



news release

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CANADA EXPANDS TEMPORARY FACILITIES IN CYPRUS TO ASSIST LEBANESE VISA APPLICANTS

The Minister of Employment and Immigration, the Honourable Barbara McDougall, and the Minister for External Relations and International Development, the Honourable Monique Landry today announced additional measures to speed up processing of visa applications submitted by Lebanese in Nicosia, Cyprus. These include increasing the number of Canada-based staff at the temporary office in Nicosia and its moving to larger, more efficient premises.

Temporary visa facilities were established in Cyprus on April 27, 1989 because it was not possible for some Lebanese applicants, particularly those from East Beirut, to reach the Canadian Embassy in Damascus, Syria, which is responsible for the Canadian immigration program in Lebanon. Quebec immigration officers are also cooperating to ensure rapid examination of those people destined to Quebec.

Mrs. McDougall said that the "enlarged temporary visa office in Nicosia will process all applications from Lebanese nationals affected by hostilities in Lebanon who have close family relatives in Canada. In this way, applicants will have access to our special program as they do through Damascus. This program is not of a refugee nature, rather it provides humanitarian assistance to those Lebanese with relatives in Canada".

Mrs. McDougall noted that since the opening of the temporary office in Nicosia, 84 immigrant visas and 166 visitor visas have been issued in Nicosia, along with 41 Minister's Permits covering 120 persons. More than 478 new applications, representing 1,180 persons, have been provisionally approved. Immigrant visas will be issued for these cases upon receipt of satisfactory results from medical examinations and background enquiries. These efforts in Nicosia support a long standing program for Lebanese with relatives in Canada; 16,000 have benefited since 1976.

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"Canada has consistently supported the sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity of Lebanon and the withdrawal of all foreign troops from its soil", Mrs. Landry said. "While Canada will continue to offer practical help to the Lebanese people, what is required for a longer term solution is a renewed effort by all parties concerned to achieve a political solution which recognizes the aspirations of all Lebanese", Mrs. Landry added.

Mrs. Landry is informing the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration of these additional measures.