



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

Press Release

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AGUIRRE VISITS CANADA, HIGHLIGHTS PROGRESS IN PARTNERSHIP

Ottawa, Ontario – Eduardo Aguirre, Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) today addressed the Summit Institute’s international forum on the U.S.- Canadian relationship. During his two-day visit to Ottawa, Director Aguirre also met with Deputy Minister Michel Dorais, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), Associate Deputy Minister Jonathan Fried, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, and the U.S. Ambassador to Canada, Paul Cellucci.

“America’s principles, like Canada’s, are founded in freedom, democracy and certain unalienable rights...we value our relationship with Canada. We remain committed to working with our counterparts in the CIC to guard liberty and secure our respective homelands,” said Aguirre.

At the forum, Director Aguirre cited important progress on information sharing and bilateral coordination on refugee and asylee matters. The Statement of Mutual Understanding between USCIS and CIC, signed in February of 2003, and its pending Asylum Annex, will establish more a comprehensive and timely information exchange on asylum seekers. This will result in a more proactive identification of the individual in question and more immediate verification of any potential security or criminal threats.

Similarly, the Safe Third Country Agreement, once implemented, will allow both nations to more effectively manage the flow of asylum seekers. While strongly reinforcing a commitment to family unity, the agreement would appropriately regulate an asylum seeker’s ability to choose a country of refuge. Asylum seekers, at land border ports of entry, would be required to present their claim in the country they are in, versus the country they are seeking to enter.

Both initiatives enhance national security and compliment the December 2001 Smart Border Action Plan, signed by Deputy Prime Minister John Manley and then-Governor Tom Ridge.

Director Aguirre’s prepared remarks accompany this release.

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On March 1, 2003, U.S Citizenship and Immigration Services became one of three legacy INS components to join the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. USCIS is charged with fundamentally transforming and improving the delivery of immigration and citizenship services, while enhancing the integrity of our nation's security.