

MEMORANDUM TO THE MINISTER

CITIZENSHIP KNOWLEDGE TESTING

FOR INFORMATION

SUMMARY

- CIC introduced The overall pass rate in April was 73%, which represents a decrease from the cumulative (November 2010 to March 2012) and March pass rates of 83%. Although the volume of data is too small to be conclusive, in April, most demographic groups performed consistently with how they have in the past.
- Some problematic questions (questions performing poorly that could be made more clear) have been identified and recommendations for their re-formulation will be provided to you in the near future.
- In the meantime, those problematic questions have been removed : As a result, pass rates will likely rise again as poorly performing/problematic questions are addressed.
- The department collects data on the written tests in a systematic manner but relies on anecdotal evidence from the Citizenship Commission and citizenship judges for information regarding the performance of the oral knowledge test. The department is discussing the issue of problematic new test questions with judges and will be gathering their input/recommendations on the oral test over the next week.
- CIC will : such that problematic questions are removed as soon as possible for the majority of candidates.
- CIC will continue monitoring both the written and to the extent possible, oral tests and provide regular updates.

BACKGROUND:

- *Discover Canada* and the accompanying citizenship test are designed to ensure that new

Canadians have a better understanding of Canada to further their integration in Canadian society.

- If applicants fail the written test, they are referred to a hearing with a citizenship judge. Those who are not successful in demonstrating that they meet the knowledge requirement (or any requirement) must reapply should they wish to become citizens.
- Written test pass rates were about 96% before *Discover Canada* tests were introduced. The pass rates decreased to about 70% during the first few months after implementation of *Discover Canada* tests and eventually stabilized at about 83% : (see Annex A, Chart1),
- The test questions were approved by you in November 2010 via memo F-4360 and were piloted in focus group sessions in fall 2011 as a means of validating the questions before implementation.

CURRENT STATUS:

Written Tests

- CIC is monitoring citizenship written knowledge test results with respect to test versions, individual test questions, and pass rates with respect to demographic groups. In April 2012, the pass rate was about 73% (70% for females and 76% for males; 72% for English and 77% for French).
- the volume of tests that were administered is insufficient to make any conclusive observations about any demographic factor, most demographic groups are performing consistently (applicants with the highest level of education and applicants that immigrated through the economic immigrant class still obtained higher pass rates) (see Annex A, Charts 2 to 5).
- However, we have noted that for April 2012, the 18-24 year old age group shows the largest decrease of any age cohort and for that month is the lowest scoring age cohort (see Annex A, Chart 2). Further monitoring and analysis will be conducted regarding impacts by age group.
- It is important to note when comparing demographic groups that CIC's previous analysis (based on nine months of linked, aggregate data from November 2010 to July 2011) confirmed the findings of the Statistics Canada analysis (based on three weeks of data in

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2010) that education was the most important variable influencing test pass rates. Specifically:

- Applicants with a university degree at time of landing had a test pass rate of 95%.
- Conversely, applicants with secondary school or less at time of landing had an average test pass rate of 66%.

Oral tests

- Citizenship Judges use an open ended-version of the multiple choice test and we rely on their input to indicate how the oral test is performing. Judges have signalled a concern about the pass rate on the oral test and the fairness of some of the new oral knowledge test questions. The department is attending meetings with citizenship judges during the week of June 11 in order to further address the issue. In addition, we plan to receive further input from judges, through the Commission, on more specific details the following week.
- Given the open ended nature of the oral test, difficulties experienced by candidates on oral questions often differ from difficulties experienced on the written test (in terms of the level of difficulty of any particular question and in terms of how to address the difficulty). Therefore, the input from judges will be important in identifying challenges with the oral test and determining respective solutions.
- In order to quickly address the pass rate drop on the written test, questions performing poorly that could be made more clear have been identified and are being removed from the versions that will be put into force during the next planned scrambling of questions. Current efforts envisage that this could be done sometime in July for the written test.
- However, given that we are still engaging judges on important input that will better help address any issues with the oral test, adjusting the oral test would be feasible sometime in August.
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- Also, an increase in the number of people who fail the written test typically results in an increase in the number of people referred to a judge. Therefore, managing written test pass rates also helps manage the volume of referrals to judges.
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CONSULTATIONS:

- The Operational Management and Coordination Branch (OMC) was consulted.

NEXT STEPS:

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- CIC will continue to monitor and analyse citizenship written knowledge test results and as more data and analysis becomes available, will inform your office.
- CIC will continue to engage the Citizenship Commission and citizenship judges on oral test questions and will monitor, to the extent possible, results from the oral hearings.
- CIC will continue to undertake research and analysis on pass rates with respect to demographic groups.

Neil Yeates