

FAIR AND EQUITABLE RESPONSE FROM MINISTER

OTTAWA, February 26, 2002 -- The Honorable Denis Coderre, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, today outlined a fair and equitable response to recent comments about proposed changes to the immigration system. The Minister plans to amend the transition regulations to allow more skilled workers to be assessed under the current selection grid until January 1, 2003. He clarified the proposed implementation dates for the new Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, and outlined how certain visa applicants could obtain a refund of their processing fees.

"While I pursue the immigration and refugee elements of the government's security agenda and the regulatory consultations on the new Immigration and Refugee Protection Act," said the Minister, "I want to be fair to visa applicants as we move toward a new system. My approach meets a test of fairness to applicants while giving them notice of the proposed changes. This way, they can make an informed decision about the prospects for their applications."

The Minister outlined his intent that the new Act will come into effect on June 28, 2002. "This target date supports many of the government's objectives in immigration and refugee matters, as well as on border security issues. I will also take the time to carefully consider forthcoming recommendations of my Parliamentary colleagues on the proposed immigrant selection criteria, among other proposed regulations. Then, I'll decide on changes that may well be necessary to the proposed system."

The Minister is proposing that those skilled workers and business immigrants who applied before December 17, 2001, and who have not received a selection decision by June 28, 2002 (the target implementation date for the new Act), will continue to be selected under the current selection criteria until January 1, 2003. The Minister is further proposing that skilled workers and business immigrants who applied before December 17, 2001 who have not received a selection decision prior to January 1, 2003, will be subject to the proposed selection criteria and a proposed transition pass mark of 70 points (reduced from 75).

Application submitted after December 17, 2001, where a selection decision is not reached by June 28, 2002 will be subject to the proposed selection criteria and a pass mark yet to be determined. The proposed pass mark in the pre-published regulations is 80 points. Before a final decision is made on the proposed pass mark, the Minister will consider the forthcoming recommendations of the House of Commons Standing Committee as well as comments received during the recent pre-publication period.

The proposed lower pass mark of 70, as opposed to 75 as originally planned, will further lessen the impact of the transition to the new rules for people who applied before the proposed new rules were first released. The Minister will soon table the last group of proposed regulations for public and parliamentary consultation.

All skilled worker and business immigrant visa applicants have the option of withdrawing their applications and requesting a refund provided their applications have not passed through the preliminary evaluation (paper screening). The refund must be requested through the office where the visa application was submitted.

While balancing fairness to skilled worker and business immigrant applicants, CIC is contributing to the government's security agenda by making plans to introduce the Permanent Resident Card on June 28, 2002; pursuing the Smart Border Declaration and the 30-point action plan; and allocating resources from the 2001 federal budget to key enforcement activities.

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