



A project of OCASI

Key Messages and Talking Points

What we want

We want policies and services that support immigrants and refugees so they can thrive as members of our communities.

This must include a meaningful discussion about the reality of structural racism in Canada. It robs newcomers and our communities of the opportunity to realize their full potential. Let's face divisions head on and focus on strategies that we know work to foster greater equality, unity, individual and community wellbeing, and shared prosperity. We can do better.

Message box on immigration, refugees, and racism + talking points on three key issues: (1) Safety/fear concerns; (2) Threat to Canadian values; (3) Worries about economic opportunities

Main message box:

Theme	Immigration	Refugees	We can do better
<p>Key messages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Immigration works for Canada. ● How our system works is the envy of the world (cite OECD) ● Over the decades, we have welcomed New Canadians from every corner of the world—and Canada is a culturally and economically richer, more vibrant country because of the diversity of our population. They start businesses. They fill worker shortages. And they contribute to the diverse fabric that Canada has become. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Imagine what it would take to uproot you and your family, with maybe only a suitcase in hand? Fleeing violence, war, atrocities, and political persecution. ● Our history includes some great moments where Canadians have come together to respond to humanitarian crises and welcome refugees from every corner of the world. ● Those were moments when we Canadians—new, old, immigrant, refugee— had the opportunity to act on key Canadian values. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Canada’s system doesn’t always support New Canadians to fulfill their full potential. ● Let’s be clear: there has been an undercurrent of racism and hate in this election. And we’ve got to work past that. ● Let’s be the Canada that supports everyone live up to their potential. Instead of letting ourselves be divided by suspicion, racism, and hate, let’s come together.



Reframe key words to build a narrative around

New Canadians • resettlement • system envied around the world • Canada is culturally and economically richer because we welcome people from every corner of the world want to live, and contribute, here—especially in a globalized labour market with an aging workforce • response to humanitarian crises and responsibility to act • we’ve been praised for the integrity and due process of our system • we don’t need more walls—we need a clear pathway to citizenship • we support everyone to live up to their potential • rather than devolve into polarizing politics we see next door • those supports help people resettle, re-establish themselves, contribute, thrive • yet the system still discriminates—we can reach higher

Talking points/counter-narrative suggestions

Counter-narratives to rebut the fear/safety/security frame: “Compromising our security/safety?”

There are a lot of checks and balances to ensure due process, even for newcomers who arrive in less traditional ways.

New Canadians who come here are subjected to stringent background checks, medical reviews—it’s a highly regulated process. According to the OECD, Canada has the most comprehensive and elaborate immigration system of all developed countries. (Source: [OECD, 2019](#))

Once they pass those tests, New Canadians often come here with a lot more education and credentials than a lot of us; and they contribute to our economy and our communities.



They could be your doctor in a small rural community. They could be that family-run corner store where you buy your milk and lottery tickets. They could be the neighbour who watches your child when you have to work late. They don't just pass a test to get here; they establish deep roots in our communities and we have to recognize that.

Too many immigrants?

How much is too many? Right now immigrants represent only 1% of the population and it's been this way for some time. The Conference Board of Canada says we should be doing much more to attract new Canadians—500,000+ a year. That's way more than where we are doing today. Why do they say it should be higher? "Immigration is more important to Canada's prosperity than ever before due to the country's rapidly aging population and low birth rate." The Board says it's key to Canada's growth strategy.

People are jumping the queue

There are three streams for refugees to come to Canada: government sponsorship, private sponsorship, and of their own volition by air, by sea or via the land border with the U.S. and making a refugee claim at a port of entry. To appreciate the diversity of people who come to Canada, there are also immigrants, migrant workers and international students. All of these are legitimate, legal ways to get here – including if a person walks into Canada at any point on the border and makes a claim at a port of entry. That's why you see RCMP helping refugees with their luggage after crossing the border into Canada. But I can't stress this enough: every newcomer to Canada is subjected to rigorous checks and balances, including refugee claimants. There's a control system in place. That's why Canada's system is respected worldwide. But why are we hearing about these concerns now? There is a concerted misinformation campaign aimed at dividing us as a country—new Canadians versus everyone else. And if we let those extremist forces polarize us further, we risk descending into a divided society. Let's not devolve into that. Unity is our strength. We need to challenge misinformation on this issue. That's key to Canadian democracy.



Good immigrant/bad immigrant

There is a disturbing narrative brewing in Canada, dividing new Canadians between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ immigrants. People come to Canada in a variety of ways. They only stay in Canada if they’ve been cleared through legal channels. They’re subjected to the same legal processes and reviews as everyone else. But let’s be clear: There is a concerted misinformation campaign aimed at dividing us as a country. And if we let those extremist forces polarize us further, we risk descending into a divided society. Let’s not devolve into that. Let’s not scapegoat some newcomers. That’s not the Canada we want. Canada has a proud history of welcoming people from around the world. Unity is our strength. We need to challenge misinformation on this issue. That’s key to Canadian democracy.

Counter-narratives to rebut threat to economy/jobs frame: “Compromising jobs? Drain on economy?”

Let’s be clear: Canada is attracting some of the most well-educated newcomers in a globally competitive labour market at a time when our local economies need workers.

New Canadians often come here with a lot more education and credentials than a lot of us; and they contribute to our economy and our communities.

And we need their contribution to our communities. Our population is stagnating; we need new workers in a competitive globalized market in order for all Canadians to maintain our high standard of living. [[Business Development Bank of Canada](#)]

In many respects, New Canadians are bringing their skills and talents to solve some of our problems:

Like doctor shortages in smaller and remote communities. Like providing home care for seniors or child care for young families. They’re entrepreneurial: They could be that family-run corner store where you buy your milk and lottery tickets.

ALL IN 4 CANADA

They don't just pass a test to get here; they establish deep roots in our communities and contribute to our economic strength.

New Canadians come here but we don't always make it easy for them.

Imagine having to flee from a war-torn country with nothing but the clothes on your back. Maybe you're fleeing political persecution. And you're applying for dozens of jobs and the doors keep getting closed on you. And yet you persist. Maybe you need a helping hand to get through those tough times, like all of us. That's why we've built a social safety net, to support us when we need it most. That's just compassion. Human decency.

Canadian values

Canada's diversity, and our ability to make this country home to people from around the world, is being tested by those who seek to divide us; forces advancing extremist views in ways that we haven't seen since the 1940s, where Canada fought to free the world from that kind of racism, hate and prejudice.

One of the hallmarks of Canada's success has been the freedom to wear what we want, to be who we want, and to co-exist in relative harmony.

Because of that, Canada is seen as an example for the rest of the world—a model for others to build on.

This is a point of pride.

But when we descend into restrictions on people whose culture is different than our own, we risk descending into a divided society. Let's not devolve into that. Unity is our strength.

And we need to challenge misinformation on this issue. That's key to Canadian democracy.



Going deeper: reaching across differences

We're witnessing a rise in hate crimes and hate speech in Canada—and it threatens our unity.

For a country that went to war in the 1940s to conquer hate and prejudice, it's important for us to think about what's behind the rise in hate speech and overt prejudice.

One thing we're not talking about is the impact of persistent income inequality—especially with rising global economic uncertainty and a shifting labour market that's undermining job security. We live in a time of anxiety and rapid change.

This isn't about new Canadians—because unless you're Indigenous to Canada, our families were all new Canadians at one point in time.

Offering refuge to people in need speaks to a long tradition of Canadian values.

Let's name the real threat: Income inequality is pitting us against each other. We've been growing the economic pie, but it hasn't been equally shared. The economic gains increasingly have been going to people at the top of the income ladder and the rest of us are fighting for scraps.

And that can devolve into a Canada we don't want.

Continued divisions along racial lines don't solve the problem of income inequality. Let's not scapegoat people who want to live here and be a part of our community. Let's call it what it is and remember who we aspire to be: a country that attracts people from every corner of the world. People who want to live here, establish deep roots, raise a family, and contribute to our communities.

ALL IN 4 CANADA

We live in a global world. Migration is more and more part of our world. Canada is a reflection of that world and that's what makes us unique. We are ahead of other countries in living with diversity. We don't get it perfect, but in the world Canada is really held in high regard.

Let's remember a key Canadian value, one enshrined in law: Everyone deserves to be treated with respect, dignity, and fair treatment. In Canada, we don't always live up to that commitment. The response to that is to adjust, to grow and unite as a country, to work through the growing pains. It's the only way forward.

October 10, 2019