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by Ozden Sungur

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Section 1. A brief history of Canadian immigration policy:

Canada is a country of immigrants. It has the highest ratio of foreign-born population among G8 countries, which stood at 20.6% in 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2011: 7). As Figure 1 shows, Canada is second only to Australia in the industrialized world in terms of the big role immigration plays in its population makeup. Large inflows of immigrants date back to the late 19th and the early 20th centuries when opening of the west and the promise of free land drew many from Europe, the United Kingdom and the United States to settle in Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2014a). Since then significant political, economic and social developments resulted in historical highs and lows in numbers of immigrants arriving in Canada in hopes of a better life. While the period before World War I witnessed the highest numbers of immigrants in Canadian history until then or since, Great Depression coincided with unprecedentedly low numbers of immigrants. Annual figures remained at their lowest levels for most of that decade not only in absolute numbers of immigrants but also as percentage of the population around 0.1%. Numbers increased after World War II, partially aided by 48,000 war brides and their 22,000 children arriving in Canada during and after the war. Another contributing factor in annual fluctuations has been political unrest and wars in foreign countries resulting in a surge of refugees seeking a safe home in Canada. A notable example is the arrival of 37,500 Hungarian refugees in 1956 and 1957 following the failed Hungarian Revolution.

A century worth of data starting in 1860 help to tell the story of how a country with a small population and vast land and natural resources shaped its demographic structure with the help of immigration. However, a real turning point in this story happened in 1962 when federal government abandoned its discriminatory approach to immigration (preferred vs. non-preferred countries) in favor of a focus on personal attributes. New regulations, intended to eliminate all discrimination based on race, religion, and national origin, brought about a shift in terms of levels and composition of newcomers to Canada. Therefore, understanding the overall impact of immigration policy on Canadian society in terms of its economic, social, and cultural development requires a closer look at the ensuing period. An essential aspect of enforcing such a shift in policy is a system that can evaluate personal characteristics of potential immigrants in a fair and transparent manner. The introduction of the point system in 1967 provided this mechanism.

In the following decades considerable changes ensued with respect to the share of source regions in total landings. European countries such as the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany and Netherlands constituted the majority of source countries prior to 1970s. According to 2011 National Household Survey (NHS), 78.3% of immigrants who arrived in Canada prior to 1971 reported being from a European country. In comparison, only 8.5% of newcomers originated from Asia. Since then Europe as well as the United States declined in significance as source regions. Instead, Asia and the Middle East gained prominence as the top source region accounting for 56.9% of those arriving between 2006 and 2011. This shift is also reflected in rankings of top ten countries of birth of immigrants. While the United Kingdom was the top country of birth in 1981, it only ranked ninth place in 2006. In contrast, China went from tenth place in 1981 up to first place in 2006.

Another dimension of the changes brought about by the end of discriminatory approach to immigration policy is the diversity it promoted. According to 2011 NHS, Canadians reported more than 200 ethnic origins and 13 of these ethnicities surpassed the 1-million mark. Perhaps not surprisingly, most of these 13 ethnic origins come from Europe including the first European settlers in Canada such as the English, French, Scottish, Irish and German. The most commonly reported ethnic origins include Italian, Chinese, First Nations, Ukrainian, East Indian, Dutch and Polish as well. Naturally, Canadian rounds out the list as the most common ethnic origin in Canada. Overall, 57.9% of the population reported a single ethnic origin while the rest reported more than one. When generational status is taken into account, the figures on ethnic diversity reveal a different pattern. Only 18.5% of first gen-

eration immigrants reported more than one ethnic origin but among second and third generation immigrants those identify with multiple ethnic origins are much higher at 45.4% and 49.6%.

Introduction of the point system in 1967 had further consequences for the composition of the immigrant population in Canada. In what follows, we will take a closer look at the main admission categories and how selection criteria for these categories evolved in response to changing social, economic and political conditions.

Section 2: The point system

The 2002 Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) identifies three major goals for immigration policy: contributing to economic development, reuniting families, and protecting refugees. Correspondingly, there are three main admission classes for permanent residency in Canada: economic class, family class, and refugee class. The point system was devised to assess mainly the economic class applicants based on their personal attributes. Therefore, this section will pay specific attention to how the immigration policy and the point system developed in response to labor market conditions as well as the bottlenecks that arose in the system.

As of January 2015, a new system called the Express Entry is used to process applications under various federal economic immigration programs. Express Entry is a two-step application management system that is intended to prevent backlogs and fasten processing times. Other main objectives of the system are to ensure responsiveness to labor market and regional needs, and to provide flexibility in application and selection management. In the first step of the selection process, potential candidates complete an online Express Entry profile to provide information that is used to evaluate their ability to settle in Canada and their potential to contribute to the Canadian economy. These data include skills, work experience, language ability, education and other relevant details. Applicants who meet the criteria of one of the three federal immigration programs are accepted in a pool of candidates. In the second stage, candidates in the pool are ranked against each other using a point-based system based on the information in their profile. Highest-ranking candidates are then issued an invitation to apply for permanent residency.

The original point system that was introduced in 1967 had similar features in that it assigned potential candidates points according to their education, age, language proficiency and personal adaptability. It also assigned points based on labor market factors such as demand for

certain occupations, specific vocational preparation (on-the-job training), arranged employment or designated occupation. Factors that might facilitate settlement in Canada such as having relatives or a particular destination were also taken into account. Applicants needed to collect 50 points out of a maximum 100 points to be admitted as a permanent resident. The list of factors and their relative weights in the overall mark as well as the minimum mark required for admission changed over time as immigration policy sought greater flexibility in the face of changing economic circumstances at home and abroad. Experience is a notable addition to the list following the 1978 Immigration Act. Its allocated weight was steadily raised making work experience more relevant for determining admission decisions. With a more recent amendment in 2008, a special economic class called the Canadian Experience Class (CEC) was created. The program went through some modifications since its introduction, notably one in 2013 that decreased the amount of work experience required. However, its main objective remained facilitating admission for permanent residency for those with recent Canadian work experience specifically in managerial, professional or technical jobs and skilled trades. CEC is one of the three federal economic immigration programs that are processed through the Express Entry system. The number of admissions under the program grew significantly from 2,545 in its first year to 23,786 in 2014.

One of the factors that was originally considered for admission decisions but eventually dropped from the list is the intended destination for potential immigrants. Economic class applicants could be awarded up to 5 points – lowest factor weight along with the relative factor (0/3/5 points depending on the relation) – for their intended destination until 1986. The Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) was established in 1998 in part as an attempt to distribute the benefits of economic immigration across all provinces and territories. Figures for geographical concentration of the immigrant population explain why additional incentives were needed to attract new immigrants to smaller urban areas and regions. According to the last NHS, 94.8% of immigrants live in four provinces: Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec and Alberta. Furthermore, a majority of immigrants live in census metropolitan areas (CMAs). The three largest CMAs - Toronto, Vancouver and Montréal – are home to 63.4% of the immigrant population. Recent arrivals also follow this pattern as 62.5% of newcomers headed for the same destinations. In comparison, only 35.2% of the total population lives in these areas. In attracting newcomers to regions that are outside these common destinations, federal and provincial governments make agreements that allow provinces to set their own selection criteria in accordance with their local and regional labor market conditions and

with regional economic growth goals in mind. Each province and territory may set its own streams that target certain groups such as students, business people, skilled workers and semi-skilled workers. Provinces such as Manitoba, New Brunswick and Saskatchewan now use PNPs as their main vehicle to settle newcomers in their provinces. For Manitoba, the number of immigrants admitted through PNPs increased significantly to 13,500 in 2009 compared to only 477 in 1999, accounting for 75% of all new immigrants in this province. The PNPs are meant to complement federal economic programs and not to replace them but their prominence in total admissions as well as in economic class admissions has been rising steadily in recent years. In 2005, provincial nominees accounted for 8,047 out of 156,312 economic class immigrants. In 2014, the number of immigrants who got admission through PNPs rose to 47,628 while the number of economic class immigrants increased to 165,089. One of the main criticisms against PNPs and their rising prominence in economic class has been their ad hoc approach to filling local labor shortages by admitting huge numbers of low-skilled workers. Furthermore, this trend is happening at the expense of skilled worker class admitted under the federal program, which declined from 130,238 to 67,485 over the same period. A comprehensive review of Canada's skilled immigration policy recommended a review of the skills profile of applicants admitted under PNPs (Beach *et al.*, 2011). They also suggested placing a cap on such admissions or allowing the cap to vary inversely with the unemployment rate.

One of the big challenges of the immigration policy has been to ensure a selection process that balances short-term economic goals with long-term perspectives while keeping processing times reasonably short. In 2008, application backlogs reached up to 623,075 while long processing times averaged at 63 months (Auditor General of Canada, 2009). At the same time, reliance on temporary foreign workers to fill labor shortages increased dramatically. In 2013, total number of unique persons holding work permits for work purposes (as opposed to humanitarian and compassionate, study or permanent residence purposes) peaked at 309,902 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2014b). To avoid the long queues, PNPs became a common device whereby candidates nominated by employers and vetted by provinces for local suitability could be fast tracked for admission without having to be evaluated through the point system. Although this approach could help with filling labor shortages in a timely manner, it had the potential to undermine the long-term goals of the policy by shifting priority away from the main economic class, the federal skilled worker class (FSW). The situation was exacerbated by increasing number of

nominations in PNPs coming from temporary workers. Ministerial instructions issued in February 2008 aimed to improve the backlogs by giving processing priority to federal skilled worker applicants who satisfy certain criteria. Applications submitted on or after February 27, 2008 were instructed to be placed in processing immediately upon receipt if submitted with an arranged offer of employment; submitted by foreign nationals who have been residing legally in Canada for at least one year as temporary foreign workers or international students; or submitted by skilled workers with evidence of experience in a given list of occupations. FSW applications received on or after this date that did not meet the criteria described above would not be processed and the processing fee would be returned. All the rest of the applications would continue to be processed according to existing priorities. These ministerial instructions effectively put in place a screening process that filtered certain FSW applications before they were evaluated through the point system. In addition to eliminating backlogs and speeding up the admission process, the instructions aimed to fill occupational gaps to meet pressing labor market shortages and to admit applicants who are expected to integrate into the Canadian workplace more easily. They also signaled a deviation from the long-run approach to skilled immigration that characterized the policy since the early 1990s. The long-run human capital model worked with a point system that placed more weight on factors such as education and language facilities and did not consider occupational demand as a determining factor in admission decisions. The policy took on a more short-term perspective as some of the processing priorities identified by the government were driven by occupational demands. The fact that temporary foreign workers who apply in FSW category also gained priority amplified the short-term nature of the policy shift. More ministerial instructions followed as government sought to achieve a more flexible and responsive admission strategy through controlling FSW intake and reducing FSW backlogs. These instructions implemented caps on new FSW applications as well as sub-caps on priority occupations, updated lists of eligible occupations for FSW applicants, introduced and eventually lifted a general pause on FSW program. Instructions were issued to manage admissions under other economic class programs and to a more limited degree under other immigration classes as well. Meanwhile, the Federal Skilled Trades Program (FSTP) is introduced on January 2, 2013 as a new federal economic program. These changes culminated in an overhaul of the point system and the introduction of Express Entry in January 2015. We will review the early application and admission results under the new Express Entry system in the last section after we take stock of how the other two admission categories fare.

Economic class currently constitutes the largest admission category with 63.4% of total landings in 2014. Family class, which consists of foreign nationals who are sponsored by close relatives or family friends in Canada, comes in second place at 25.6%. Spouses and partners, dependent children, parents and grandparents are among the relatives that are admitted through this category. Family class is not evaluated through the point system so admissions in this category have not been as directly impacted by changes to the system as the economic class. Applications in this category were also exempt from ministerial instructions issued in 2008 so they continued to be processed with the same priorities as usual. In fact, as total number of landings remained relatively stable over the last decade so did the share of family class, varying between 22% and 28%. However, if we trace back the history of Canadian immigration policy a couple decades further we see a clear shift in focus from family reunification to economic goals. During mid-80s, a surge in economic class admissions accompanying an increase in total landings put this category in first place at 48.7%. While in 1984 family class accounted for half of new immigrants to Canada it only accounted for 35% in 1987. Since then family reunification remained a secondary goal of immigration policy as reflected by its relative share in total landings. Canada's immigration plan for 2016 aims to put some of the focus back on family class by introducing specific measures to boost family reunification.

Refugee protection is also back in focus in most part due to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Syria. Canadian refugee system has two main programs to provide such protection. Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program assists those seeking refugee protection from outside Canada. In-Canada Asylum Program works to grant protection to people in Canada in cases of well-founded fear of persecution, risk of torture, or cruel and unusual punishment in their home countries. Number of admissions under this category varies every year according to global circumstances. 2015 has been a year marked by an unprecedented scale of displacement driven by various conflicts around the world including the humanitarian crisis in Syria. In what follows, we will look at how the Canadian nation continues to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis using provisions set by the immigration policy.

Section 3: Response to the Syrian refugee crisis:

The heartwarming scene on December 11, 2015 at Toronto Pearson International Airport where Prime Minister Justin Trudeau welcomed Syrian refugees to their new home stood in stark contrast to the usual

coverage of the crisis and the Western world's response to it. The headlines praised Canada as a nation that "welcomes in people who are fleeing extraordinarily difficult situations"¹. According to UNHCR, Canada resettled 20,000 refugees in 2015, surpassed only by the United States that admitted 66,500 refugees and leading Australia that resettled 9,400 (2016). Of course, these figures look rather small compared to the global dimensions of the crisis. In 2015, the number of people forced from their home reached its highest level on record at 65.3 million. Making matters worse, the voluntary return rate hit its lowest level in over three decades. Of millions running away from persecution and various conflicts around the world, only 84,000 are estimated to be able to go back to their home safely. Meanwhile, there seems to be little agreement about how to share the burden of such vast displacement globally. The number of refugees hosted by the top hosting country Turkey reached 2.5 million by the end of 2015 and continued to climb since then as the political instability dominates the region. These figures are symptomatic of a responsibility that is often born by countries immediately bordering the conflict zones.

So what motivates countries to provide solutions to these humanitarian crises aside from pressures building up around their borders? Perhaps one of the defining moments for Canadian public opinion about the Syrian refugee crisis was the death of the 3-year-old Syrian refugee Alan Kurdi along with his 5-year-old brother and mother while attempting the treacherous crossing between Turkey and Greece on September 2, 2015. The despondent journey of this family especially struck a cord with the public in this country far away from the conflict zone. A close Canadian relative had already tried and failed to bring other members of the family to resettle in Canada due to incomplete documentation². Their application did not meet the regulatory requirements for proof of refugee status recognition from the UNHCR or from a foreign state. Following the tragedy, and with a new liberal government in charge of the Ministry of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Canadian aunt of the little boy was invited to re-apply to sponsor her relatives. This time their application was helped by a temporary exemption issued by the Government of Canada in September 19, 2015 allowing Syrian and Iraqi refugees fleeing the current

¹ The quotation is from a speech by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on December 11, 2015 at Toronto Pearson International Airport. It was widely reported on TV and newspapers.

² There is an archived statement from Citizenship and Immigration Canada on its website.

conflict to be sponsored by private sponsor groups without a proof of refugee status. They were approved and arrived in Canada on December 28, 2015 to start their new life. They are among the 29,413 Syrian refugees who have arrived in Canada since November 4, 2015. As of July 24, 2016, 16,078 of these refugees are included in the government-assisted category. Privately sponsored refugees total up to 10,545 while the remaining 2,790 are blended visa-office referred refugees (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2016a).

Therefore, Canada's current commitment to humanitarian and compassionate causes is facilitated by various arrangements that combine public and private initiatives. The most differentiating aspect of these categories is how the financial support is funded. Under the Government-Assisted Refugees (GAR) Program, the initial settlement is completely supported by the Government of Canada (or the province of Quebec) up to one year from the date of arrival in Canada or until the GAR becomes self-sufficient, whichever happens first. The support may include accommodation, food, clothing, assistance in finding employment and becoming self-sufficient. Since October 19, 2012 private groups may also sponsor applicants who are recognized as refugees by either the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) or a foreign state. A group of five (G5) or more Canadian citizens or permanent residents can come together and volunteer to provide financial and emotional support to refugees while they settle in Canada. The group members should be 18 or older and live or have representatives in the area where refugees settle. The support is usually provided for one year although in certain cases refugees may be eligible for assistance for up to three years. Some community organizations, called community sponsors, may also assist refugees to come to Canada. In addition, there are organizations that sign a sponsorship agreement to provide resettlement support on an ongoing basis. These private organizations are known as Sponsorship Agreement Holders. Lastly, Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) Program established in 2013 coordinates government efforts with private initiatives by matching refugees identified by the UNHCR with private sponsorship groups in Canada. Under this arrangement, government provides six months of financial support while private sponsors provide another six month of financial assistance in addition to social and emotional support for up to a year.

Syrian refugee crisis shed a renewed light on refugee protection as an integral component of Canada's immigration policy. In order to emphasize its commitment, liberal government renamed Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration as Ministry of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship following the last federal election victory in October 2015. Historical highlights of this commitment date back to the end of World

War II. Noteworthy episodes include admission of 57,000 Hungarian refugees in 1956-57 and 11,000 Czechoslovakian refugees in 1968-69. 1970s marked continuing arrival of thousands of refugees including Ugandans, Chileans, and Indochinese and ended with 60,000 Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotians making Canada their new home in 1979-80. 7,000 Kosovars arrived in a more recent wave of refugees in 1999. While Canada kept its involvement in refugee protection as one of the major objectives of immigration policy, the relative size of the program declined over time. In 2014, refugee category accounted for only 8.9% of total landings whereas it accounted for up to 20% three decades ago. Given that government already exceeded its goal of resettling 25,000 Syrian refugees in early 2016 and plans to admit an additional 10,000 GARs by the end of the year, number of admissions under refugee class in 2016 will well surpass levels targeted in recent years. However, its relative share in total admissions will still depend on how economic class admissions fare under the Express Entry system as well as the implications of a strengthened focus on family class.

Section 4: Recent developments

Last decade has been a period of change and expansion in many aspects of Canadian immigration policy even as annual immigration flows remained steady at 0.7-0.8% of total population. Admission strategy remained centered on economic goals with considerable shifts in shares of programs devised to fulfill these goals. Labor market priorities reflected in occupational gaps drove higher admissions through PNPs and Live-in Caregivers Program at the expense of skilled worker class. CEC, a relatively new program created to retain skilled workers with Canadian experience, continued to expand its share. At the same time, a high incidence of temporary foreign workers arose as employers found it hard to fill certain vacancies with Canadians. Furthermore, their permanent inclusion in Canadian labor force was facilitated by admissions through various economic programs. Although still the main economic class, FSW admissions continued to decline. A series of ministerial instructions beginning in 2008 aimed to address the bottlenecks highlighted by these trends and eventually led to a new application management system called Express Entry. This system currently manages applications for certain economic programs including the FSW Program, FST Program, CEC and a portion of the PNP. First round of invitations for permanent residency application under Express Entry reveal some interesting features of the new admission strategy. Within its first year of operation, the system received 191,279 profiles con-

taining information on applicants' age, education, official language proficiency and work experience (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2016b). Among eligible applicants who satisfy the criteria for at least one of the economic programs, those with an arranged job offer or a provincial/territorial nomination have a particular advantage. Indeed, almost all candidates who received an invitation to apply for permanent residency in the first four round of invitations had job offers supported by a Labor Market Impact Assessment (LMIA). This outcome is not surprising as job offers and PNP nominations add 600 points to an applicant's score enabling them to rank higher in the candidate pool. At the same time, LMIA's ensure that the job offers are authentic and genuine, Canadians are considered first by the employers for existing vacancies and candidates are offered compensations in line with prevailing wages. Another notable outcome is the overwhelmingly high number of Canadian residents among applicants selected for admission. Around 78% of those invited to apply for permanent residency already reside in Canada and most of them are foreign workers with job offers backed by LMIA's. International students also fared well but not necessarily due to their Canadian educational credentials. In fact, the system does not distinguish between Canadian and foreign degrees. Instead, international students and post-graduate work permit holders rank high due to their high education, Canadian work experience, official language proficiency, and younger age profile. Express Entry system also seems to favor applicants coming from countries where English or French is the official language. United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, United States of America, France, and Australia are all in top ten countries of citizenship of invited candidates. In comparison, the top ten countries in the 2014 intake (FSW, CEC, FST) included only the United Kingdom and the United States and at lower ratios. Under the new system, India, China and Philippines remained in top three positions. The apparent advantage of language fluency under the new admission system should be a welcome change in light of the evidence that it is an important factor for economic outcomes of immigrants in Canada. Empirical studies corroborate its significance in obtaining a job commensurate with occupations skills, training and subsequent advancement in the labor market (Beach *et al.*, 2011). The first year-end report also reveals that one of the main objectives of the new system met expectations by lowering processing times to less than six months for 80% of the applications. However, as the volume of applications processed under the new system grows, continuous monitoring and additional measures might be needed to ensure reasonable processing times.

The strong focus on economic priorities that accompanied recent trends was criticized by some as an indication of immigration as a

mere economic policy tool. It must then come as good news to those critics that the Canadian government announced plans to make family reunification an important priority in 2016-2017 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2016c). As with economic class, reducing inventories and processing times for family sponsorship applications (especially for spouses) is emphasized as a key element to improving policy outcomes. Other plans include doubling the cap for sponsorship applications for parents and grandparents from 5,000 to 10,000 and restoring the maximum age for dependents to 22 from 19 to allow more Canadians to be reunited with their family members. The two-year conditional permanent residence requirement for new spouses entering Canada is also considered a priority to be resolved in order to facilitate more family reunifications. These proposals can help provide immigrants with the support system to establish themselves and put down roots in their communities. Consequently, they can be instrumental in preventing onward migration. These measures can also alleviate some of Canada's broader demographic challenges such as the low fertility rates and aging population.

The overall impact of the new admission strategy and how it serves various goals of immigration policy is yet to be seen but one thing remains certain. Immigration will continue to shape Canadian social, economic and political spheres as it did since its inception.

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Ottawa, September 3, 2015 – Citizenship and Immigration Canada today issued the following statement:

“The plight of the Syrian people, including the events of yesterday, is a tragedy and we offer our condolences to all those affected.

“An application for Mr Mohammad Kurdi and his family was received by the department but was returned as it was incomplete, and it did not meet regulatory requirements for proof of refugee status recognition from the UNHCR or from a foreign state. There was no record of an application received for Mr Abdullah Kurdi and his family. “Canada did not offer citizenship to Mr Abdullah Kurdi, as claimed by some media outlets.



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