr. Cullen pointed out that members of the family class and retirees do not have to satisfy the detailed criteria of the point system. Family-class applicants will still have to meet basic health and character standards and will need written statements promising the support of their Canadian sponsors for as long as ten years.

Retired persons will be selected under general criteria regarding their intended destination in Canada, the presence of friends or relatives there, and on personal suitability and financial stability.

Refugees seeking resettlement in Canada will be assessed against the factors in the point system but will not receive a point rating. Instead, the assessment will be used to evaluate their prospects for successfully adapting to Canadian life, taking into consideration the amount of settlement assistance available to them from government or private sources in this country.

The regulations establish a broad priority system for the processing of immigrant visa applications. Under this system, members of the family class, refugees, and members of groups designated as deserving humanitarian treatment will receive the highest priority.

Temporary workers and students

One group particularly affected by the new regulations will be visitors intending to study or work temporarily in Canada. As of April 10, these people will have to

