



THE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

Dramatic changes have occurred to U.S. refugee and immigration policy - Canada must prepare itself for the repercussions - New School of Public Policy report

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Calgary – The U.S. has recently made dramatic changes to its refugee and immigration policy. One change includes further cuts to the U.S.'s longstanding refugee resettlement program. The other change, already announced, could mean that the U.S. will effectively compromise its reciprocal role in the Canada-U.S. Safe Third Country Agreement, affecting asylum seekers. As the U.S. slashes its intake of refugees, they could surge in numbers to Canada.

Today, The School of Public Policy with author and immigration expert, Robert Falconer released two reports examining the noteworthy changes to refugee and asylum policies in the U.S. and what the implications are for Canada.

According to Falconer “As the U.S. cuts back its intake of refugees, the issue of Canada’s obligations to its international partners concerning refugees will surge to the forefront. Last year, Canada was the world leader in refugee resettlement, the program that relocates vulnerable refugees to Canada after being selected and vetted abroad. As the U.S. retreats from its own program, Canada will be forced to decide how many more refugees it can accept. This will be more than a question of humanitarianism. Instead, the shutdown’s potentially divisive effects will encompass questions of stress on Canadian public finances, communities and non-profits, along with the bigger political picture of trade, foreign policy and national security. Not only does the contemplated shutdown mean that the U.S. will be abandoning the millions of people stuck in Third World refugee camps, waiting to go somewhere else, but it will also leave in the lurch the U.S.’s international partners who traditionally house these people.”

Refugee advocacy groups in Canada are currently challenging Canada’s agreement with the U.S. at the Federal Court on this and other bases. Should they be successful there would be an immediate impact on Canada’s asylum system. It would cause an increased number of claims at the border from previously ineligible asylum seekers coming from the U.S., who would have previously been sent back to the U.S. The ramifications of such a change would include further clogging of an already backlogged Canadian asylum system and increased strain on federal and provincial finances.

Tensions between the two countries, already chilled due to issues of trade, would also be worsened. The incoming government after the Oct. 21 federal election in Canada could now be faced with some tough decisions to make about its relationship with the U.S. as one of its first orders of business.

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

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