



## **AN OVERVIEW OF THE IMMIGRATION PROGRAM**

The Government of Canada has begun a thorough review of all immigration policies and programs. To place this review in context and to provide background for the outline of existing immigration programs and policies that follows, it is appropriate to consider the following excerpts from a statement by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in presenting the Annual Report to Parliament, Immigration Plan 1994:

"Immigration policy represents one of the most important and complex challenges facing Canada today. It is, perhaps more than any other area of public policy, closely tied to our history — to the development of our values, our cultural diversity, the regional and economic dynamics of our nation. It will, in the long run, help to determine the character of our country in the years ahead."

"I am committed to an open and progressive immigration policy. Canada's immigration policy should not be about closing doors to those who need our help. It should not be about barring the way to those who can help our country grow stronger. Our government is determined to maintain a dynamic immigration program — a program that will achieve the fundamental social, humanitarian and economic objectives set out in the Immigration Act."

"Periodically throughout our history — especially during economic downturns — there have been

calls to slam the door shut to immigration. That sentiment, at times, has been translated by governments into restrictive laws and policies. I believe that such sentiments indicate a lack of vision of what this country can become. I believe that if such sentiments had prevailed in the past, Canada would be a much lesser country than it is now. Canada would not have flourished and progressed if we had locked ourselves into a restrictive mind-set that excluded the people who have helped make us grow and prosper."

"The Government's election campaign document (the Red Book) identified a pressing need to develop effective international means to manage the displacement of over 20 million people by war, persecution and natural disasters. The root causes of such movements — racial, religious and ethnic intolerance, poverty, and political repression — must be dealt with through concerted multilateral action."

"I believe it is vital that we develop co-operative approaches to address this need. In response to increasing migration pressures, many countries have acted alone and simply closed their front doors — only to find more people trying to gain entry illegally through back doors. This approach also increases, unfairly, the number of people who arrive on the doorsteps of those nations whose doors are still open."