



КОНГРЕС УКРАЇНЦІВ КАНАДИ

UKRAINIAN CANADIAN CONGRESS

CONGRÈS DES UKRAINIEN-CANADIENS

Submission by the Ukrainian Canadian Congress to the Cross-Country Consultations on 2012 Immigration Levels by Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Immigration and Nation Building go Hand in Hand

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IMMIGRATION AND NATION BUILDING GO HAND IN HAND

Background

The story of Ukrainian immigration to Canada is marking its 120th anniversary this year. There are many portraits of the success, struggles and fortitude that fill Canada's Ukrainian-Canadian history. We are all proud Ukrainian Canadians who are blessed to have come to a country that welcomed us, our parents and grandparents.

It is more important for Canada to continue to welcome motivated immigrants from overseas than ever before. Canada has a tradition of recognizing the importance and contribution of immigration, dating back to the expansion of the west under Prime Minister Laurier. Ukrainian Canadians worked diligently on settling the prairies 120 years ago.

"Established" Canadians, when meeting these Ukrainian newcomers in towns, mocked their dress and sneered at their language and religion. These Ukrainian Canadians endured scarlet fever in Manitoba and laid railway tracks through bogs swarming with mosquitoes and black flies while many others died in airless mines like those in Kirkland Lake or those who chiselled through the Rockies to build the magnificent Banff Springs Hotel as slave labourers during Canada's First World War internment operations.

But despite these hardships, they endured through sheer force of will and determination. Future waves of immigration from Ukraine brought more hard working and talented people who have contributed to making Canada the country it is today. Their numbers include Members of Parliament and Cabinet Ministers, judges including Supreme Court Justice Sopinka, and even a Governor General, the Right Honourable Ramon Hnatyshyn.

In the 21st Century, it is essential that Canada expand its immigration policies to welcome many more people from abroad who are committed to Canadian values of hard work and building stable, healthy communities.

The Ukrainian Canadian community believes that Canada should expand its immigration target from 0.8 to 1 per cent of the total population. This would help to bolster the Canadian labour market and ensure the most important jobs in our expanding economy don't go unfilled.

A solid immigration policy is about nation-building – giving immigrants the freedom and tools to contribute more than just labour. We believe that future immigrants should be able to bring over immediate family members, so that they can build their new life in a socially cohesive environment.

Currently, there are enormous stresses on new arrivals, not to mention enormous bureaucratic processes and taxpayers' money being spent trying to achieve family reunification after one member is admitted on their own.

We believe that Canada should focus on attracting immigrants with relational incentives, particularly those under 35, as an effective way of ensuring the regionalization of immigration, directing newcomers to Canadian communities that need workers. The federal government can do its part in identifying communities that are losing population and have skilled worker requirements.

Newcomers are more comfortable in new communities when they are joined by their family in communities with cultural, linguistic and religious infrastructure supports.

We also have to integrate our Foreign Worker program into our Labour market strategy to address job shortages more quickly. It's imperative that this track allow participants to obtain permanent residency if all requirements are met.

It's also essential that we as a country do a better job at recognizing the bona fide credentials for foreign-trained professionals. There are tremendous benefits waiting for Canada if the federal government, along with provinces and licensing bodies can work together to produce durable criteria for transferring professional designations. The opportunities that have been lost by our inability to address this to date are staggering.

Our current workforce is aging rapidly, with one in three Canadians on the cusp of retirement in the coming decade. Those remaining in their prime earning years are not having nearly as many children as their parents and grandparents. Yet our economy continues to expand. The demand for Canadian resources, technology, knowledge and finished goods will continue to grow only if we collaborate to address the demographic challenge which can, potentially, undermine our growth potential.

The vast majority of immigrants to Canada come here to find success through hard work and by contributing to building the communities in which they live and work. Canada's economic future requires a dramatic increase in our immigration rates, and an imaginative policy shift toward attracting families, professionals, the best and the brightest.

In this regard, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress makes the following specific recommendations:

1. OVERALL IMMIGRATION LEVELS

The Ukrainian Canadian community believes that Canada should expand its immigration target from 0.8 to 1 per cent of the total population.

2. SUPPORTING INCREASED LEVELS OF IMMIGRATION FROM UKRAINE

Immigration levels from Ukraine to Canada since its independence in 1991 remain low compared

to previous immigration waves and compared to other source countries. In the 2010, annual report to Parliament on Immigration, Ukraine ranks in 26th place from source countries.¹ The Ukrainian community is one of Canada's founding people's, having settled here some 120 years ago. We have helped to build this country and have an existing cultural, educational, and religious infrastructure base and support systems in many provinces. The UCC believes that a balanced approach among diverse ethnicities is important in a multicultural society.

We support an increased level of immigration from Ukraine by increasing the immigration staffing at Canada's Embassy in Ukraine and by increasing the quotas established by CIC in 2011 for future years.

Number of staff in visa section of the Canadian Embassy in Kyiv was reduced from 14 to 11 after 2006. Staffing changes were driven by decrease in number of incoming applications for visas (below 2000 from 2005-2007 compared to 2400-3600 in the years 2000-2004), while in 2008-2009 staff total was increased to 13.

Given that the UCC is recommending a 25% increase in immigration levels, we therefore recommend an increase of 3 FTE to the staff complement in the visa section at the Canadian Embassy in Ukraine.

We want to see an increase of 25% of new immigrants which will require 3 more full-time staff.

3. ABOLITION OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

While the Ukrainian Canadian Congress agrees that knowledge of an official language should be a determining factor in awarding Canadian Citizenship, we believe that too much emphasis has been placed on the language capacity of potential immigrants.

The assessment of points for proficiency in the official languages of Canada is a tremendous barrier for Ukrainian and other nationals to overcome, when applying to come to work or immigrate to Canada. The fact that a substantial percentage of the points that an applicant receives are related to official first and second language knowledge is a significant barrier for skilled and qualified applicants from across the world.

The Ukrainian Canadian Congress recommends that the Canadian Government abolish the requirement for proficiency in English and French. Further, the new regulations which eliminate the requirement to interview applicants have placed a financial burden in the form of IELTS testing on applicants even when employers have no Official Language requirements.

A 2001 study by Professor Wsevolod Isajiv, of the University of Toronto, showed the results of some 300 interviews with Ukrainian immigrants showed that, "more than 90% of those interviewed fall into the independent immigrant category. This situation mirrors Canadian

¹ <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2009/permanent/10.asp>

immigration policy--Ukrainians in this category have high qualifications and significant disposable incomes. Young and dynamic (39.2 years old on average), close to a quarter of these immigrants have Canadian citizenship and own their home.”²

There is more than ample evidence to demonstrate that Ukrainian immigrants to Canada participate in the labour market, integrate well into society, become home owners, to demonstrate that **the language requirement is prejudicial and serves as a barrier to exclude many highly skilled immigrants whose first language is neither English nor French and should be removed.**

4. VISA REGIME

The Ukrainian Canadian Congress believes that the time has come to remove visa requirements for Ukrainian visitors to Canada.

Ukraine dropped visa requirements for Canadian visitors in 2005. However Canada, while allowing visitors from Lithuania, Hungary, Slovakia, Latvia and Poland to enter without visas, continues to require visas from Ukrainian residents.³

Canada should encourage greater ties with Ukraine and drop this requirement. The visa requirement hampers Ukrainian businesses from investing in Canada.

The Ukrainian Canadian Congress supports the abolition of the temporary resident visa requirement for citizens of Ukraine to visit Canada.

5. ADDITIONAL FULL CONSULAR OFFICES

The Immigration section of the Canadian Embassy in Kyiv is not adequately resourced to deal with the demands and realities of Ukrainian immigrants. Many take overnight trains from Lviv and other cities only to be told their applications are not in order and rejected.

In this regard, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress supports the opening of full Canadian consular offices in Kharkiv and Lviv, Ukraine.

6. INTEGRITY OF THE CANADIAN IMMIGRATION SYSTEM

The Ukrainian Canadian Congress believes that the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act needs to be upheld to ensure that all individuals regardless of ethnic origin who have engaged in espionage against Canada and her NATO allies or who were members of the NKVD, KGB, or their military intelligence equivalents, regardless of rank or duties should not be allowed admission into Canada.

² <http://www.utoronto.ca/jacyk/Isajiw.htm>

³ <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/visas.asp#exemptions>

Conclusion

The Ukrainian Canadian Congress, and its member organizations, are willing to assist Citizenship and Immigration Canada with the development of ways to implement the abovementioned recommendations by providing necessary logistical and implementation support. We believe that many of our community organizations and individuals can and will share their experience and expertise to provide and maintain a reliable support system for newcomers to Canada in the areas of immigration, settlement, integration and retention.