

#21 Immigration: Why Not Be Like Canada?

John Teevan April 30, 2021

An immigrant-welcoming nation like Canada should inspire us. The nation of 38m had welcomed 5m immigrants over the 20 years to 2016. How can we imitate their success?

Canada is known as our compassionate, neighbor with a remarkably high 21.9 % foreign-born population compared to 13.4% in the U.S. For Canada that is a historically low number while for the U.S. it is historically high. That 13.4% is triple the 4.8% in America in 1970. How do they do it? (*The Atlantic* Tony Keller July 2018).

First, Canada requires all immigrants to come through its front door. This means that potential immigrants start by applying for an immigrant visa rather than just showing up. People arriving at airports or seaports (10 admitted for asylum in 2018) are simply turned away if they have no visa. No visa, no entry, no public services. The goal is to have an orderly admission of over 300,000 legal immigrants into Canada each year.

Second, Canada limits the number of visas for each country. Canada's population from India may be approaching 4%, but there are still limits. Keller reports that over 75% of applicants from Somalia, Yemen, Afghanistan, and Syria were turned down. Tourists hate Canada's visa restrictions earning it a 'nearly worst' rating (120th of 136) among nations to visit. So, immigrants cannot come in the tourist backdoor either.

Third, that leaves just walking across the border. While millions have walked from Mexico to the U.S., for Canada it is only thousands. And that number has swelled only recently. Most of the 50,000 asylum seekers already in Canada in 2017 just walked across the border. Half of those walked 60 feet on a dirt path between two country dead-end roads (one in eastern Ontario, and one in upstate NY) each named Roxham Road.

These border walkers eventually get a hearing and may be granted permanent residence. As in the U.S. they are released into the population and are given medical care, education, and permission to work. Because Roxham Road is the opposite of the system and the exact opposite of what Canadians desire, it is putting the system at risk of fraying into chaos. Some immigrants have been given housing in Montreal's Olympic Stadium or college dorms in Toronto. Canadians are not happy about this.

If the U.S. wants less chaotic immigration, we could abandon the political shouting though that seems unlikely. The left appears to want an endless supply of apple pickers, dishwashers, wait staff, landscapers, and left-leaning new voters while the right wants to keep drugs, M-13, rapists, and left-leaning new voters at bay.

- Reasonable people would consider Japan, a nation as tribal (racist?) as some say America is. The population of Japan is declining from the 2007 peak of 127m because the birth rate has plunged. Japan really needs immigrants but refuses them. A walled-up United States needs (and has) immigrants too though our large number (45m) foreign born makes the U.S. younger, poorer, unhealthier, yet more productive, than it otherwise would be.

- Reasonable people would desire and create an orderly immigration system. We have little evidence of order apart from Obama's deportations and Trump's wall. The situation these days in California and Texas is grim.

- Reasonable people would work with the Central American nations that so many immigrants come from. Do they want their energetic people moving to the U.S.? Or are they glad to be rid of their troublesome and poor folks? What can be done to help those nations thrive so they can retain people? Or do open borders just feel good?

- Reasonable people would ask why so many Central Americans would want to come to such a racist nation only to be abused and kept in poverty by supremacists. Maybe they see that as a false narrative about the U.S.

- Reasonable people would consider the human cost plus the tragedy of children traveling alone and being released in the U.S. maybe as 'Dreamers' and maybe abandoned. Costly for adults too.

On January 15, 2021 Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced the new and higher annual immigration goal moving from 340,000 to 400,000 to help Canada grow and prosper in a multicultural climate. Canada, the compassionate and welcoming nation, still appears iron-fisted compared to the U.S., because we do not seem to place a value on an orderly, non-chaotic, and non-overwhelmed immigration situation. We could fix this.