

Speech – The People’s Party of Canada Position on Immigration and Multiculturalism

Maxime Bernier, Leader of the People’s Party of Canada [spoke](#) at an immigration rally in Mississauga, July 24, 2019



I want to discuss with you today the People’s Party position on immigration.

For decades now, there has only been one acceptable position among our political and intellectual elites: more, and more, and more immigration.

There is a taboo around this topic. As soon as you raise a concern about the level of immigration, someone will accuse you of harbouring anti-immigrant views and being racist or xenophobic.

The result is that all the other parties have the same position. They are all in favour of mass immigration.

The Liberals have increased immigration levels from an average of 250,000 per year during the last decades to 350,000 in 2021, a 40% increase.

Andrew Scheer gave a speech on immigration a few weeks ago. He did not say anything relevant or significant. He did not mention any number. Instead, he spent half an hour pleading that he is not racist.

No lessons to receive

I'm not going to spend 30 minutes rejecting accusations of racism. Only 30 seconds. That's all I need to refute a false and ridiculous accusation.

I don't care one bit about people's race or skin colour. I have said many times that racists and bigots are not welcome in our party. We care about shared values, culture and identity.

You can be of any ethnic background or faith, and be a Canadian, if you share fundamental Canadian values, learn about our history and culture, and integrate in our society.

There are nominated candidates of all races and religions in the PPC. With names like Salim Mansour, Rocky Dong, Jigna Jani, Tahir Gora, Jude Guerrier, Jing Lan Yang, Salomon Rayek, and many, many others.

We have no lessons to receive from anyone about openness and inclusiveness.

And the journalists who don't want to recognize this and keep coming back with questions about bigotry can just take a hike!

No taboo

Immigration is a very important question. It's completely absurd to turn it into a taboo subject.

And the majority of Canadians agree with us.

The reason those in favour of mass immigration don't want to have any debate on this issue is because they know they would lose it.

Every survey that has come out in recent years shows that a large proportion of Canadians, depending on the question, support a lower immigration level.

In an Angus-Reid poll last year, 49% said it was too high, while only 6% wanted Canada to accept more immigrants.

Who are the extremists? The left-wing media and activists say we are extremists because we want to cut immigration.

But they are the extremists! The Liberals are the extremists! We are the mainstream!

Canada already accepts more immigrants than almost any other country: 21% of our population was born outside of Canada. More than one in five.

Our ratio is higher than in the US, where it is 15%. It is almost double that of European countries like France, Germany and the UK, where the foreign born constitute only 12% of the population. And where there have been for many years social tensions related to immigration.

Canada has always been a country largely open to immigration, because of its vastness and its relative youth. I believe that by and large, our immigration policy has been very successful.

But that doesn't mean this will always continue, as we keep increasing immigration to new record levels. We are not immune to the conflicts and social tensions happening elsewhere.

I want Canada to still be a peaceful, prosperous and harmonious society 25 years from now, with well-integrated immigrants.

Maintaining Canada's national identity

So let's ignore the critics and discuss the specific reasons immigration levels should be lowered.

Most fundamentally, it has to do with social harmony and the maintenance of our Canadian national identity.

Last year, in August, just before I left the Conservative Party, I published six tweets that caused quite a controversy.

I was criticizing Justin Trudeau's slogan that "diversity is our strength." I attacked the Liberal cult of diversity and extreme multiculturalism.

I recognized that of course, Canada is and has always been a diverse country. We have First Nations and Inuit, two official languages, a multiethnic population, and very different regional cultures. The culture of Cape Breton is very different from that of the Eastern Townships in Quebec, or that of southern Alberta, or Nunavut.

All these regional cultures are intrinsically Canadian. They developed in Canada. They don't exist anywhere else in the world. They deserve to be nurtured and to survive.

My problem with Trudeau's slogan, and with the policies that go with it, is not that I am against diversity. It's the belief that more and more diversity is always better. And that there is no limit to it.

As I wrote in one of my tweets, if anything and everything is Canadian, does being Canadian mean something? Shouldn't we emphasize our cultural traditions? What we have built and have in common? What makes us different from other cultures and societies?

In the past, immigrants who came here gradually integrated into our society. They kept some aspects of the culture of their country of origin, of course. And that influenced and changed our society. They became Canadian, but with a distinct flavour.

This is a type of multiculturalism that enriches our society. And it is perfectly fine.

But that is very different than coming here to recreate the society and culture you left behind.

Living permanently in an enclave apart from the larger Canadian society.

And moreover, being officially encouraged by the government to continue to do so rather than to integrate into Canadian society and adopt Canadian culture and values.

A nation must be based on a sense of belonging, of participating in a common national project, sharing the same values, being different from the rest of the world.

It's only when these sentiments are widely shared that we can develop the trust and common understanding necessary for our institutions to function.

Our country was almost torn apart because of the misunderstandings between Francophone Quebecers and the rest of Canada.

Many First Nations members feel alienated from Canadian society.

So why would we want to emphasize cultural, religious and ethnic differences, which have been one of the main causes of conflict throughout human history? This is insane.

We can already see the consequences in the way ethnic politics has become the norm among the other parties. They don't talk

to Canadians. They address themselves to ethnic voting blocs. To Ukrainian Canadians, Italian Canadians, Chinese Canadians, Muslim Canadians, Sikh Canadians.

Trudeau does it, Scheer does it, Singh does it.

Even our foreign policy now depends on appealing to these ethnic political clienteles, instead of being based on the interests of Canada as a whole.

If we continue on the present course, all these little tribes will have less and less in common, apart from their dependence on government in Ottawa.

Multiculturalism and balkanization

Some people have accused me of abandoning my free-market ideas because I talk about these issues. But this is totally misguided.

Mass immigration, open borders, unvetted immigration, extreme multiculturalism: all of this has nothing to do with freedom.

On the contrary, it's a very dangerous type of social engineering. It amounts to large-scale government intervention in society and culture.

It will bring increasing cultural balkanisation, distrust, social conflict, and potentially violence, as we are seeing in other countries where division has reached a critical level.

In his 1991 book on multiculturalism, the late advisor to John F. Kennedy, Arthur Schlesinger, warned that "countries break up when they fail to give ethnically diverse peoples compelling reasons to see themselves as part of the same nation."

Three years later, Canadian author Neil Bissoondath published *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada*. That's a very good title!

Bissoondath wrote that encouraging ethnic differences leads immigrants to adopt a psychology of separation from the mainstream culture. And he blamed multiculturalism for creating enclaves that isolate ethnic groups, at the expense of the unity and cohesion of our society.

Let me cite one more scholar. In his current research, Canadian political scientist Eric Kaufmann shows that lower immigration rates also help newcomers themselves. Because the lower rates bring greater integration, while also making the established population more welcoming.

In case there is a CBC journalist reporting this. Please note that these writers are not Far Right white supremacists. Just trying to help my good friends at CBC here!

Protecting Western Values

And let's stop being politically correct. We must recognize that not all values, not all social customs, not all cultures, are equally valuable.

Our distinct values are those of contemporary Western civilization. They include democracy, individual rights and freedoms, including freedom of religious belief and freedom to criticize religion.

Our distinct values also include equality between men and women, the equal treatment of all citizens regardless of ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation, the rule of law, separation of state and religion, tolerance and pluralism, and loyalty to the wider society instead of to one's clan or tribe.

When I say that newcomers to Canada must integrate into our society and share our values, it is to these Western values that I am referring.

Values that our ancestors fought for. Values that explain why

we are one of the freest, most dynamic, and most prosperous societies in the world. Classical liberal values.

In most non-Western societies still today, these values are not widely accepted or practiced. In fact, that's precisely the reason why millions of people from around the world want to come to Canada and other Western countries.

Among the threats to our values and way of life is political Islam, or Islamism, the fastest-growing and most dangerous radical ideology in the world today, which is responsible for so much violence in so many countries.

There is growing evidence that Islamists are pushing their agenda here in Canada, with the support of money from the Middle East.

One of the main critics of Islamism in Canada is our star candidate, Salim Mansur. He too wrote a book about multiculturalism a few years ago.

In it, he described official multiculturalism, sponsored by the state, supported by taxpayers, and enforced by human rights commissions acting as the thought-police, as a lie.

A lie based on the idea that all cultures are equal. A lie destructive of our Western liberal democratic heritage, traditions, and values based on individual rights and freedoms.

The biggest peddler of this lie in Canada is of course Justin Trudeau.

He simply doesn't care about Canada's culture and identity, heritage and traditions. He sees himself as a citizen of the world.

That's why he described Canada as the first post-national state, with no core identity. This fits with his support for globalism, and for the United Nations.

I'm not exaggerating when I accuse the Liberals of putting Canada on a road to destruction. Because if we allow Trudeau to implement his globalist vision, Canada will eventually cease to exist as a distinct nation.

We have to reverse this trend if we want to make sure that we, and our children, still have a country that is like the Canada we know, with its values and its unique identity intact, 25 years from now.

The downsides of mass immigration

Let me move on to other arguments.

The main argument that is presented in favour of immigration is the economic one. Immigrants bring their skills, their entrepreneurship, and their dreams. They fill manpower shortages, as our society ages and our workforce declines. This makes our society richer, younger and more dynamic.

This is certainly true, but only to some extent. It depends on the kind of immigrants we welcome.

Immigration is actually very costly for governments. There's all the government programs to manage it of course. But a larger cost is the fact that immigrants pay on average about half as much in income taxes as other Canadians but absorb nearly the same value of government services.

A study from 2011 put the cost to taxpayers at roughly \$6,000 per immigrant. For a total annual cost of somewhere between \$16 billion and \$24 billion.

\$24 billion is a lot of money. Eight years later, and with a much higher level of immigration, the costs can only have gone up.

One reason for this is that immigrants generally have lower wages than non-immigrants.

But another key reason is that the proportion of immigrants who come to Canada because they have the right skills, based on their education, work experience and knowledge of an official language, is not very high. And it has been dropping under the Liberal government.

Right now, only about 55% of newcomers are selected through the economic program. The rest come through the family reunification program or are refugees.

But even that 55% does not tell the whole story. It consists of the principal applicants and their immediate family. If you remove the spouses and children, only 26% of all the people who come to Canada every year actually fulfill our economic needs.

If you are not grasping the significance of this, let's look at it from the other side. It means that three quarters of all immigrants who come to Canada are dependents, do not have the right qualifications that we need, may not master any of our official languages, or are too young or too old to work.

These people do not contribute very much or at all to our economy. But they cost a lot in terms of social services.

Canadians are a compassionate people and we should be. But at what cost? Are Canadians happy to subsidize 74% of our current immigrants?

If the main objective of Canada's immigration policy is to fulfill the economic needs of our country, it's an obvious failure.

And it won't be fixed by simply increasing the total number of immigrants. That will cost us even more.

Another justification we often hear for an increase in immigration levels is that we are an aging society, and we need immigrants to reverse this trend.

However, demographic studies have shown that this is a myth. Newcomers are a bit younger on average than Canadians, but not enough to have a noticeable impact on the rate of aging.

The Liberal government is making matters worse by increasing the number of parents and grand-parents accepted under the family reunification program every year, from 5000 to 20,000.

This, of course, is an easy way for them to pander and buy votes among immigrant communities. But again, it defeats the purpose.

I can understand why immigrants would want to bring the rest of their extended family here, including older ones who will benefit from our health care system.

But we cannot be the welfare state of the planet. Canadians know that government funding is limited and we already fall short of caring for our own. We have long waiting lists for surgeries, and so many other problems to solve here first.

Another economic downside of mass immigration is that it inflates housing prices in our big cities. More than 41% of all immigrants to Canada settle in Toronto and Vancouver, which have some of the least affordable housing among big cities in the world.

There are other reasons for these sky-high prices of course, including zoning laws and monetary policy. But lower immigration would bring demand down and allow more Canadians in these cities to afford a house.

All these economic arguments in favour of reducing immigration levels are rarely discussed. It's time to break the taboo and have a real debate.

Refugees

Finally, there is the issue of refugees.

There are horrible cases of wars, persecution and human rights violations in the world. With the result that there are about 25 million refugees.

It's absolutely tragic. I encourage Canadians to do what they can to help through private organizations. But at the level of government, my duty, my moral obligation, must be to first help those in need among our own population.

Justin Trudeau however sees himself as some kind of world minister already, managing a file in a world government. And so in 2018, Canada welcomed more resettled refugees than any other country. More than the United States, a country with ten times our population. And as many as all of the European Union.

In addition to this, we have had to deal with tens of thousands of asylum seekers illegally crossing our borders over the past three years.

Accepting all these refugees will cost Canadian taxpayers billions of dollars.

The UN's Global Compact for Migration, which the Liberal government signed last year, aims to normalize this kind of situation, and to make it easier for millions of people to move to Canada and other Western democracies.

What is going on is exactly what you would expect. The Liberals haven't lost control of our borders. They are deliberately attempting to erase it.

Policies

Given all these considerations and principles, here are the policies that the People's Party of Canada proposes to implement if it forms the next government.

First: immigration levels.

Canadian society cannot successfully integrate 350,000 immigrants and refugees every year, as the Liberals, and probably also the Conservatives, are planning to do.

This is equivalent to adding one Nova Scotia to our population every three years, or one Manitoba every four years. And pack the majority of them in a few crowded cities.

Support for immigration will continue to diminish, and social tensions are likely to rise, if we continue doing this. We need to slow down.

A People's Party government will substantially lower the total number of immigrants and refugees we accept every year, from 350,000 to between 100,000 and 150,000, depending on economic and other circumstances.

Second: Multiculturalism.

In a free society, immigrants have the right to cherish and maintain their cultural heritage. It should be clear that the People's Party will never support any government measure to force them to abandon it. But that doesn't mean we have any obligation to help them preserve it either, with government programs and taxpayers' money.

When they decide to move from their country of origin to this one, immigrants must be willing to leave some of their life behind, and be prepared to become full members of their new country.

The vast majority of Canadians rightly expect them to learn about our history and culture, master one of our official languages, and adopt widely shared Canadian values.

Official multiculturalism is based on the false idea that there is no unified Canadian society, no distinct Canadian culture, to integrate into. That we are just a collection of tribes living side by side.

We are all Canadians. We must focus on what unites us as Canadians, not what divides us.

A People's Party government will repeal the Multiculturalism Act and eliminate all funding to promote multiculturalism. We will instead emphasize the integration of immigrants into Canadian society.

Third: Focusing on economic immigrants.

If the main economic benefit that we derive from welcoming immigrants is that they answer the needs of sectors where there is a scarcity of manpower with specialized skills, then we should make sure we have a much higher proportion of skilled immigrants who can fulfil this need.

It's irresponsible to have only 26% of all immigrants and refugees in this category. If we reduce the total number of immigrants, but double that proportion to 50%, there will be no reduction in the absolute number of economic immigrants compared with previous years.

A People's Party government will reform the point system and the various programs to ensure that our immigration policy is focused on accepting a larger proportion of economic immigrants with the right skills.

We will accept fewer resettled refugees and will considerably limit the number of immigrants accepted under the family reunification program, including abolishing the program for parents and grand-parents.

And we will change the law to make birth tourism illegal. Canada is not a shopping centre, where any foreigner expecting a child can come and buy a citizenship or future education and employment opportunities for their children, without following the proper immigration channels.

Fourth: Selecting immigrants who share our values.

The safety and cohesion of our society depends on citizens accepting the basic Canadian values and societal norms I mentioned earlier.

A People's Party government will ensure that every person hoping to immigrate to Canada undergoes a face-to-face interview and answers a series of specific questions to assess the extent to which they align with these values and societal norms.

We will increase resources for CSIS, the RCMP and Canadian Immigration and Citizenship to do these interviews and thorough background checks on all classes of immigrants. With fewer immigrants to process, there will be more resources available to achieve this.

Immigrants whose responses or background checks demonstrate that they do not share mainstream Canadian values will be rejected.

Finally, on the issue of refugees.

A People's Party government will take every measure necessary, in partnership with our American neighbours, to stop the flow of illegal migrants at the border.

We will declare the whole border an official port of entry and send back to the US anyone trying to enter illegally.

Instead of making it easier to enter Canada and helping these illegal refugees, as the Liberal government has done, we will make it more difficult, by fencing off the areas where it takes place such as Roxham Road in Quebec.

For resettled refugees, in addition to accepting a smaller number, we will rely on private sponsorships instead of having the government pay for all the costs of resettling these refugees in Canada.

We will stop our reliance on the United Nations for refugee

selection. And we will give priority to refugees belonging to persecuted groups who have nowhere to go in neighbouring countries.

For example, Christians, Yazidis, and members of other minority religions in majority Muslim countries. Members of the Ahmadi community, and other Muslims in these countries who are persecuted because they reject political Islam and adhere to Western values. And members of sexual minorities.

And finally, we will take Canada out of the UN's Global Compact for Migration. Our immigration laws will be made in Canada, for the interest of Canadians.

Conclusion

This has been a long speech. So my conclusion will be brief.

The primary aim of Canada's immigration policy should be to economically benefit Canadians and Canada as a whole.

It should not aim to forcibly change the cultural character and social fabric of Canada, as radical proponents of multiculturalism want. Canada has its own distinct identity, worth preserving, among the nations of the world.

It should not put excessive financial burdens on the shoulder of Canadians in the pursuit of humanitarian goals. Canadians are generous, but it is not our responsibility to solve all the world's problems.

And it should not be used as a political tool to pander and buy votes among immigrant communities. This kind of ethnic politics practiced by all the other parties will lead to even more social division.

We are all Canadians. The People's Party will unite Canadians with an immigration policy designed to benefit all of us.

Thank you.