

## Tory plan to stop benefits of jobless who refuse work

Controversial proposals to remove benefits for three years from people who refuse their third offer of a job are to be announced by the Conservatives.

Under the "three strikes and you're out" policy, there will be escalating penalties for people who refuse to accept "reasonable" job offers.

The proposals come on top of plans already announced to clamp down on incapacity benefit claimants and get 200,000 people off benefit and into work.

Under the proposals, everyone who receives a reasonable job offer will be expected to accept it. If they do not, they will lose one month's unemployment benefit. If they refuse a second reasonable offer, they will lose three months' benefit. If they refuse a third reasonable offer, they will be excluded from further out-of-work benefits for up to three years.

For example, a couple claiming jobseeker's allowance (JSA) would forgo £92.80 a week - more than half their total income, assuming they also claim housing and council tax benefits. For parents on JSA or incapacity benefit (IB), they could lose between a quarter and a third of their income if they fail to comply with the conditions of the welfare programme.

The shadow secretary for work and pensions, Chris Grayling, said: "We think it's time to take tough action against those who are deliberately staying at home and claiming benefits rather than going back into work. We think that if you get a reasonable job offer, you should take it - and if you don't, then you can't expect to be able to carry on claiming out-of-work benefits."

"Under Gordon Brown we have seen millions of people coming into the country to work. Yet it's still possible for many British people to stay at home on benefits, and not go back to work. That simply doesn't make sense."

<http://politics.guardian.co.uk>

## Gas and Electricity prices rise in UK

Npower, Britain's fourth-largest power supplier, is being criticised after raising customer bills by 17 per cent for gas and 13 per cent for electricity. Andrew Horstead, head of energy research at the consultancy Utiyx, acknowledged that suppliers were facing growing cost pressures, but said that npower was using record oil prices as a "smokescreen" to restore profit margins. He said that the link between gas and oil prices was nebulous and indirect.

<http://business.timesonline.co.uk>

### Timeline: Canada A chronology of key events:

**2007 March** - The Action Democratic Party, which advocates more autonomy for Quebec but within a federal Canada, makes dramatic gains in provincial elections. It reduces the governing Liberals to a minority government and knocks the separatist movement into third place.

**2007 November** - The Canadian dollar continued its lofty flight as it passed \$1.10 US.

**2007 November** - Prime minister Harper announces review of former Prime minister Brian Mulroney's dealings with Karlheinz Schreiber and the Airbus affair cutting off all government contact with Mulroney

## British immigration, emigration at record highs

Even as immigrants pour into Britain, record numbers of Britons are leaving the country in search of a better life abroad. Here are some key facts about British immigration and emigration:

- In 2006, Britain recorded the highest number of immigrants and emigrants since comparable records began in 1991, according to data issued by the Office for National Statistics in November.
- A record 591,000 people arrived to live in Britain in 2006, slightly more than the previous high of 586,000 in 2004.
- London remained the most common destination for immigrants, although they have become increasingly dispersed.
- A record 400,000 people left Britain in 2006. Of these, just over half (207,000) were Britons the highest number since records began.
- The British Diaspora is one of the largest in the world, according to several think-tanks. The Institute for Public Policy Research estimates that only the Indian and Chinese diasporas rival Britons living abroad in terms of absolute size and geographical spread.
- Net migration the difference between immigration and emigration showing whether the British population is growing or shrinking as a result of migration flows decreased from 204,000 to 191,000 in 2006, mainly because of higher emigration.
- Net migration peaked in 2004 at 244,000 when the European Union expanded from 15 to 25 member states. Britain was the only big EU country to allow citizens of new member states work without restriction.
- Immigration from Eastern Europe since the expansion of the European Union in 2004 has stoked political debate, but some say it also helped keep lid on wage inflation as immigrant workers increase the pool of labour and tolerate lower pay.

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## 2008 marks Quebec City's 400th anniversary



Quebec City has made big plans for 2008, the year of its 400th anniversary. The countdown began on New Year's Eve with a free, outdoor show, featuring 400 performance artists, and an enormous firework display at midnight. A calendar of special events will follow through the year, altogether totting up an estimated \$100 million.

Earlier this year, a poll conducted by the Canadian government found that more than 80% of the national population was completely unaware of the anniversary. However, an unsolicited publicity boost was received earlier this month, when national

newspapers whipped up controversy with debates over whether or not the Queen should be invited. (Unsurprisingly, hardline separatists weren't keen.) The city's other plans for its big year include the construction of new riverside promenades and the staging of a "monumental urban opera". Of course, the province's two most important exports will be making appearances too: Céline Dion on August 22 and Le Cirque du Soleil on October 19. But what the city is really gearing up to is a sound-and-light show by the city's famed theatre artist, Robert Lepage. Not just a few lame lasers accompanied by Ode to Joy as found at historical sites across the world, The Image Mill will be the world's largest outdoor architectural projection. A kaleidoscope of moving images depicting crucial moments in Quebec City's history are set to be projected on to the grain elevators of a disused mill by the waterfront. Lepage describes it as "a giant firework", and one that will be replayed every evening for 40 days, starting June 20. For more on Quebec's 400th anniversary, see [www.monquebec2008.ca](http://www.monquebec2008.ca).

## Highlights of the Canadian census

- On census day, May 16, 2006, almost 20 per cent of the population, or 6,186,950 people, were foreign-born.
- More than half the recent immigrants came from Asia and the Middle East, then Europe, followed by Central and South America and the Caribbean, and lastly Africa.
- Canada has a higher proportion of foreign-born than the United States, 19.8 per cent compared to 12.5 per cent.
- Among western countries that are immigrant-receiving countries, only Australia has a higher proportion of foreign-born population than Canada.
- Over 70 per cent of new Canadians use English as their mother tongue.
- 17.5 per cent of the foreign-born population that live in Quebec report French as their only mother tongue.
- Almost 70 per cent of new immigrants settled in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver.
- Just over 85 per cent of foreign-born residents who were eligible for citizenship in 2006 became citizens.
- 2.8 per cent of the population hold citizenship of another country in addition to Canadian. Eighty per cent of these citizens are foreign-born.
- Of the foreign-born Canadian citizens who have a second citizenship the largest groups are from the United Kingdom (14.7 per cent), Poland (6.6 per cent), then the United States (5.4 per cent)
- In 2006, the number of foreign-born residents from Asia and the Middle East exceeded that of Europe for the first time.
- Rounding out the top ten source countries for immigrants are: the United States, South Korea, Romania, Iran, the United Kingdom and Colombia.
- Our new immigrants are young. Almost 58 per cent who came in the past five years were between 25 and 54. By contrast, only 42 per cent of the Canadian-born population is in this age bracket.
- One in five new immigrants were under age 14.
- Americans were the primary source of immigrants to the Maritimes with people from the British Isles more likely to go to Newfoundland and Labrador.
- The percentage of foreign-born people in Quebec increased 20 per cent between 2001 and 2006, the highest-ever level.
- Nearly 87 per cent of new immigrants to Quebec settled in Montreal.
- Only about 6,300 foreign-born individuals live in one of the three Northern territories, with 1,000 of them arriving in the past five years.
- The proportion of the foreign-born populations of Toronto and Vancouver exceed those of American cities like Miami and Los Angeles.

### LANGUAGE

- 98 per cent of the population speak one of both official languages.
- 58 per cent reported English as their mother tongue compared to 22 per cent who reported French.
- Chinese languages are the third-largest mother tongue group at three per cent.
- There are nearly 200 mother tongues reported in Canada.
- Nearly 84 per cent of francophones who live outside Quebec report that they are bilingual. For francophones within the province of Quebec, the number drops to 36 per cent.
- Only 7.5 per cent of anglophones who live outside Quebec report they are bilingual, compared to almost 69 per cent who live in Quebec.
- Nationally, 17.4 per cent of Canadians reported being bilingual in 2006.
- For Canadians as a whole, after English and French the largest language groups are Chinese languages (16.1 per cent), Italian (7.4 per cent) and German (7.2 per cent).
- The rate of language transfer from francophones to English continues to increase. Language transfer refers to the language most often spoken at home that is different than the mother tongue.

## Finance - British homes lose the cushion of easy credit

The credit crunch has come home to roost: rejected credit-card, loan and mortgage applications have forced millions of Britons to delay key purchases for their houses.

The end of easy credit has had a devastating effect on retailers of big-ticket items such as sofas, with Land of Leather issuing a profit warning on Friday after orders plunged 25.5 per cent in two months. Orders are down 16 per cent since August.

'It's more difficult to get a loan approved and a lot of people felt they couldn't handle another monthly payment,' said Land of Leather finance director Clive Hatchard. Around a fifth of its customers buy suites on credit but that had fallen to just 15 per cent during the sale. People didn't have the money, or couldn't get it,' he added. According to website MoneyExpert, the number of credit card applications that were turned down rose from 2.7 million in the six months to March to 3.3 million in the six months to October. It was also harder to get an unsecured loan, with rejected applicant numbers rising from 1.4 million to 1.9 million.

'There is a reduction in available credit, there's no doubt about it,' says MoneyExpert chief executive Sean Gardner. He said even those with good credit histories were being rejected as lenders looked more closely at their ability to repay, given the higher interest rates now charged on loans.

Economists are now warning that the UK economy now faces a hard landing: 'We expect 2008 to record the softest consumer spending since 1992,' says Michael Saunders, chief UK economist at Citigroup.

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## 2008 – Time to get your finances in order

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At mdmm.ca we do this day in day out for our clients. We also take particular interest in the prosperity of the British population in Canada – Mick McCafferty, ex Royal Navy Officer, Civil Engineer and creator of the britclub.ca and the BritClub Gazette is now licensed in the financial industry in Quebec. "I want to see British immigrants succeed in Canada. Understanding your finances and the Canadian tax system is crucial"



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## *Ozzy and the Spice Girls in Montreal*

Ozzy Osbourne will take the stage at the Bell centre in Montreal on 16<sup>th</sup> January and the Spice Girls will bring "Girl Power" to the city on 31<sup>st</sup>.

"Girl Power" has aged surprisingly well judging from the Spice Girls' high-energy, fun and often racy kick-off of their reunion tour in Vancouver. The five Spices -- Scary (Mel B), Ginger (Geri Halliwell), Posh (Victoria Beckham), Sporty (Mel C) and Baby (Emma Bunton) -- haven't shared a stage together since 1998, when Halliwell shocked the pop world by leaving the highly successful group -- worldwide sales totalled 55 million -- to continue on as a foursome until 2001 when they finally began pursuing solo careers. Now the formerly flaming-haired singer is back in the Spice fold with new softer blond streaks and the group's famous and fabulous "girl power" appears to be fully intact. You will be able to hear all your favourites on 31<sup>st</sup> January at the Bell Centre.

Ozzy Osbourne won't bite the head off a dead bat or a live dove but he will be on stage at the Bell Centre in Montreal on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2008



<http://www.bellcentre.ca>

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## *Christmas Cheer for Local British Family*



CJAD and Air Canada's Home for the Holidays Contest made the dream of a lifetime come true for local Brit Mark Peters and his family. As a result of winning the contest his family came to visit for the holidays all the way from Connah's Key, North Wales.

***"We haven't been together in 27 years at Christmas so this was a very special time for all of us"*** said Mark who lives in St. Lazare.

Mum and Dad, Beryl and Bill and Mark's sister and niece, Liane and Lisa Jones came over. They stayed at the Ritz Carlton in Montreal for five days before moving to St Lazare to celebrate Christmas with Mark, his wife Alison and their boys are Gareth and Adam, before returning to the UK on the 28th December.

Part of the prize package was a dinner for 10 at the Ritz (see picture above) where CJAD had a live broadcast of the entire event hosted by Andrew Carter.

"We relived past Christmas's in the UK, had some laughs", and a great time was had by all.

CJAD also arranged a tour around the radio station which was enjoyed by the whole family.

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[www.britclub.ca](http://www.britclub.ca)

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## Other News & Events

### **British airports to relax restrictions on hand luggage**

Twenty-two British airports will allow passengers to carry more than one piece of hand luggage from Jan. 7. Airports, including Heathrow, Manchester, Glasgow and Edinburgh, which have met government requirements for extra security checks will permit two items of luggage to be taken on board flights starting from Monday, Sky news reported on Sunday. Since a tightening of security in August 2006 when police disrupted terrorist plans on transatlantic flights, passengers at British airports have been restricted to one piece of hand luggage. But the one-bag regulation will remain at some major airports including Luton, Leeds Bradford and Liverpool, as these airports have not demonstrated to the Department for Transport they can cope with extra cabin bags without compromising security. <http://news.xinhuanet.com>

### **British Scientists Create 'Iron Mask'**

Scientists in Britain have come up with a solution for making electronic gadgets completely waterproof, using a type of coating that repels liquids. The technology has, up until now, been used for military gear, but the makers of Ion-Mask are already in discussion with three cell phone manufacturers with a view to using the coating on their products.

Government scientists at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in Porton Down, Wiltshire, are behind the breakthrough. Ion-Mask is a protective layer which bonds to the device using a plasma, or electronically-charged gas, and its chemical properties allow oil

and water to be repelled easily. Originally developed for treating soldiers' uniforms to repel toxic vapours and liquids in chemical or biological attacks, the technology will be used to protect devices thought to be too small to be fitted with waterproof seals, such as mobiles and MP3 players. As well as covering the devices, Ion-Mask is versatile enough to be able to coat individual components, in order to up the level of protection.

<http://qizmodo.com>

### **Highly-motivated Poles 'push British graduates to back of the jobs queue'**

Skilled and highly-motivated Polish workers are winning jobs ahead of British university graduates, the leader of the CBI warned. Employers prefer to hire Eastern European staff because they are more capable than supposedly well-qualified Britons, Richard Lambert said. The low employability of British young people was "depressing", he added.

His remarks suggest that some of the hundreds of thousands of Eastern European workers who have come to Britain since their countries joined the European Union in 2004 are beginning to move out of the lowest paid work to challenge Britons for more demanding and better rewarded jobs. Mr Lambert, was also scathing about the Government's efforts to improve the competitiveness of young Britons on the jobs market and said the quality of British graduates was too low. "If businesses can't find the skills or work attitudes that they need in the national workplace, they can perfectly well recruit them elsewhere," he said.

<http://www.thisislondon.co.uk>

### **Credit Crunch Hits British Homebuyers**

The property market is rapidly cooling, with the credit squeeze beginning to take its toll on British housebuyers..

The the British Bankers' Association says that in November, the number of mortgages approved for UK homebuyers fell by more than 40 per cent compared with a year earlier, though they were just above the nadir reached in October (itself the lowest rate since the BBA series started in 1997), and healthier than some analysts feared.

Partly reflecting the increase in house prices over the past 12 months, the value of gross mortgage lending was less badly affected, but still down 16.9 per cent on a year earlier. Net underlying mortgage lending continued to soften, posting a rise of £4.3bn on the month, down from a £4.8bn increase in October and well below the previous six-month average rise of £5.5bn.

Meanwhile, the Institute of Directors predicts that the economy is entering a period of "sticky-flation", with a sharp slowdown in GDP growth against a backdrop of stubborn retail inflation, with "flat/falling house prices". The IoD believes GDP growth will almost halve to 1.7 per cent next year, from 3 per cent this year, and somewhat below the Treasury's estimate for growth of 2.0 to 2.5 per cent.

<http://www.businessweek.com>

### **10% slump in house prices**

British house prices are set to tumble by more than 10 per cent next year, according to City traders. This weekend they warned that residential property values might continue to suffer up until 2012.

<http://news.independent.co.uk>

## ***And Finally***

### **Canada seizes North Pole**

Canadian troops reached the North Pole in December, striking a dramatic blow against what the Canadian government calls a "terrorist rogue state". "We have achieved a mighty victory over the evil forces of Santa Claus, and we will bring democracy to this troubled land," Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced from the deck of an icebreaker somewhere in the Arctic Ocean.

In a news conference last week, Harper stated that Canada had initiated "this war of necessity" against "the lawless Claus regime that has occupied the region for years in direct contravention of international law". "If we don't fight the terrorists at the North Pole, we shall soon be fighting them in Saskatoon!" Harper thundered.

However, the controversial invasion suffered another public relations reverse yesterday as shells from a Canadian artillery unit destroyed the fabled candy-striped pole located at the planet's northern apex. The pole was an internationally famous symbol of the joyous Christmas season. "Human history has indeed entered a bleak cultural twilight from which it may never emerge," mourned Horace Shuttleworth, aged 6, of Plymouth.

Santa Claus's whereabouts are not presently known, but the jolly bearded figure recently appeared in a video airing on the Arabic language news service Al Jazeera. Claus, sporting an AK-47 and an ammunition belt, denounced the "unprovoked aggression of the bloodthirsty Canadian crusaders". Claus called on "all self-respecting elves and reindeer to rise up against the enemies of freedom, justice, and cheap battery-operated toys".

A high-ranking officer with the Canadian army, speaking to DeadBrain on condition of anonymity, acknowledged that elvish guerrilla resistance has "stiffened substantially" in the last week. "There's far more of the little wankers than we planned for," the officer acknowledged, "and they can run right under our tanks."

Critics charge that Canada is attempting to seize control of the large oil and natural gas reserves believed to lie under the fast-melting Arctic ice sheet. In a news conference last week, Harper insisted that the purpose is "to effect regime change and install a democratically elected government for the people - and yes, elves as well I suppose - in the Arctic region." When asked specifically about the rumoured trove of natural resources, Harper stammered "There's oil up there? You don't say!"

Canada's hopes for a peaceful democratic state on its northern border are quickly fading as factional strife overwhelms the Arctic region. "Reindeer-on-reindeer violence is skyrocketing," said Douglas Ramsbottom, professor of toy transportation at the University of Narvik. "Donner and Blitzen have long resented Rudolph's dominance," Ramsbottom noted. "They may see this post-Claus chaos as an opportunity to settle scores."

A recent academic paper called for partitioning the polar zone among contending reindeer militias, but the Canadian government denounces any such talk as "premature". "Our position is clear," Harper said at the news conference. "We must give war a chance."

Source: <http://www.deadbrain.co.uk>

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