Government of Canada Announces 10-Year Biometric Passports for Canadians

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On July 2, 2013, the Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Minister (the "Minister") announced that 10-year ePassports, also known as biometric passports, will now be available to Canadian citizens. The Minister also announced that Citizenship and Immigration Canada ("CIC") would immediately assume primary responsibility for Passport Canada, which had previously been part of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

The new ePassport contains new security features designed to make the passport tamper-proof. These features include:

- An electronic chip ("e-chip") embedded in the back cover, which will store the same personal information that appears on Page 2 of the Passport (except for the signature), the photo and a digital security feature that proves the passport was issued by the Government of Canada; and
- New images in the inside pages that provide additional security.

Over 100 countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom and France, already issue ePassports to their citizens.

According to CIC, when information is first stored on the e-chip in the passport, the e-chip is electronically locked so that information cannot be modified. CIC also states that the information on the e-chip cannot be read unless the ePassport is held within 10 centimetres of an ePassport reader, open to page 2, and the machine-readable zone has first been read. Canadians who would like to see the information stored on their e-chip to make sure it is accurate may do so by visiting one of Passport Canada's 34 regional offices.

At border crossings equipped with ePassport readers, the ePassport is placed into a scanner that reads the machine-readable zone, which allows the e-chip to be read also. The machine also checks other security features, such as the country-specific signature. Canada Border

Services Agency authorities that do not yet have ePassport readers in place will continue to examine travelers' passports by examining existing security features such as the holographic images.

For an adult (age 16 or older), a 5-year ePassport for will cost $120 and a 10-year ePassport will cost $160. For a child (up to 15 years old), the cost will be $57.