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**SOLBERG STALLS ON FIXING DEPORTATIONS –
IMMIGRANT GROUPS, EMPLOYERS AND UNIONS PLEDGE THEIR
COMMITMENT TO WORK WITH PARLIAMENT ON SOLUTION**

Toronto, April 4, 2006 - Canada's messy immigration system is not meeting the country's labour force needs and will hurt its long-term prosperity, said immigrant groups, employers and unions during their first meeting with Minister Solberg on the issue of deportations. While disappointed by the government's unwillingness to stem the tide of deportations, the groups welcomed the Minister's interest in further dialogue and pledged their commitment to work with Parliament and other stakeholders to find a quick resolution.

"Meeting with the community on the first day of Parliament sends the right message. Are we encouraged by the Minister's openness to listen? Certainly more so than last week. Did we hear an adequate response to our clear proposals? Unfortunately, no.", said Peter Ferreira, President, Portuguese-Canadian National Congress. "We know that the economic costs are too great, the humanitarian impact is too unacceptable for Canadians, and the reality is that this is an issue that all parties in Parliament can rally around. We are ready to work with Parliament to move forward on a concrete proposal that is on the Minister's table and would go a long way towards addressing the weaknesses in Canada's immigration system."

On the heels of his first session in Parliament as Immigration Minister, Monte Solberg flew into Toronto in response to calls from immigrant groups, unions and employers regarding the need for leadership to address ongoing deportations within the Portuguese and other communities.

"These deportations could not come at a worse time. Canada is enjoying 30-year low unemployment rates, the labour force demand in trades remains keeps rising and home buyers are waiting longer and longer in line to finally take possession of their new properties. But we still have an immigration system that does not recognize the labour market's needs for skilled labour in the short term, nor a policy that is serious about declining birth rates and an ageing population in the longer term. It's time for concrete solutions that can put our economic and humanitarian priorities on solid footing ", said Ana Bailão, President, Federation of Portuguese-Canadian Business and Professionals.

Immigrant groups, employers and trade unions are united in calling for a made-in-Canada worker permit system that balances Canada's economic needs with Canadian values. This proposal for regularization has been tabled with the Minister and groups will be following up later this month to check in on Parliament's progress. The proposal outlines a plan whereby:

1. Those who have been working in Canada for at least two-years would receive a 2-year work permit that would permit them and their family to stay in Canada;
2. At the end of those two years, pending a solid work record and no criminal record, they would be given the opportunity to apply for landed status.
3. By that time Canada's Immigration system would have been reformed to account for our full labour force needs.

"We believe that there's reason to be optimistic. There's an agreement among employers, unions and community groups about how we can move forward and a concrete proposal is on the table that all Canadians can be proud of. And there is an emerging consensus among all Parties in Parliament about the need for a positive resolution to this issue. With the right kind of leadership, the government can rise above politics and truly work for people. This problem was not created by the Minister, but the reality is that only he can take the first step towards fixing it," said Marcie Ponte, Congress Ontario Vice-President.

People Concerned about the Deportation of Undocumented Workers consists of agencies and organizations representing and/or serving Portuguese-speaking communities in Canada and other groups and individuals concerned about the deportation of undocumented workers.

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