

# **Contemporary Immigration in Canada and Its Relevance for the U.S.**

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# Canadian Exceptionalism

- Compared to the citizens of other developed, immigrant receiving countries, Canadians are much more open and optimistic about immigration
- In a comparative poll asking if “immigration was more of a problem than an opportunity”
  - 27% of Canadians agreed
    - Support for immigration is longstanding and has increased over time
  - 42% of French agreed, the country closest to Canada
  - 65% in the UK agreed

# The Context of Canadian Optimism

- High mass migration
- Among countries surveyed in 2010, Canada had by far the highest percentage of foreign-born residents at 20%
- Higher than the U.K., U.S., France, Italy and Germany

# Canadian jurisdictions compete for immigrants

- Every Canadian province and the 2 territories have struck agreements with the federal government so that they can select migrants directly into their jurisdictions through a **provincial nominee program**
- Canada is exceptional in that there is little variation between jurisdictions in support for immigration
- The U.S. Constitution places immigration under federal jurisdiction
  - but some states, such as Utah, have acted to have more control

# Balanced Control Over Immigration in Canadian Constitution

- Ottawa's role is limited to conducting a security, criminal and health check on foreigners picked by the provinces
- Each province gets a quota of immigrants based on its population
  - province can pick whoever it wants
- Choice based on
  - needs of labor market
  - Desire to enhance some groups via family unification
- Poaching from the U.S.:
  - Some provinces are sponsoring H1-B holders stuck in the American labyrinth

# Explaining the high support for immigration in Canada

- **Most immigrants are admitted based on their economic contribution**
  - 59% economic, 26% family sponsorship, 11% refugees
- **Illegal immigration is low due to geography**
  - 85% of all immigrants become citizens after 3 years, and participate in electoral politics
  - Keeps anti-immigrant politics to a minimum
- **View that immigration helps nation building (We are not US or UK)**
  - Policies & institutions for permanent settlement and integration
  - Racism impedes integration of visible minorities

# Canadian Identity as Multicultural

- **Government celebration and funding of diversity within a Canadian nation**
  - Settlement services, support for retention of language of origin
  - Charter of Rights and Freedoms outlawed discrimination, protected equity hiring, etc.
- **Integration is more favored than assimilation**
- **Universal publically supported health care also integrates immigrants**
- **Critique. Multiculturalism is a smoke screen**
  - to fend off Quebec separatism
  - to appear tolerant and inclusive without taking aggressive action on racial discrimination

# The current party in power, the Conservatives:

- Historically lost the immigrant vote
- Have changed by reaching out to newcomers in Canada
- Have maintained the white vote by portraying themselves as tough on immigration by reducing the number of refugees and tightening other immigration rules
- Have skewed the pre-existing balance between humanitarian and economic-utilitarian goals in immigration policy



# Temporary Foreign Worker Program Has Become Problematic

- TFWs have exploded under current government and now outnumber permanent immigrants
- Canadians favor permanent settlement and don't want a 2 tier society
  - View the program as a government effort to lower wages
- Temporary migrants have little loyalty to Canada
- Could overstay their visas and increase the number of unauthorized, which Canadians oppose

# Relevance of Canadian Experience to US Immigration Debate

- **Canada's provincial nominee program could be a model to involve the states in immigration**
  - avoids distinctions between the skilled and the unskilled made in employment-based U.S. immigration law
- **Canada's guest worker program for Mexican farm workers might be a good model**
  - Government officials from both countries recruit workers, expedite visas, guarantee health and safety standards, coordinate travel arrangements and pay
  - Might also be a model for border commuters

# If the bill passes:

- **Canadians, and only Canadians, who are 55+, rent/own property in both the U.S. and Canada, and who do not work in the U.S. or collect welfare:**
  - **will be able to stay in the U.S. for 240 days a year without paying taxes in the U.S.**
  - **Current time limit is 182 days**