



EBTC INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Canadian travelers will be issued a higher-security electronic passport starting in 2011 that will be valid for 10 years instead of the current five, the federal budget announced Tuesday.

Details of the new passport emerged in a two-year, \$165 million spending package aimed at enhancing border security, while still keeping people and goods flowing. The new measures included \$26 million to introduce the use of biometric data, such as fingerprints and live photographs, in the visas of foreign visitors, following the lead of the United States, Australia and Britain.

The budget also allocated \$6 million over two years to support new enhanced provincial drivers licenses that will, for the first time, list a driver's citizenship. This new license will help people living in border communities conform to the U.S. Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative that requires the use of a secure travel document at land crossings by June 2009.

The enhanced driver's license was billed as a convenient alternative for people who do not hold passports.

British Columbia and Washington State are conducting a pilot project on enhanced drivers' licenses.

The government is also kicking in an additional \$14 million to more than double - from 160,000 travelers to 350,000 - the NEXUS program for low-risk frequent travelers between Canada and the U.S. It will also spend \$15 million to establish a facility to monitor the flow of small boats and big commercial ships on the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Seaway.

Overall, the budget earmarked \$75 million to the Canada Border Services Agency to more efficiently and securely manage the flow of people and goods at more than 1,200 entry points.

But the introduction of the new electronic passport is the most novel of the new security measures outlined in Finance Minister Jim Flaherty's budget.

Canada will join 42 countries, including the United States and all of Europe, with the introduction of the new electronic document that will look like the current passport booklet, but will contain a machine-readable encrypted microchip. The digital chip will contain the same information as the passport itself, but it will be virtually impossible to tamper with.

The government announced its intention four years ago to move to upgraded passports, but key details emerged in Tuesday's budget.

It has not been determined how much the new passport will cost individual Canadians. The current five-year passport costs \$87.

Flaherty also announced a series of anti-crime measures that he called "another step towards building safer communities and putting criminals out of business."

These included \$400 million to help the provinces and territories recruit 2,500 new police officers, \$122 million to assist reforms in federal prisons and \$62 million towards the Public Prosecution Service of Canada and the National Crime Prevention Strategy.