

Jennifer Watts | CEO, Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia

ADDRESSING ISSUES OF IMMIGRATION IN THE CANADIAN FEDERAL ELECTION

Building towards Monday, Oct 21st, 2019

- Election planning and partnership development began in August, 2018.
- Three key milestones building towards the 2019 Canadian Federal Election.
- Strength in approach through innovative tools, tactics and partnerships.

Immigration 101: Refugee Claimants

Who are refugee claimants?

These are individuals who make a claim that they are refugees at the Canadian border. Their claim is processed by the Immigration Refugee Board (IRB) using Canadian law and international conventions to which Canada is a signatory. IRB will determine if they can stay as a Protected Person.

How does Canada determine claims?

A claimant is determined to be a Convention refugee if they're not able to return to their country of origin because of a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, political opinion, nationality or being part of a social group, such as women or people of a particular sexual orientation.

A claimant may be determined to be a person in need of protection. They can't return to their home country safely. They may face danger of torture, risk to their life or risk of cruel and unusual treatment or punishment.

What happens if IRB determines a person is a Convention refugee or a person in need of protection?

If both cases, their claim is accepted. They become a Protected Person. They can apply for permanent residence and include immediate family members overseas on their application.

What happens if their claim is denied?

Individuals can appeal the decision to the Refugee Appeal Division of the IRB. Once they have exhausted all legal avenues, they must leave Canada or be removed by the Canada Border Service Agency (CBSA).

Terminology

Labels like "Individuals who entered Canada illegally" or "illegal migrants" are inaccurate and misleading. A person can make a refugee claim either at the border when arriving in Canada at an official port of entry, or once already in the country, as an inland claim. The government will not prosecute those who cross at irregular border points and make a refugee claim.

Omitting the term "refugee" can reinforce misperceptions that refugee claimants are not refugees or are less deserving of Canada's protection.

We do not know whether a claimant is a refugee or not until their case has been decided. Most refugee claimants are refugees, as we find out through the refugee determination process: they don't become refugees because we say they are – they already are refugees before we find it out.

Security screening

Claimants are rigorously security screened by Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and the RCMP. They are interviewed and fingerprinted.

Building Partnership

- Conversations with the Halifax Chamber of Commerce, United Way, and Halifax Partnership to coordinate messages on immigration around 2019 election.
- Discussed roles and audiences each organization served, how we can best support a cohesive message and encourage information sharing among teams.





MAKING WAVES

Stories of Second-Generation Immigrants




Addressing Negative Rhetoric

- First ‘challenge’ arose with the posting of the “No MASS Immigration” billboards that appeared across select cities in Canada.
- Partnerships previously built were mobilized, with Halifax Chamber leading the development of the counter campaign of digital billboards, ISANS helped shape the final messages that appeared.
- ISANS developed an op-ed, conducted media interviews and developed social media content to be used by all partners during the campaign.

HALIFAX

Immigration in Nova Scotia not a yes or no question, experts say

By Taryn Grant Star Halifax
Wed., Aug. 28, 2019 4 min. read



HALIFAX—For Jennifer Watts, the question implied by anti-immigration billboards that went up and down in a flash over the past week is the wrong one for Canadians to ask.

The billboards that went up in Halifax, Regina, Vancouver, Calgary and Toronto last week showed the smiling face of Maxime Bernier, leader of the People's Party of Canada, and the message: "Say NO to Mass Immigration." The ads, which caused an uproar across the country, have since been taken down.

"Our reality is, in fact, we benefit and we have always benefited from immigration," said Watts, CEO of the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia. The non-profit offers settlement services such as language classes and employment assistance.

"We have an economic imperative to engage in this ... It supports the social and cultural development of our community, as it has throughout history."


The ads were paid for by a third-party group, but Bernier didn't shy away from the thrust of their message. On Twitter, he said there was "no link" between the party and the billboard backers but then asked his followers for their opinions: Yes or no to mass immigration?

Rather than ask whether Canada should accept more immigrants,

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IMMIGRATION...

**It's our Strength,
It's our Story**



Immigration

It's our strength, it's our story.

IMMIGRANTS GROW OUR COMMUNITIES

Immigrants contribute to the growth of Canadian communities. Immigrants:

- help grow small and mid-sized communities in our province
- grow our volunteer base and strengthen our local communities
- strengthen our cultural vibrancy and experiences



#BetterTogetherNS

Immigration

It's our strength, it's our story.

Ask your candidate:

Please tell us your Party's position on immigration and refugees.

What will you and your party do to build a community where all can belong and grow?

To learn more about the Canadian Federal Election, such as voting information and registration, please visit the Elections Canada website at www.elections.ca

#BetterTogetherNS

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Next Steps and Key Learnings

- Proactive partnership development beyond the settlement sector is critical to build larger buy-in on issues related to immigration.
- Building a common knowledge base, consistent monitoring of rhetoric and messages help define what themes or issues that need to be addressed in a proactive manner.



Next Steps and Key Learnings

- It does not have to be perfect—be good as you can be.
- Importance to respond and speak with newcomers, community at large, our staff, partners and support those who can't publicly communicate.
- Incubate and support creative, thoughtful staff who push the boundaries of who we can be as communicators – stepping up our game as a sector.

Immigration 101: Refugees



Definition of a Refugee

"A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it"

- 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees

Refugees help build a strong Canada

Canada is a leader in supporting those fleeing violence, persecution, and threat of death. As a nation, we are a beacon of hope in often dark and turbulent times for some of the world's most vulnerable



Once in Canada, refugees:

- build a society with unique perspectives, voices and lived experiences, that foster a more resilient and tolerant Canada and leader throughout the world.
- Volunteer and participate in community activities
- Start businesses and become employed in a wide range of professions reflecting their unique skills and backgrounds
- Take up citizenship at high rates

Key Messages

Canada is a multicultural, diverse, open and safe country. Immigration, including refugee programs, foster and build our multicultural society. Canadians gain access to unique perspectives, voices, and lived experiences.

Canadians are helpful, compassionate and caring citizens. Canadians have a global responsibility to respond to those around the world who are seeking refuge from violence, threats, wars and persecution. We can do more.

Refugees help build a strong Canada through filling Canada's employment gaps, starting businesses, volunteering and taking up citizenship.

Sources

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Source: IOM, UNHCR, and OSCE, Vienna, Austria



Thank you!