Family Reunification and Family Class Immigration in Canada

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Family Reunification in Canadian Context

- Family reunification is an important principle of Canada’s immigration policy.
  - Long-standing policy allows Canadians and permanent residents to bring their family with them when they immigrate to Canada or to sponsor close family members for immigration to Canada.
  - Principle reaffirmed in the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*
- Research suggests that immigrants tend to establish themselves more easily if they are supported by their families.
Newcomers are welcomed to Canada through one of three main classes: Family, Economic or Refugee

The *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* established three basic classes for those seeking permanent residence in Canada, which correspond to major program objectives;
- Contributing to economic development: Economic Immigrants
- Reuniting families: Family Class
- Protecting refugees

The Family Class is made up of people who join family members already settled in Canada.
Family Class Immigration: How does family reunification work in Canada?

- Family Class immigrants are people sponsored to come to, or remain in Canada by a relative who is a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident of Canada.

- The Family Class applicant must be the sponsor's:
  - spouse, common-law or conjugal partner (aged 16 or older);
  - dependent child, including a child adopted abroad;
  - child under 18 years of age to be adopted in Canada;
  - parent or grandparent; or
  - brother, sister, niece, nephew or grandchild who has been orphaned, is under 18 years of age and is not married or in a common-law relationship;
  - other relatives may also be considered in certain circumstances.
Family Class Immigration: Sponsors have an important responsibility

- Sponsors must be Canadian citizens or permanent residents, 18 years of age or older.

- Sponsors are responsible for:
  - initiating the immigration process for family class applications;
  - providing the essential needs of permanent residents after arrival in Canada; and
  - ensuring that sponsored family members do not become dependent on the Canadian social assistance system for a period of 3-10 years.

- Given their level of responsibility, sponsors are subject to certain eligibility criteria, to ensure that they will be able to support family members upon arrival in Canada.
Family Class Immigration: Becoming a permanent resident of Canada

- Family Class applicants are subject to health and security criteria, not additional criteria required of economic immigrants.

- Successful applicants become permanent residents of Canada and are accorded most of the rights, entitlements and responsibilities as Canadians citizens.

- Family Class immigrants are more likely to benefit from the presence of support networks already established in Canada, a factor which research suggests is important for successful integration.
A profile of Family Class immigrants in Canada, 2005

Who are Family Class?
• Female (60%)
• aged 25-44 (43%)

Where do they come from?
• Asia and Pacific (58%)
• Europe/UK (12%)
• Africa/Middle East (12%)
• South/Central America (11%)
• United States (6%)
A profile of Family Class immigrants in Canada, 2005: Level of education

Level of Education of Family Class Immigrants 15 Years of Age or Older
(percentage distribution)
Family Class Immigration in Canada, 2005

Canada – Permanent Residents by Category, 2005

- Family Class Immigrants: 63,352 (24%)
- Refugees: 35,768 (14%)
- Other Immigrants: 6,796 (3%)
- Economic – Principal applicants: 61,614
- Spouses and dependents: 94,696

Total Immigrants: 156,310 (60%)
Summary: Key Features of Family Class Immigration in Canada

- Family reunification is a formally recognized objective, articulated in legislation and supported by the Family Class of immigration.

- Regulations recognize a relatively broad definition of Family Class.

- Sponsorship is an important responsibility and is key to the successful integration of Family Class immigrants.

- Family Class immigrants are granted permanent residence and have the rights, responsibilities and entitlements of citizens, with few exceptions.
Areas for further study…

Role of family reunification in:

- supporting the integration of permanent residents;
- maximizing social, cultural and economic benefits of Canadian society;
- enriching the social and cultural fabric of Canadian society;
- supporting the development of a strong, prosperous economy.
Citizenship and Immigration Canada

For further information:

www.cic.gc.ca

www.canada.metropolis.net