

Once in Canada, Always a Canadian?

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Being a Canadian has many benefits: health care, passports, and access to justice, to name a few. What parents would not want that for their child? Well, many who are not Canadian covet these benefits and want to access them through instant citizenship. They come to Canada expecting a child, give birth, then head back to their home countries with a baby who is automatically considered a Canadian citizen.

It's called "birth tourism" and it is somewhat problematic¹ when you consider that Canada has generous family reunification² policies.

These children, born in Canada but not necessarily having any real connection to Canada, could grow up without any knowledge of our heritage and come to Canada when they are 18. They, then, could sponsor their parents to come over, all while the "birth tourists" have no connection, loyalty or commitment to Canada and have contributed nothing to Canada's social programs. This birth tourism then becomes a drain on Canadians and our social programs.

If you invited twenty-five guests over for a New Years party, and said that they could also stay over night — even though you only had enough bedding for ten — would you expect a happy outcome? Everything would be fine for a while; people laughing and chatting, and no one really thinking about where they will settle down. But then, at a certain point, a few people would realize that all of the guest bedrooms have been taken, and there are only so many couches — and the mood changes! "Who organized this mess?" is what some would be thinking.

The mess part is where Canada is headed; for some, we are already there. For others it might come in 18 years when the "birth tourist" children come, with their parents etc. following close behind. Already, there are tens of thousands of Syrian refugees, who were let into Canada following the 2015 election, many of whom are still unemployed³. Then there are the "Irregular" migrants, who have walked across the Canada-US border and are now living in hotel rooms⁴ with disappointing prospects.

The Liberal government plans to set immigration goals even higher⁵, going from 330,000 to 350,000 by 2021. What will this mean for existing Canadian citizens, and the immigrants who have recently landed?

There are two major problems that we already have and that could become worse with increased immigration: 1. Affordability of housing, and 2. Availability of pension benefits (CPP). There are also concerns about integration: Do these new immigrants speak either official language? Are the professional designations or credentials of the applicant transferrable to Canada? Are there cultural expectations and practices at odds with Canadian culture? These questions will have to be dealt with another time.

So, let's take the party analogy a step further: imagine that the hosts let some of the guests stay in the bedrooms of their children, and didn't worry about where their own children would sleep for the night. That is how some Canadians feel because they have no house of their own, and no way to buy a house in the area where they were raised — the prices are just too high. The demand for housing in Canada's major cities is growing, in no small part because foreign buyers are pricing the children of long-time citizens out of their home market.

Now, of course, Canadians are free to move wherever they want within Canada but cities are becoming more and more concentrated and in many cases, small towns are becoming bedroom communities or are being deserted as jobs disappear.

The Canada Pension Plan is in trouble, (as I've already written about⁶) and adding immigrants, who are already halfway through their working careers (or more) and who will collect CPP when they turn 65, is a looming disaster.

One simplistic solution would be to just stop immigration, and not allow any more refugees to enter Canada. That would create other problems and would prevent us from responding to the needs of true refugees. It would also keep us from welcoming the immigrants who have skills we really need. The truth is that Canada is a big country that can still absorb many immigrants and refugees if we can develop a proper strategic plan and properly protected borders.

Cities like Toronto and Vancouver are barely keeping up with their current infrastructure needs at current population levels, but there are also many towns and villages outside of the major urban centres that have excess housing and are looking for new residents to start businesses and turn vacant storefronts and derelict downtowns into bustling centres again. How to solve these problems will require an honest national conversation.

In the meantime, the Canada Pension Plan must be revamped to protect the investment that Canadians have put into their own retirements. CHP's proposal is a Personal Income Security Account (PISA). It would ensure that the money you put into it is there for you when you need it. Those coming from foreign countries cannot expect to be carried into retirement by a pension plan to which they have not contributed.

"Birth tourism" also needs to be ended; children born in Canada should only be granted citizenship if one or both parents are Canadian citizens or landed immigrants.

If Canadians were to elect a government with the honesty and "guts" to take on these issues, Canada would be a better place both for Canadian citizens and for future immigrants. Expectations would be defined and realistic. Citizens would have a say about immigration at their local community level, and the federal government could not keep using immigration as a political wedge-issue to buy votes.

CHP has the fortitude to tell the truth even when it hurts. If you believe that Canada needs this voice, please support CHP⁷ with your time, money, and membership.

Footnotes

¹ nationalpost.com/opinion/chris-selley-maybe-canada-has-a-birth-tourism-problem-after-all

² www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/family-sponsorship.html

³ www.huffingtonpost.ca/2018/05/03/syrian-refugees-canada_a_23426295/

⁴ globalnews.ca/video/4622068/exclusive-look-at-torontos-refugee-hotel

⁵ nationalpost.com/opinion/john-ivison-will-the-canadian-consensus-on-immigration-fall-victim-to-liberal-bungling-on-border-crossers

⁶ www.chp.ca/commentary/dude-wheres-my-pension

⁷ www.chp.ca/donate

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