Canadian Politics | Immigration

Feds launch global ad campaign to dissuade asylum seekers from coming to Canada

By **Quinn Patrick, True North Wire** • December 4, 2024

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Source: Facebook

The federal government is launching a global online ad campaign to warn asylum-seekers that making a claim in Canada will be difficult in an effort to dissuade others from doing so amid an onslaught of filings.

The ads mark another shift in Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's administration as it attempts to save face while public opinion is plummeting, much of which has to do with previous immigration policy stances and its contribution to the housing shortage.

According to the Department of Immigration, the ads will run in 11 languages, including Spanish, Urdu, Ukrainian, Hindi and Tamil for four months and cost $250,000.

"Claiming asylum in Canada is not easy. There are strict guidelines to qualify. Find out what you need to know before you make a life-changing decision," one ad reads.

However, immigration lawyer Sergio Karas said he remains "skeptical" about the effectiveness of such an ad campaign.

"I am skeptical of the effect these advertisements will have. The advertisements do not accord with reality," Karas told True North. "No amount of advertising will be effective unless it is accompanied by legislative changes that will make it harder for applicants to abuse the system, file bogus claims, or apply for refugee status to obtain a work permit."

The department noted that another aspect of the ad campaign will include internet searches being led to government-sponsored content.

For example, if someone searches "how to claim asylum in Canada" or "refugee Canada" they will be directed to content titled "Canada's asylum system – Asylum Facts."

The government announced a reduction in its annual immigration targets in October and is feeling heightened pressure to get temporary residents to return to their home country instead of fleeing south of the border, following U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's tariff announcement. Trump cited Canada's poorly secured border as one of the factors behind his 25% tariff on all Canadian imports once he takes office in January.

According to Karas, "human smugglers, unscrupulous consultants, and applicants" are well aware that it's effortless to utter the magic words "I claim refugee status," granting them a hearing that takes over four years and that the likelihood of deportation is "extremely low."

A department spokesperson told Reuters that, "Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada is working to combat the spread of misinformation and disinformation about Canada's immigration system, and to highlight the risks of working with unauthorized representatives."

However, Conservative Shadow Minister for IRCC Tom Kmiec accused the Trudeau government of making it easier for bad actors to abuse the system in the first place.

"Trudeau and his incompetent Ministers have thoroughly broken our immigration system. Trudeau made it easier to game the system and claim asylum in Canada as the skyrocketing numbers will show. It will take more than an advertisement claiming the opposite to fix it," Kmiec told True North.

"They did nothing about Roxham Road for more than six years and relaxed visitor visa requirements, resulting in a sharp hike in asylum claims at our airports. Under his watch, asylum claims at our airports grew by more than 16 times, going from 2,320 in 2015 to 41,350 last year."

Canada's refugee system is currently facing a backlog of 260,000 cases, as global displacement continues to rise.

Immigration Minister Marc Miller has hinted at the idea of streamlining certain claims deemed unlikely to succeed to cope with the backlog.

"They will continue to play the system like a fiddle until the federal government cuts off all financial incentives to claim refugee status, enforce the law, and deport those who have overstayed their welcome," said Karas. "Then and only then, the word will spread around the world that Canada is serious."

Author

Quinn Patrick, True North Wire

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