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## PROVINCE LAUNCHES ENHANCED IDENTIFICATION CARD PROGRAM

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### **Secure Alternative to Passport for Driving to U.S. will Cost as Little as \$30: Chomiak**

Manitoba is introducing an enhanced identification card (EIC) as a less-expensive alternative to a passport that will permit entry to the United States by land or water, Attorney General Dave Chomiak announced today.

This week, the Manitoba government proclaimed legislation that gives the green light to the voluntary program which will help Manitobans meet new U.S. border crossing rules that take effect this June. The EIC will be a more affordable and convenient option for Manitobans who choose this card instead of a passport in order to enter the U.S. by land or water, said Chomiak.

Manitobans with passports may also want to have one of these wallet-sized cards because they can be carried all the time and will allow spontaneous visits by land or water to the U.S.

Manitobans will be among the first in the country to be able to obtain an approved, affordable alternative to the passport for travelling to the U.S. by land or water. The Manitoba card is now in the final stages of approval by the U.S. government.

“The new card will be offered to Manitobans on a voluntary basis and we expect it to be a popular choice. Besides costing less than a passport, the new card will have several security features and be more convenient to carry,” said Chomiak, who is also minister responsible for Manitoba Public Insurance, which is delivering the new program.

Starting Feb. 2, any Canadian citizen who is a resident of Manitoba can apply for the new card. Through Autopac brokers and Manitoba Public Insurance service outlets, Manitobans will be able to book appointments for the interview that will determine whether they will qualify for an EIC.

“This is an important achievement in our ongoing efforts to ensure that trade and travel across our borders are not disrupted as a result of changes to U.S. entry requirements under the U.S. Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative,” said Vic Toews, president of the Treasury Board, on behalf of Public Safety Minister Peter Van Loan. “At the same time, we are maintaining high security standards. Enhanced identification cards and enhanced driver’s licences can serve as an acceptable and secure alternative to passports at U.S. land and water border crossings. I am happy that our efforts have led to this recognition.”

Highlights of the EIC:

- An EIC will cost \$30 for drivers with valid Manitoba licences and \$50 for all others, \$50 to \$70 less than the cost of a passport (including the cost of a photo). The additional cost for

those without Manitoba driver's licences is due to the extra time required to establish a new account and verify identity.

- The program will be voluntary and available to all Canadian citizens who reside in Manitoba and meet the eligibility criteria. Sharing of personal information between Manitoba Public Insurance and the Canadian and U.S. federal governments will be based on fully informed, written consent.
- Those interested in applying for the card should first read the *Manitoba Enhanced Identification Card Applicant's Guide* which has full details including the personal information that is required to be shared. Manitoba Public Insurance will soon publish the guide on its website.
- The card can only be used for entry to the U.S. by land or water. It will not be acceptable for entering the U.S. by air or for entering other countries. Canadian citizens planning to fly to the U.S., change planes on U.S. soil or to travel abroad still require a passport.
- The card will make crossing the border more convenient by incorporating a radio frequency identification (RFID) chip that can be read from a maximum distance of 4.5 metres by special scanners at U.S. border crossings.
- The RFID chip has a unique identifier number that points to information stored in a secure Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) database that is located in Canada.
- For privacy protection, the card will come with a protective sleeve to help prevent the RFID chip from being read at times other than intended. It will be credit-card size to make it easier to carry in a wallet.
- The security features of the EIC will be incorporated into the Manitoba driver's licence when the province moves to its new one-piece licence. At that time, drivers who already hold an EIC will be able to convert it into an enhanced driver's licence (EDL) if they wish. Subject to U.S. approval, the EDL will also be an acceptable alternative to the passport for entering the U.S. by land or water only.
- The key to obtaining an EIC before it is needed is to book an appointment early. Manitobans attempting to book appointments in May or even April are likely to find there are no more available appointments until well after June 1.
- Manitoba Public Insurance (MPI) can accept almost 1,000 people each working day beginning in early February. MPI strongly suggests that people act early by seeing their Autopac agent to book an appointment at an MPI enhanced ID centre.

Marilyn McLaren, president and CEO of Manitoba Public Insurance, said, in light of privacy considerations related to the collection, sharing and safeguarding of individuals' personal information, the corporation and government have been working with the Manitoba ombudsman to ensure that the program complies with Manitoba's information privacy laws and to incorporate best practices to protect the privacy of card holders. Personal information collected under the program is protected by Manitoba's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) and Personal Health Information Act (PHIA).

“MPI has a proven track record of working with Manitobans and, most importantly, protecting their privacy while offering vehicle insurance and driver’s licences,” McLaren said. “The goal of the EIC program is to give Manitobans a secure, low-cost alternative to the passport that speeds up the flow of traffic at the border.”

With few exceptions, as of June 1, all Canadian citizens 16 and over will have to present a passport or approved alternative when entering the U.S. by land or water. The new U.S. rule is already in effect for air travel to the U.S. Complete details on the new U.S. entry requirements for Canadian citizens are available on the CBSA website at [www.cbsa.gc.ca](http://www.cbsa.gc.ca).

One-piece regular and enhanced driver’s licences will be introduced beginning in late 2009. By 2010, all drivers will have a one-piece licence.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION ATTACHED