

More immigrants are in Canada's national interest

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Immigration Minister Jason Kenney's announcement that he's launching stakeholder consultations on Canada's immigration program presents a timely opportunity for a national conversation. How will we adapt to a century of unprecedented mobility? Will we harness migration to build a more dynamic society and economy, or will we quietly recede from the frontiers of globalization, sacrificing innovation and prosperity for a more static society?

With new policies aimed at clamping down on human smugglers and enhancing U.S.-Canada border security, many perceive that Canada's door is closing. This is false – so far. Canada accepted 17 per cent more migrants last year than in 2005. In a time of recession when other Western governments are imposing strict limits on migration, Canada admitted 50,000 more migrants in 2010 than in 2009.

Over the past 25 years, the total number of international migrants doubled to more than 200 million. We should expect that number to double again in the next two decades. The world is entering a period of hypermobility, the product of a growing supply of potential migrants from developing countries and a burgeoning demand for both low- and high-skilled workers in developed countries such as Canada. Skype, Western Union, low-cost airlines and other advances are enabling an unprecedented scale of movement.

The drivers of mobility will grow stronger in the coming decades for three reasons:

- Intercountry inequality is increasing rapidly. Millions of Europeans left for the Americas in the late 19th century to seek, among other things, wages that were two to four times higher than those at home. Today, migrants stand to earn as much as 15 times more by moving to another country to work.
- The connected processes of economic development, urbanization and population growth in developing countries are positioning more people to seek their fortunes abroad. Those with the greatest propensity to move are educated young people with access to resources and networks for migration. Climate change will also threaten rural livelihoods, pushing more people into cities and some across borders.
- Demand for migrants will increase as declining fertility and population aging create severe labour shortages, often in developed countries such as Canada. The fiscal burden of an aging population will be borne by a shrinking work force, and staff for nursing homes and retirement facilities will continue to be scarce. Just as Canadian farms rely on temporary foreign workers during harvest time, our elderly population will benefit from the care provided by new Canadians.

We should embrace higher levels of migration because it's in our national interest. High-skilled migrants innovate at a higher rate than the native-born population, and low-skilled migrants meet crucial service sector gaps. On the whole, migrants contribute more to the public purse than they receive in benefits. It's no wonder the provinces are seeking increased quotas.

We should also increase levels of migration because it can deliver far more for global prosperity than foreign aid and international trade ever will. Completely opening borders, World Bank economists predict, would produce gains as high as \$39-trillion for the world economy over 25 years. These numbers compare with the \$70-billion that is currently spent every year in overseas development assistance and the estimated gains of \$100-billion from fully liberalizing international trade. If we want to revolutionize our foreign aid policy, we can start by giving more people a chance to work in Canada.

The debate on immigration policy is undermined in many countries by partisan agendas and dysfunctional politics. Other governments are tempted to choke off migration in the interest of short-term expediency and political gain. We must resist this trend, remembering that Canada is a society built with the ingenuity and hard work of generations of migrants.

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Refugee reform: Give Kenney's plan a chance to work

Jeffrey Simpson

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Ideally, a refugee system should be fast, thorough and fair. Not everyone would say the Canadian system is fair, although by world standards it is, but almost no one would say it is fast. Backlogs of tens of thousands of claimants have plagued the system. Those backlogs historically have produced amnesties and periodic but unsuccessful changes to speed things up. Today, there are about 42,000 cases in the queue.

Now, along comes the Harper government's new refugee policy, crafted by the energetic Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism. It went fully into force on Dec. 15. Whether it will work better than the previous system obviously cannot be predicted. On paper, the new system looks like an improvement. At the very least, it deserves a chance to succeed.

The new system sets up three classes of refugees instead of two. As before, there will be refugees identified as such abroad and brought to Canada. This category – people in “vulnerable situations” – will be increased to as many as 14,500. A government willing to bring in more of these refugees can hardly be accused of being “anti-refugee.”

Then there are people who land in Canada and claim refugee status. A new category has been created – claimants from designated countries of origin. There are 27 of them for now – 25 in the European Union, plus the United States and Croatia. These are countries with democratic governance, independent judiciary, protection of human rights, free press and so on, from which few successful claimants can be expected. Anyone applying from these countries will get one hearing within 30 to 45 days.

Most of them will fail, and unsuccessful claimants will not have the right to appeal to the Immigration and Refugee Board, as do claimants from non-DCO countries. They can appeal, however, to the Federal Court.

This DCO identification has some refugee advocates upset. They say everyone deserves the full appeal procedure, regardless of their country of origin. The government relies on a balance-of-probability analysis, defending the DCO system as faster, cheaper and fairer.

The initial DCO list, however, is bizarre. It includes Sweden and Denmark, but not Norway, Switzerland or Iceland, presumably because they are not in the European Union. It somehow misses Australia and New Zealand.

Eventually, the list will be updated to include many more countries. Some should be from Latin America, where people from every country now require visas to travel to Canada – a political irritation, an expense (for the traveller and the government) and unnecessary for established democratic countries such as Chile and Mexico.

The third category – and the largest – will be from non-DCO countries. These claims will be heard by civil servants, with appeals allowed to a new Refugee Appeal Division. Other

changes envisage faster removal from Canada of unsuccessful applicants and the removal of a provision that allowed unsuccessful claimants to avoid deportation while they appealed to the Federal Court. It was this long delay – on average, four to five years – that allowed people to remain in Canada.

The Kenney reforms aim to find the right balance between being fair to would-be refugees with plausible claims and being active in bringing refugees already defined as such from abroad, while being stricter with false claimants and trying to make the entire system deliver judgments much more quickly than the previous one.

It will be some time before anyone knows if the minister has found the balance among these competing priorities. Once immigration lawyers begin to work with the new system, they will find ways of elongating procedures. And no one should be surprised if someone launches an appeal against parts of the new system in the courts. If the new system works as intended – and many other reform efforts have failed – Canada will be well-served.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/commentary/refugee-reform-give-kenneys-plan-a-chance-to-work/article7623935/>