

# **Observations on the Impact of Irregular Crossing of Canada's Southern Border**

Testimony of Frontier Research Fellow Randy Boldt

to

The House of Commons' Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

Government of Canada

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I briefly want to give the Committee some of my background.

I was a Commercial and Corporate Banker in Canada and the UK for 18 years - with a Degree in Ag Economics and an MBA.

I was the Program Manager and founder for the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program - Business - Manitoba launched the first Provincial Nominee Program in Canada in 1997 and we also started the first Business Provincial Nominee Program in 2000.

I was Assistant Deputy Minister of Immigration in Saskatchewan.

I started my own Immigration company in 2008.

I am Director for the Canadian subsidiary of one of the largest Indian Travel Agencies. We have 3 branches in Canada.

My family came as refugees to Canada in 1929 - escaping the Soviet Union.

As the levels of Asylum seekers grow - both from those who cross the border irregularly, and those who apply when they come as Visitors or Students - the visa officers have ordinary human reactions - they increase

refusal rates for all categories coming in on Temporary Visas. Officers are the gate keepers to Canada - and they see their job as protecting our country from those wanting to enter and make asylum claims. They believe that there are good processes for applying as refugees abroad - and coming to Canada as a visitor - or walking across a non-controlled border crossing - are not some of them. If an officer believes that an applicant for a Temporary Visa has even the slightest intention of applying for Asylum - they will be refused. I have worked with many visa posts around the world - and officers have made this point clear to me. Also, the greater the number of Asylum Seekers being approved in Canada - the greater number of refusal there will be for Temporary Visas outside of Canada (students, visitors and workers).

According to the Minister's own report, those coming as International Students and Visitors contributed \$32 billion annually to the Canadian Economy in 2017 - so any increase in refusal rates cost our country billions of dollars every year.

The number of Study Visa Refusals has skyrocketed under the Current Federal Government - near doubling in many provinces. In most provinces the refusal rate has gone up from the mid 20% to over 50% in only three years. Our local Manitoba Association wrote to the Minister about this. Minister Hussen's response was completely logical - he simply took down the statistics from their web site - and refused to provide the Statistics via ATIP requests. This is at the same time, when Manitoba (and other provinces) are looking at International Students as a growing source of skilled labour to fill local economic needs.

It has been recently well documented that Visitor visas refusals have also risen dramatically. The rate is now 26%. But this number vastly understates the issue. In places like India - getting a US Visa is relatively simple. Alternatively, people know that the majority of Indians can't get an ordinary visitor visa to Canada - so they simply don't apply. There are millions more visitors who would like to come to Canada - but who know they will be refused a visa - so don't even try. The reason why they will be refused - the officers fear that they will make asylum claims.

When we started the PNP program, the processing time by the Federal Government was 6 months. Over the next 18 years it slowly rose to 11 months. Since the new government has taken over - the processing time has quickly escalated to 19 months. In a province like Manitoba, which relies almost entirely on the PNP for increases in skilled labour and population growth - this increase in processing time costs tens of millions a year for our little province.

Finally - there is the cost of processing and settling those who make asylum claims in Canada. In my view - this is likely the smallest of the costs associated with this issue. The other costs - missed opportunities of students and visitors, companies and communities being without skilled workers - are far larger and more critical.

Parliament has asked the PBO to examine the costs associated with Asylum seekers - but I would ask that you request that the report be amended - so that the costs of refused visitor and students, and delays in economic immigrants be added to the costs associated with these claims.

There is only one Department of IRCC - not two. The department allocates resources as it sees fit. In 2017, it allocated resources to process Syrian refugees security screening in 96 hours - down from 30 days. This is at the same time - it takes up to 11 years to screen some family members being sponsored by their children. These are resource allocations made by the Government. There aren't two departments. They may keep repeating that there are two streams - but as one stream goes faster - the other stream goes slower. This is irrefutable. It is also irrefutable that as asylum seeker approval numbers grow - the refusals of other temporary categories goes up.

The approval rates of asylum seekers in the USA under the Obama Administration was 18%, in the UK the rate is 28%, in France it is 32%. In Canada, the rate under this government is now 70% and rising. But even this rate is understated. Of the 30% that are refused, they have several other ways of remaining. Refused applicants can appeal the decision. As the majority of those entering Canada this way are single men - many refused applicants get married and apply as spouses. While others are unable to be removed - due to the lack of travel documents or PRRA. Then there is H & C and some of them even qualify as FSW. To the best of my knowledge, there has never been any statistics released on the actual number of asylum seekers who are allowed to remain in Canada. Anecdotally, visa officers claim that about half of those initially refused are allowed to stay - for a total of 85%. I am not aware of any other developed country which allows 85% of asylum seekers to remain.

In Canada, regardless of which party you are in - or support - we passionately believe in fairness. No party has a lock on it. Yet when it comes to Asylum seekers, it is hyperbole - political correctness and lack of any economic data or analysis - that seems to rule. There should only be one door to enter Canada - and that is the front door.