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Most Calgary and Edmonton residents want immigration to slow: poll

By **Quinn Patrick, True North Wire** • October 1, 2024

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The vast majority of Albertans living in the province's two largest cities would like to see the immigration rate slow down.

A Maru public opinion poll conducted by CityNews earlier this month revealed that 70% of the 400 people surveyed in both Calgary and Edmonton want to see immigration either reduced or halted completely.

"Not surprisingly, this poll confirms a trend that started some time ago: the historic consensus on immigration has been significantly eroded by unwise federal government policies that were never based on sound economic needs but are instead based on party politics, pandering, and the erroneous idea that 'more is always better,'" specialist citizenship and immigration law Sergio Karas told True North.

"For immigration to continue to work for the benefit of Canada it has to be well thought out, controlled, steady, manageable in number and quality, and secure."

Alberta Premier Danielle Smith called on the Trudeau government to slow the pace of immigration earlier this month, telling Ottawa that it's time to "immediately reintroduce sensible and restrained immigration policies."

"The Trudeau government's unrestrained, open-border policies, permitting well over one million newcomers each year into Canada is causing significant challenges," said Smith on Sept. 17 during a televised announcement that her government would be investing $8.6 billion in new schools.

According to Statistics Canada, Alberta took in over 200,000 new people last year, a 4.4% increase, and the province continues to be the fastest growing in Canada by a landslide.

Smith has said that Alberta can no longer support the housing, schools, hospitals or jobs required to accommodate everyone.

However, the premier had previously asked Ottawa to approve more newcomers for economic purposes earlier this year and shared her desire to have Alberta's population reach 10 million people by 2050.

"Let's have an aggressive target to double our population. People are going to want to come here, and we have to embrace them, and we want to build this place out," said Smith on the Shaun Newman Podcast in January.

She would later walk those comments back in August after receiving considerable criticism.

Alberta NDP's critic for immigration and multiculturalism Lizette Tejada accused Smith of scapegoating immigrants after her government ran a campaign welcoming them to the province.

"We have a government that is not willing to invest or to plan for that growth and now… really this a bit of a dog whistle, to point at one part of the population to distract from their own failures in governing," TeJada told CtiyNews.

According to the poll, immigration for skilled workers was better received.

Still, only 17% of Calgary and Edmonton residents wanted to see an increase in that sector.

Around half of respondents said that they believe immigrants are having a positive impact while 30% said they think immigration should be halted altogether.

Karas, who is also co-chair of the American Bar Association Immigration and Naturalization Committee, said that it's becoming obvious that people's evaluation of immigrants has largely to do with the kind of applicant they are and what they can offer Canadian society once here.

"It is also glaring from the poll that not all immigrants are viewed equally by the public, and that is a shrewd observation: while many immigrants are needed in specific sectors of the economy, others are not because they become a burden to the social safety net, schools, hospitals, and other public services. This distinction has to be taken into consideration in any future policy formulation. The link between immigration and jobs is paramount," said Karas.

"The public is also concerned about the many failures of security screening associated with immigrant selection that have been publicized recently, and that undermines the positive view of immigration. This must be corrected immediately."

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