

## **Canada's refugee numbers are increasing. And the system risks losing confidence. Change is needed now - New Policy School report**

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Calgary – The Canadian government has committed to increasing refugee numbers. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has designated Canada as a primary destination for hard-to-settle refugees. The diversity of source countries is increasing, resulting in more refugees who are illiterate in both English and French. More refugees will struggle to adapt to life in Canada. Taken together, it is possible that without fixing the problems in the system, public dissatisfaction could rise as Canadians lose faith that their refugee system is under control - that could undermine their faith in the entire immigration system.

Today, The School of Public Policy with author Robert Vineberg released a report that provides an overview of how Canadian refugee policy has evolved since the end of the Second World War, the current state of affairs in refugee policy, including the good and the bad, and includes solid recommendations for reforming it.

According to Vineberg “When citizens lose faith in their government’s refugee policies, there arises the potential for an anti-immigration backlash, as several European countries have recently discovered. Refugees go unprocessed for years, and in the meantime end up living, working and laying down roots. The biggest flaw in the immigration system traces back to the government’s overreaction to the Singh Supreme Court decision. The Supreme Court ordered that all rejected refugees had a right to an in-person appeal, but the federal government went much further and gave every refugee an in-person hearing. That system has left Canada with a backlog, as of last year, of **34,000 cases**. In most every other country, initial refugee screenings are conducted by public servants working for the immigration agency, which here would be Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), as opposed to the Immigration and Refugee Board.”

Canada could do a much better job at clearing its backlog and better processing refugee claims, particularly in weeding out the bogus claims, by reassigning responsibility for interviewing refugees to the officials at IRCC. Also, this would avoid the conflict of interest at the IRB, which oversees reviewing appeals of its own decisions. The IRB is better suited to handle appeals of decisions made by IRCC agents who are at arms-length from the IRB.

In addition, Canada should also ensure it maintains a balance in accepting not strictly refugees who are most at risk, but also an equal number of refugees who will more easily establish themselves in Canada and adapt within one year of landing in Canada. Having a system that not only ensures more efficient, effective processing of refugees, with proper control over who settles here, will not only help Canadians maintain confidence in their refugee and immigration system. It will also ensure that Canada has a system that can respond, when necessary, to global crises when they erupt, and better help those refugees who need protection.

The paper can be downloaded at <https://www.policyschool.ca/publications/>

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### **Media contact:**

Morten Paulsen

[morten.paulsen2@ucalgary.ca](mailto:morten.paulsen2@ucalgary.ca)

403.220.2540