



For Immediate Release

### **Immigration minister Hon. Joe Volpe announces positive changes in immigration laws**

Ottawa- Today, Hon. Joe Volpe, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, announced a series of measures aimed at improving service delivery and the efficiency of Canada's immigration and citizenship programs.

"Canada's immigration system is a model for the world and today's measures allow us to maintain and enhance our position. We will do this by reducing application processing times for permanent residents who want to become Canadian citizens and sponsored parents and grandparents who want to be reunited with their family in Canada" said Mr. Volpe.

Today's measures include an investment of \$69 million over two years to restore, by 2007-2008, processing times to an average of 12 months for a grant of citizenship and four months for a proof of citizenship. Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) is also exempting citizenship applicants from undergoing language ability and knowledge-of-Canada tests at 55 rather than 60 years of age, while in no way reducing the rigorous security screening requirements that all applicants for Canadian citizenship must go through before becoming citizens of Canada. The measures to speed up the processing of sponsorship applications for parents and grandparents coming to Canada as family class immigrants include tripling the number of parents and grandparents who can immigrate to Canada from 6,000 to 18,000 a year in 2005 and in 2006. Also, the issuance of multiple-entry visitor visas will be facilitated so that parents and grandparents can visit their families in Canada while their applications are in process.

The Government of Canada will invest \$36 million a year for two years to cover the costs of processing and integrating parents and grandparents. CIC is expanding two pilot initiatives for international students to enhance the competitiveness of Canada's education industry. The first will allow international students across Canada to work off-campus while completing their studies and the second will allow them to work for a second year after graduation. This second initiative will apply outside of Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver to help spread the benefits of immigration to more regions in Canada. The Government

of Canada is investing \$10 million a year for five years to support this strategy. The measures announced today demonstrate action on commitments laid out by Minister Volpe in his January 2005 six-point plan for addressing critical issues in the citizenship and immigration programs.

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