

Canada and the United States Sign Visa and Immigration Information-Sharing Agreement

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On December 13, 2012, Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Minister Jason Kenney and United States Ambassador to Canada David Jacobson signed the *U.S.-Canada Visa and Immigration Information-Sharing Agreement* (the "Agreement") in furtherance of the Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness Action Plan (the "Action Plan"), which was signed in 2011 by Prime Minister Stephen Harper and President Barack Obama. As part of the Action Plan, Canada and the United States committed to share immigration information to improve border efficiency and security, by establishing and verifying the identities of foreign nationals, and identifying those who were inadmissible, at the earliest opportunity.

The Agreement authorizes development of arrangements under which Canada may send an automated request for data to the United States, such as when a third country national applies to Canada for a visa or claims asylum. Such a request would contain limited information, such as name and date of birth in the case of biographic sharing, or an anonymous fingerprint in the case of biometric sharing. If the identity matches that of a previous application, immigration information may be shared, such as whether the person has previously been refused a visa or removed from the other country. The same process would apply in reverse when a third country national applies to the United States for a visa or claims asylum.

According to the Agreement, no information will be shared on Canadian or United States citizens or permanent residents. However, it will allow both countries to share information regarding third-country nationals who apply for a visa or a permit to travel to either country. The Agreement also provides an additional tool for regular, systematic information sharing on inland asylum claimants.

Biographic immigration information sharing is set to begin in 2013 and biometric sharing in 2014. ■