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News Release

Canada lifts visa requirements for travelers from Poland, Slovakia, Lithuania and Hungary

Mississauga, March 1, 2008 — The Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, announced today that citizens of Poland, Slovakia, Lithuania and Hungary no longer require a temporary resident visa to visit Canada.

"Canada enjoys strong ties with these countries," said Minister Finley. "Lifting the visa requirement will help build those relationships to the benefit of Canadians and the citizens of Poland, Slovakia, Lithuania, and Hungary."

Visa-free status for the four countries is effective immediately.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) has an ongoing review of the visa requirements for New Member States (NMS) of the European Union (EU). These reviews are done on a country-by-country basis.

"We are committed to the free and secure movement of people between the EU and Canada," said Minister Finley. "We are also committed to the objective of visa-exempt status for all EU member states."

In 2006, there were 33,363 temporary resident visas issued for citizens of Poland, 3,780 for citizens of Slovakia, 989 for citizens of Lithuania and 6,385 for citizens of Hungary.

Twelve countries joined the EU in 2004 and 2007. Initially, visas were required for travelers from seven of the NMS. The requirement was lifted on travelers from Estonia in 2006 and the Czech Republic and Latvia in 2007. With today's announcement, travel to Canada from all but two of the EU's 27 countries is now visa-free. CIC will continue to work in cooperation with the two remaining countries, Bulgaria and Romania, with the goal of having visa-free travel for all EU citizens. Canadian officials will conduct technical visits to these countries as part of CIC's ongoing review to determine when visa requirements can be removed.

To guard against abuse of older passports, by January 2009, travelers from Poland and Lithuania will be required to carry a more secure e-passport for visa-free travel.

By law, all visitors to Canada require a temporary resident visa, except citizens of countries where an exemption has been granted. Visa requirements for travellers to Canada are the country's first line of defence in maintaining the safety and health of Canadians.

For more information on CIC's programs, consult our website at www.cic.gc.ca.

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Date Modified: 2008-03-01