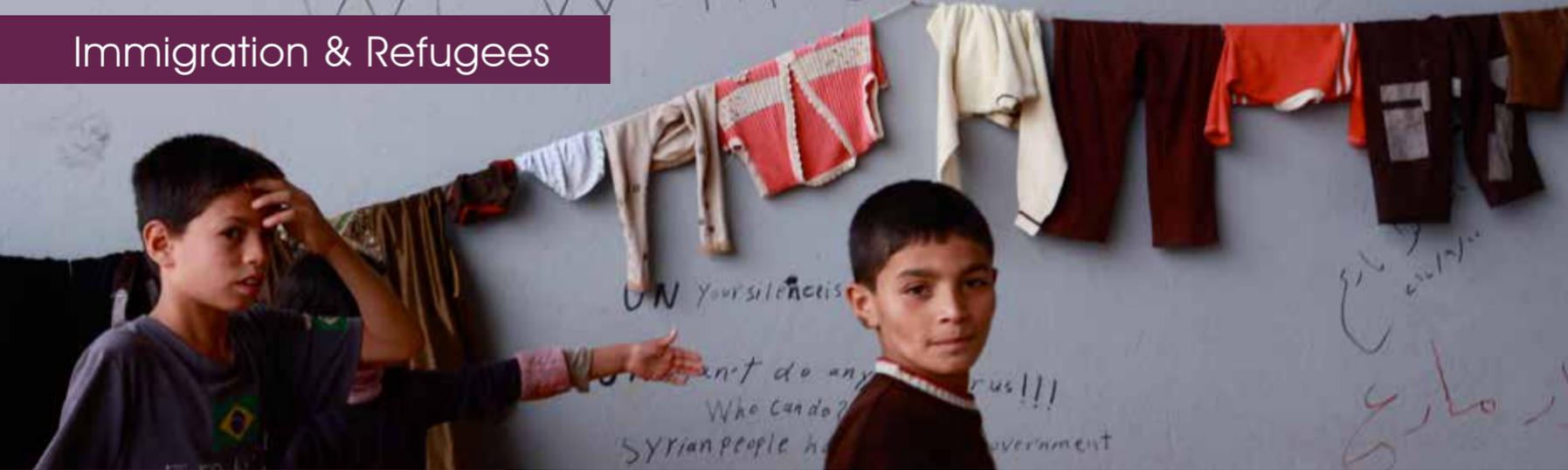




Immigration & Refugees



The Facts:

- When establishing immigration levels to Canada, the Conservative government has focused on 70% economic immigration. This has come at the expense of family class sponsorships and refugees.
- Family reunification has decreased by 15 % between 2010 and 2013, with less newcomers coming to Canada under the Family Class.
- Recently passed legislation (Bill C-24) means that a dual citizen can be stripped of his or her citizenship if convicted of certain criminal offences abroad, even in countries with dubious legal systems. This also includes Canadian born citizens.
- In Ontario alone, the Conservative government cut \$14 million dollars to settlement services in 2015 and close to \$100 million dollars in the last five years.

Refugee Crisis:

- The Conservative government created a two-tier refugee system making it harder for refugees coming from certain countries to seek asylum in Canada.
- The two-tier system also reduced and eliminated medical coverage to some refugees, a decision that the Federal Court said is unconstitutional. The Conservative government is currently challenging the Federal Court decision.
- UNHCR is asking Canada to commit to resettling thousands of Syrian refugees by the end of 2016. So far, around 2,500 Syrian refugees have arrived in Canada.

The Issues:

- Only 26 per cent of permanent residents who settled in Canada in 2008 acquired Canadian citizenship, compared with 44% for immigrant who arrived in 2007 and 79 percent for those who arrived in 2000.
- Bill C-24 allows the Canadian government to revoke citizenship of dual citizens for certain criminal offenses (including those who could apply for dual citizenship in another country). Legal experts have suggested that Bill C-24 creates "second class citizenship".
- In January 2015, the Canadian government did promise to resettle an additional 10,000 Syrian refugees. However, 60% of the sponsorships would be private sponsorships through organizations like churches, synagogues, and mosques, and 40% would be government sponsored.
- In 2015, a Federal Court of Appeal found that the federal government discriminates against parents and grandparents in family sponsorship because of the longer processing time of these cases.

The Parties:

Conservatives:

- The Conservatives proposed and passed Bill C-24 based on the threat of so-called "jihadi terrorism"; the law is currently being **challenged in court** by civil liberties & legal advocacy organizations.
- The Conservative government says it will focus on resettling only refugees from **Syria's religious minorities**, contrary to international human rights norms which say that refugees should be assessed based on need, not religious background.
- The Conservative government says it will resettle a further 10,000 Syrian refugees over the next three years if elected, bringing the total eventually to 20,000 refugees resettled in Canada.

Liberals:

- The Liberals voted against Bill C-24, pledged to repeal it.
- A Liberal government has pledged to accept 25,000 Syrian refugees by the end of 2015.

NDP:

- The NDP voted against Bill C-24, would repeal it.
- The NDP called for the Conservative government to increase government-sponsored refugee numbers and accelerate Syrian refugee application processing.
- An NDP government has pledged to accept 9,000 refugees for the next four years.
- Allow Canadians a one-time opportunity to sponsor a relative who is not a member of the family class to Canada

Green:

- Make it easier for foreign-trained professionals to join the labour force.
- Provide more funding for training in official languages (ESL and FSL) for new immigrants.
- Amend the Anti-Terrorism Act and the Public Safety Act to require that, after a reasonable length of time, formal charges be brought against all those detained.
- Repeal recent changes that encourage rapid deportation, ignoring rules of due process and natural justice.
- Open an investigation into allegations by the United Nations Human Rights Committee of Canadian officials cooperating with foreign agencies known to use torture.
- Reverse the Conservative government's policies to place barriers on family reunification.
- Pledged to grant asylum to 25,000 Syrian refugees immediately.

Where do Canadians Stand?

According to a recent poll, over half of those surveyed believe Canada should take in more refugees (54%). 64% say private groups should sponsor more refugees. Support for bringing in over 10,000 refugees was strongest among NDP and Liberal supporters.

Questions to ask candidates:

- 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?
- How will you ensure access to citizenship and exercise of citizenship is equal for all Canadians?
- What will you do to remove barriers to family reunification and allow all categories of family members to reunite in Canada?
- Do you feel the religious background of a refugee claimant should be a determining factor in assessing their claim for asylum?