

Canada - General Election 2015

Questions for political parties



1. Settlement Services

Settlement service is an important resource that helps refugees and immigrants to make a strong start in their new life in Canada. This year, the Government of Canada cut \$14 million from immigrant settlement services in Ontario. Ontario has already faced cuts to settlement funding almost every year since 2010, affecting the capacity of community-based organizations that deliver these programs to maintain organizational stability and excellence in quality of service. The federal government no longer has immigration agreements with the provinces and territories, except in Quebec.

Question: How will you support the immigrant and refugee serving-sector to deliver appropriate settlement services to immigrants and refugees, and support them to reach their full social, political and economic potential?

2. Employment

There is extensive research documenting the chronic underemployment of skilled immigrants in Canada, as well as research to show the strong correlation between racialization and the growing wage gap in the labour market¹. Recent (past ten years) immigrants at all skill levels (internationally and locally trained professionals, tradespeople, lower-skilled dependents) are facing higher levels of un/under-employment compared to earlier cohorts, and compared to those born in Canada. For many, re-training, re-qualifying and licensing in

¹ Block, Sheila and Galabuzi, Grace-Edward. Canada's colour coded labour market: The gap for racialized workers. 2011. Wellesley Institute.

Canada have not resulted in a significant change in job or wage prospects, and discrimination continues to be a significant barrier – particularly for racialized immigrants and refugees. This represents a significant missed opportunity for our economy and tremendous personal cost to the affected individuals and their communities.

Question: What will you do to improve the employment prospects, and pay parity for immigrants at all skill levels?

3. Citizenship

Only 26 per cent of permanent residents who settled in Canada in 2008 acquired Canadian citizenship, compared with 44 per cent for immigrant who arrived in 2007 and 79 percent for those who arrived in 2000. These are the findings of research on citizenship acquisition released earlier this year². Access to citizenship has become more restricted, and naturalized citizens and those with dual citizenship are treated differently under the law.

Question: How will you ensure access to citizenship and exercise of citizenship is equitable?

4. Refugee sponsorship

59.5 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced as a result of war and persecution by the end of 2014 according to the UNHCR³ - the highest level ever recorded. A year

² Griffith, Andrew. Multiculturalism in Canada: Evidence and anecdote. Metropolis Conference presentation. 2015.

³ Global Trends Report 2014: World at War. UNHCR. June 18, 2015. <http://www.unhcr.org/558193896.html>

earlier the number was 51.2 million. Canada's Government Assisted Refugees program numbers have fallen by almost 22% in the ten years since 2004, and by 24% for all refugee programs⁴.

Question: What will you do to increase the number of Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) over and above the current numbers, and to welcome more refugees to Canada through all the programs?

5. Migrant Workers

Canada has relied for decades on migrant workers to support and sustain our economy. In previous years, migrant workers in all occupations and sectors were allowed to stay and build a new life in Canada for themselves and their families. In recent years while migrant workers are recruited to work in almost all sectors and occupations only some are allowed to stay. The most recent change has further restricted the pathway to permanent residency for Caregivers and Domestic workers who arrived through what was known as the Live-in Caregiver Program until December 2014.

Question: What will you do to provide a pathway to permanent residency to all migrant workers, including those recruited through the Temporary Foreign Worker, International Mobility and Seasonal Agricultural Worker programs?

6. Family reunification

Family reunification is a pillar of Canada's immigration program. Changes to legislation and policy in recent years combined with existing barriers are contributing to an increase in prolonged and sometimes

⁴ Facts and Figures 2013 — Immigration overview: Permanent residents. Citizenship and Immigration Canada. December 2014.

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2013/index.asp>

indefinite delays in reunification. They include a narrow definition of family (example: non-biological children are not included), a category of "excluded family members, lower maximum age of a "dependent child" who can be sponsored, limitations on reunifying with parents and grandparents and more. Refugees and immigrants, particularly those from the Global South are subject to greater scrutiny and are among those most affected. Between 2010 and 2013, family reunification reduced by 15%⁵.

Question: What will you do to remove barriers to family reunification and allow all categories of family members to reunite in Canada?

7. Residents without Immigration Status

Canada has a large and growing number of residents without full immigration status. The growth in this population has resulted in part from gaps in immigration and refugee policies and practice and a massive growth in migrant workers, who also happen to be vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Residents without immigrant status are a part of our economy and our communities. Most do not qualify for any form of government assistance, and support themselves and their families through their own efforts. They pay taxes without receiving the full benefit of legal resident status.

Question: What is your position on the regularization of residents without full immigration status?

⁵ Ibid.