

Thank you Margaret.

First of all, I'd like to acknowledge the brilliant panelists that have been assembled today and make it clear that I feel very inadequate to be amongst you all.

I'd also be remiss if I didn't thank Tom Axworthy for his hard work in putting these events together. I was lucky enough to have studied under Tom once upon a time and for those of you who've had the pleasure of having Tom in your life, you know that his generosity and ability to challenge you are a perpetual gift, so thanks Tom.

Today, I'm going to be speaking to the actions and perceptions of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Justin Trudeau Governments on immigration broadly and refugees specifically, including how both have been progressive as it can be defined relative to their times, but also politically pragmatic when managing public expectations from Canadians.

When considering such a broad period of time and such an expansive subject, it is often best to consider the pertinent events as a series of moments. Not in the temporal sense of a moment, but more as a fork in the road where a choice was made, and one can look back and clearly trace our nation's journey from there to here in the present day. In this case we'll look at two sets of moments, one from each government.

I would encourage you all to consider the impact that different choices would have had on the Canadian fabric, and related to that, the Canadian foreign and development policy decisions noted by the other panelists today.

For our first set of moments, immigration policy, then and now.

Many of you will be familiar with the Canadian immigration points system, which has now been in place in one form or another for 52 years, a global first.

This system, the great equalizer of those around the world hoping to immigrate to Canada, measures ones' human capital by awarding points on the basis of metrics such as age, professional experience, and proficiency in one of our two official languages, amongst others.

From Pierre Trudeau to Justin Trudeau – comparing Immigration and Refugee policy then and now

This revolutionary concept, not adopted in Australia until 1989, New Zealand in 1991, and briefly flirted with in the UK in from 2008 to 2010 was introduced in Canada in 1967 – under *not* Pierre Trudeau but Lester B. Pearson, and his Minister of Manpower and Immigration, Jean Marchand, one of the three wise men of the '65 election.

So why raise this Pearsonian invention then?

The establishment of the points system was only half of the equation. What came next changed our country's trajectory forever, and in my view for the better – and not in the least because it's unlikely I'd be here if it hadn't!

The point system's greatest merit remains the same today as it was then: it is entirely agnostic to the country of origin of a potential immigrant. While the system is forever evolving, adding or limiting points based on types of job offers, family size, relatives already in Canada and a host of others factors, it is incapable of prioritizing one nationality or race over another.

Our first moment has arrived.

Combined with the multicultural policies of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau commencing in 1971, the points system led to a seismic shift across the newly-levelled immigration spectrum.

While the mid-1960's saw immigrants from Europe comprising between 85-90% of those arriving in Canada, by the time Trudeau took his walk in the snow in 1984, that number had flipped, with 70% of prospective New Canadians coming from outside of Europe, predominantly from Asia. While Pearson had unlocked the door, Trudeau pushed it open to the diversity of the world that we now call one of our greatest strengths in Canada today.

Critics then and now claim that these policies were merely self-serving political manoeuvres that helped Trudeau remain in power through the 1970's but I have to say that I've always found this to be a fundamentally lazy claim.

Any such motivations to garner support would be no different in its motivation from a tax cut or a policy change that some may find favourable, with those latter examples being far less time consuming and a more efficient way to score political points.

Combine this with introducing Canada's Immigration Act in 1976, which amongst other key actions defined refugees and our obligations to them under international agreements, and you have a pretty activist government when it comes to immigration policy.

So, *progressive*, but also *pragmatic*.

While the composition of immigrants under Pierre Trudeau had changed, so did the overall numbers of those admitted. Facing a weakening economic climate and rising unemployment in the 1970's, the overall numbers of immigrants ebbed and flowed, generally declining from the start of his tenure which averaged over 165,000 newcomers between 1968 and 1975, with a high of 218,500 in 1974 to an average of 114,000 newcomers from 1976 to 1984, with 88,300 in that final year.

But once again, the balance of this pragmatism was tempered with a progressive and compassionate position on the subject of refugees, which we'll come to in a moment.

Those two terms, progressive and pragmatic, can also be used to describe the immigration policy under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Taking a deliberate approach of embracing the economic benefits of immigration, the current Trudeau Government introduced a historic multi-year levels plan, which has steadily grown Canada's intake of newcomers from an average of 255,000 seen under Prime Minister Stephen Harper to 320,000 in 2016, 330,000 last year and up to 350,000 in 2021.

While that number still falls short of the 450,000 asked for by the government's own Economic Advisory Council it represents an increase of nearly 38% from the Harper years.

It also has the added political pragmatism of staying close to the 1% of population benchmark that walks the line of popular acceptability in Canada without exceeding it.

Similarly, mindful of the social license around immigration, 72% of the growth is across economic programs, including growing programs where provinces themselves are active participants in selecting economic immigrants—

after all, it's hard for the most ardent of Tory Premiers to criticize your policies when they're both participating and benefitting directly.

Overall, current policies under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau represent 80% of our current population growth and in a few years, 100% of Canada's labour force growth as a result of this governments immigration policies.

This deliberate and fundamental choice represents the second moment of this pair, choosing to underpin the Canadian social safety net and taxpayer base with the one thing that we aren't producing enough of in this country – people!

Before our second set of moments, on the subject of refugees, I think it's important to note two very key points as it relates to the Canadian context:

First, political rhetoric aside, for decades now Canadian refugee resettlement policy has been world class regardless of the governing party. I was both pleased and relieved to see that immigration policy broadly and refugee policy specifically were not a political football in the 2019 federal election.

Now a reality check, for my second point.

While Canada has long been and continues to be a world leader in resettling refugees, which specifically means taking those who are in UNHCR refugee camps and bringing them to Canada, we and countries like us should always acknowledge those states that manage an exponential burden due to their geography in hosting refugees that cross their borders directly, often in the millions and often without an endgame, and do so with a fraction of our resources. These include Turkey, Jordan, Uganda, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Lebanon, Sudan and more recently Colombia.

Which takes us back to 1969.

While Canada signed on to the UN Convention on Refugees it came 18 years after it was first adopted by the UN. And while Pierre Trudeau's government *did* adopt it, no formal measures were established to examine refugee claims until the Immigration Act came into force in 1978.

Which to me makes the following perhaps even more progressive: between Trudeau becoming Prime Minister in 1968 and the Immigration Act taking effect ten years later, Canada accepted:

- 11,000 Czechs fleeing invasion from Soviet and Warsaw Pact forces,
- 7000 Ugandan Asians, predominantly Ismaili Muslims expelled by Idi Amin, including 4400 on specially chartered flights,
- 11,000 Lebanese escaping their civil war
- over 7000 Chileans and other Latin Americans after the overthrow of Allende by Pinochet
- and thousands of Bengali Muslims and Soviet Jews, amongst other groups, looking for safety and security

And while immense praise is deservedly placed on the Joe Clark government for its actions related to the 60,000 Southeast Asian refugees, or boat people, it was Pierre Trudeau's 1968 Immigration Act that enabled the concept of private sponsorships that has become a hallmark of the Canadian tradition in welcoming refugees, accounting for close to 300,000 refugees resettled in Canada to date outside of those assisted directly by the government. In fact between 1978 and 1981, refugees accounted for 25% of all new arrivals in Canada, up significantly from the 10-15% average seen before and after.

Fast forward to 2016 and refugees surged again as a part of the total newcomer population, making up 20% of the total. This was, of course, Justin Trudeau's reaction to the Syrian refugee crisis shortly after being first elected, where he had committed to resettling 25,000 people from that conflict. That number has been exceeded, and by more than a little bit, with roughly 70,000 Syrian refugees having been settled in Canada since the program began.

Add on nearly 1500 Yazidis and other survivors of Daesh, or ISIS, and new commitments for resettling refugees from Africa and the Middle-East, and the White Helmets and LGBT refugees Minister Gould mentioned and it's clear that on the refugee file, the Trudeau apple has fallen extremely close to the tree.

In all of these cases, refugee resettlement was not without its opponents either, both internal and external. Chileans brought to Canada under Pierre Trudeau were seen as a risk due to their arrival from a Communist state and faced long security screening processes.

Public sentiment for Syrian refugees peaked during the 2015 election campaign and was and is more of a political liability than a boon. Malicious false claims about these now Syrian Canadians are spread online constantly and even repeated by tabloids like the Toronto Sun, unfortunately shaping the opinions of some of our friends and neighbours.

I may be telling tales out of school here but upon being elected in 2015, the government was told by a senior public servant that 25,000 Syrian refugees was an impossibility and that 5,000 was a more reasonable number. It was conveyed that 25,000 was going to be the number and the public servant came back again suggesting 8,000 might work. Fast forward a few months and the number was *more* than 25,000, it had been *met and exceeded*, and that public servant had wisely decided to go enjoy her retirement in the meantime.

You don't need me to tell you this all comes in the context of borders tightening and walls going up towards refugees. While always a leader, Canada is now *the* world leader in taking resettled refugees. Not per capita. Real numbers.

Sadly, that's more of a reflection of American policy under Trump than our nature, generous as it might be.

And perhaps therein lies the most vivid parallel regarding immigration and refugee policy between Trudeau *pere* and Trudeau *fils* when it comes to their detractors and the subject of immigration.

Whether found in an age of xenophobia driven by fear of the unknown several decades ago, or today where a xenophobic revivalism is taking hold of states that have traditionally led alongside Canada, both Trudeau Governments have and continue, respectively, to demonstrate that their progressiveness is more than a tool for political gain.

We are lucky enough to not have to wonder what Pierre Trudeau would have said on the matter, were he here today – he told us in 1971, when speaking to the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, he stated:

“Uniformity is neither desirable nor possible in a country the size of Canada. We should not even be able to agree upon the kind of Canadian to choose as a model, let alone persuade most people to emulate it.

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There are few policies potentially more disastrous for Canada than to tell all Canadians that they must be alike.

There is no such thing as a model or ideal Canadian. What could be more absurd than the concept of an “all-Canadian” boy or girl?

A society which emphasizes uniformity is one which creates intolerance and hate. A society which eulogizes the average citizen is one which breeds mediocrity.

What the world should be seeking, and what in Canada we must continue to cherish, are not concepts of uniformity but human values: compassion, love, and understanding”