

News & Views

The Newsletter of the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration

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Message from the Minister

Over the past year, I have been honoured to serve as the province's first immigration minister. I am particularly inspired by the immigrants I meet, who are contributing so much, in so many different ways, to our communities. I have also been impressed by the people and groups who recognize and appreciate all that immigrants bring, and are working hard to help them make this province their new home.

With the province's first immigration strategy, we now have a blueprint to help guide these efforts. The strategy was based on your experience and advice, a process that opened the lines of communications between government and immigration partners. The success of the immigration strategy in the past year, and in future years, rests with our ability to keep these lines of communications open.

This newsletter can enable us to share information on progress and challenges. Perhaps more importantly, I hope you will use it as a forum to ask questions and share ideas.

This first edition is devoted to progress in year one, and some of the priorities for the next year. Where there has been success, the credit for that success must be shared with our immigration partners and with immigration staff. Because of you, we have an immigration strategy that reflects Nova Scotia's priorities – and because of you, we can continue to turn the words in the strategy into action.



Minister MacDonal greeting guests at the Office of Immigration's open house in November.

Finally, I want to thank everyone for their patience, as we worked to build our team and find a permanent home. A lot has been accomplished, but a lot remains to be done. I look forward to our continued progress in helping more immigrants come to Nova Scotia, and settle successfully so they remain for many, many years.

Rodney MacDonal

NOVA SCOTIA
NOUVELLE-ÉCOSSE

Office of Immigration
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News & Views is published regularly by the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration.

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A Lot Can Happen in a Year . . .

Activity Report on Year 1 of Nova Scotia's Immigration Strategy

Premier John Hamm and newly-appointed Immigration Minister Rodney MacDonald launched the province's first immigration strategy on January 26, 2005. It set out immigration policy, guiding principles, and targets to significantly boost the number of immigrants coming to the province, as well as our success rate in helping them stay.

In the first year of the five-year strategy, a solid foundation was laid to put the strategy into action. The highest priority was to support activities that help immigrants settle successfully. Considerable progress has also been made in attracting more immigrants, particularly through the Nova Scotia Nominee Program.



Premier John Hamm chats with two guests at the open house.

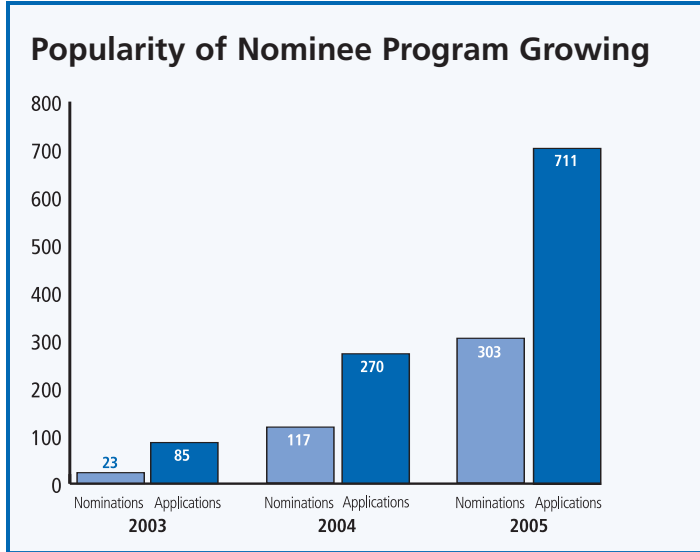
Laying the Foundation

- Passed legislation, creating the Office of Immigration with responsibility for working with partners to attract more immigrants, and help them settle and stay.
- Passed a budget, more than doubling the amount of money available to help immigrants settle.
- Started new, and strengthened existing, partnerships through more than 100 meetings with groups and individuals.
- Recruited a multicultural, multilingual, energetic team of professionals to work with partners on immigration priorities.
- Located permanent office space in the same building as Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). Nova Scotia is the only province in the country where immigrants can attend to provincial and federal immigration matters in one place. More than 200 friends and colleagues attended an open house in November.
- Strengthened the partnership with CIC, particularly benefiting from their expertise, resources and support as the strategy was developed and the office was formed.

Attracting More Immigrants

Nominees

- Received the 1000th application to the Nova Scotia Nominee Program in December. (The program began in 2003.)
- More than doubled the number of families nominated for permanent residency, for a total of 303 families in 2005, compared to 117 families in 2004. A total of 443 families have been nominated since the program began. With an average family size of four, this will bring more than 1700 newcomers to the province.
- Attracted immigrants from 55 different countries who are settling in 48 communities across the province.
- Reached agreement with the federal government to raise the cap on the number of immigrant families allowed to be nominated to the province above 200. A target of 300 families was set for 2005.
- Began opening the nominee program to immigrants with broader experiences, by circulating a discussion paper on a new family business category.
- Started a fee review to ensure fees are affordable and fair, while enabling the province to meet immigration goals affordably for taxpayers.



All Immigrants

- Saw an increase in the number of all immigrants (nominees and those coming to Nova Scotia through federal programs) by 8.5 per cent*.
- Developed a DVD which featured immigrant success stories in three different languages.

Helping Immigrants Settle, Succeed and Stay

Funding

- Developed and published funding criteria, and held an information session, to help groups understand the priorities for grant funding.
- More than doubled the funding for settlement agencies and communities.
- Funded all immigration projects funded previously and provided funding to expand existing projects and start new ones. Examples are language tutoring in libraries, language curriculum for immigrant engineers, and employment counselling.

* Based on preliminary landing statistics provided by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

- Provided funding to support immigration in rural communities for the first time: 30 per cent of the total.
- Dedicated funding for the first time to support Francophone immigration.
- Partnered with the Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs to fund a conference for immigrants of African descent.
- Dedicated funding to the Department of Education for the first time for English second-language education in the public schools.
- Signed accountability agreements with groups who received funding to help evaluate results for dollars invested.

New Policies and Partnerships

- Worked with Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters on a guide to support employers hiring immigrants.
- Partnered with government and community agencies on a tool kit to support immigration in small communities.
- Worked with other provinces and the federal government on Atlantic marketing and population issues.
- Negotiated agreement with the federal government to allow international students to work off-campus. (Nova Scotia was the first province in Canada to sign this new agreement. This agreement is currently on hold until the federal government approves funding.)

A Lot Accomplished, A Lot To Do Yet . . .

The Year Ahead

As part of government's budget cycle, the Office will be releasing its business plan later this year, detailing a complete list of priorities. Here are some highlights:

Continue building partnerships

- Create a new Immigration Council to represent partners and advise government.
- Work with Citizenship and Immigration and other provinces on ways to improve client service, such as speeding up processing times.

Build on the success of the Nominee Program

- Raise the target by at least 100 for the number of families that Nova Scotia can nominate to the federal government.

Past targets: 200 in 2003, 300 in 2005.

New target: At least 400 in 2006.

Over the longer term, negotiate with the federal government to remove the cap that exists in the current agreement so targets, and marketing efforts, can be increased further.

- Open the program to immigrants with a broader range of backgrounds. Finalize work on, and introduce the family business category. Continue to explore the benefits of adding entrepreneur and international student categories.
- Work with regional development authorities, Victoria County, and La Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse, on the community-identified category.

Continue helping immigrants settle successfully

- Work with partners on further improvements to the funding process to ensure grants are awarded fairly, and to the highest immigration priorities.
- Negotiate a new funding formula with Ottawa, to ensure that (a) settlement funding grows as immigrant numbers grow, and (b) increased funding provided by Nova Scotia enhances services for immigrants – and does not simply replace funding no longer provided federally.
- Hold a provincial forum with employers to begin addressing workplace issues facing immigrants.
- Reconvene the Roundtable on Immigrant Women to address immigration issues facing women and families.
- Work with the Department of Education, Office of Economic Development, Nova Scotia Business Inc. and other provincial departments on linking skills, economic and immigration issues.
- Work with the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training, as well as other partners, on actions to assess and recognize the qualifications of immigrant workers.
- Work with the Department of Health and partners on training and other support for internationally trained professionals.

Intensify marketing efforts

- Participate in international immigration fairs in Europe.
- Participate in delegation to promote Canada in Asia.
- Create a new web site: easier to navigate, interactive, comprehensive, and with key information in French and English.

Editor's Note

This newsletter will share news about immigration activities, and give partners a chance to ask questions and express their views. All submissions will receive a response. Those that are of broad interest, and do not repeat topics already covered, will appear in the newsletter. The newsletter, or special bulletins on single topics, will be e-mailed as often as the volume or timeliness of information requires. Ideas to improve the newsletter are encouraged.

Submissions should be sent to the *News & Views* editor:

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