

Canada's Immigration Policy: New Targets and Priorities

Canada's demographic and labour market requirements are annually assessed through a consultative mechanism in which provincial and territorial governments, as well as national non-governmental organizations, are invited to provide their views on future levels of immigration to Canada. This process recently resulted in the Hon. John Roberts, Minister of Employment and Immigration, tabling a report to Parliament on immigration levels for the period 1984-1986. Concurrently Mr Roberts announced that Canada plans to admit between 90,000 to 95,000 immigrants in 1984 and that 1985 and 1986 levels have been set at 105,000 and 120,000 respectively. During this period the attainment of economic, social and humanitarian goals will continue to highlight Canada's immigration policy.

Canada's economic environment affects immigration level planning in general and labour market immigration in particular. Despite impressive economic recovery in Canada, employment growth during 1984 is expected to be affected by unused capacity and a determination to increase productivity. Rising rates of labour force participation, especially for young persons and women, is expected to result in substantial labour force growth during the next two years and this will retard a fall in unemployment rates. For this reason, restrictions which were introduced in May 1982 over the immigration of persons who would enter the Canadian labour force will be maintained for the immediate future.

There are, however, instances when a qualified Canadian worker cannot be found despite a thorough search of the national job market or when Canadians cannot be trained quickly enough to meet certain skill requirements. In this situation workers from abroad who are destined to pre-arranged jobs may be exempt from the general restrictions on persons entering the labour force. Immigration levels planning for 1984 includes a selected worker intake of between 6,000 and 8,000 persons.

Entrepreneurs Welcome

During 1984, Canada will actively promote the immigration of foreign entrepreneurs who can provide economic benefit. The aims are to encourage job creation, the inflow of venture capital, growth in exports and the reduction of regional economic disparities. Measures designed to promote entrepreneurial immigration include increased emphasis on recruitment, streamlined selection procedures and provisional admission as a means of enabling entrepreneurs to develop business plans in cooperation

with the provincial government concerned. In announcing measures to encourage the admission of entrepreneurs as immigrants, the Minister of Employment and Immigration said,

"We are looking for immigrants who can establish job-creating businesses and bring a new investment spirit as well as new skills and product lines to Canada. To be accepted, entrepreneurs will need sufficient capital to start a business; however, financial status alone will not guarantee a visa. The active personal involvement of these immigrants in business that directly create jobs for Canadians, plus business know-how and managerial skills, are the most important considerations."

Between 1980 and 1982, some 5,500 business immigrants were admitted to Canada. These immigrants brought an estimated \$1.5 billion dollars into the country and created about 10,000 new jobs.

Reunification of families

The government of Canada also remains committed to the reunification of eligible immediate family members from abroad with their sponsoring relatives in Canada. As settlement costs for members of the family class are underwritten by their sponsors, the selection criteria bearing on this portion of the immigrant movement to Canada are the requirements for good health and good character. In recent years family class immigration has accounted for approximately one-half of the total movement of immigrants to Canada. This has been due to the government's social policies directed at family reunification even during periods when labour market immigration declined in response to

domestic economic conditions. Family class immigration planning is expected to remain at about 50,000 per year during the forecast period, with a significant proportion originating in Asia.

An important aspect of Canada's immigration planning is the resettlement of refugees and other victims of displacement and persecution. A refugee plan is developed annually in which both international and domestic factors are taken into consideration. In addition to assisting in the resettlement of refugees from other world regions, the ongoing need for Indochinese refugee resettlement will again feature prominently in Canada's refugee assistance programs during 1984. Concurrent with Indochinese refugee resettlement activities, Canada will continue to encourage measures designed to curtail the refugee outflow from Vietnam and to redirect it through regular immigration programs for that country. The government assisted allocation for 12,000 refugees including 3000 refugees from South East Asia, in addition to private and family sponsorships, demonstrates Canada's traditional humanitarian commitment in the area of refugee relief.

At the time of the 1981 census, there were 3.9 million persons living in Canada who had been accepted as immigrants; they represented 16% of the total Canadian population. The numbers of immigrants admitted to Canada averaged approximately 130,000 per year between 1980 and 1982, with over 35% originating in Asia. Newcomers to Canada have contributed to profound changes in the size and the composition of the Canadian population. They will no doubt continue to play a significant role in Canada's economy, society and culture in the years to come.



A family of Indochinese refugees is interviewed at one of the refugee processing centres in the region.