Recent Changes in Refugee and Immigration Policy

October 2014
Canadian Council for Refugees
Recent Changes in Refugee and Immigration Policy

Major themes

- Shift in priorities to economic
- Increase in precarious status
- Restrictions for refugees
- Emphasis on criminality and fraud
Economic priority
Recent Changes in Refugee and Immigration Policy

Immigration categories: 1995

- Family
- Refugees
- Economic

Economic Priorities
Recent Changes in Refugee and Immigration Policy

Immigration categories: 2014 targets

- Family
- Refugees
- Economic
Recent Changes in Refugee and Immigration Policy

Immigration categories: 1995 vs. 2014

Economic Priorities
Recent Changes in Refugee and Immigration Policy

Priority to economic migration

Reflected (for example) in policy changes:

○ Sponsorship of parents and grandparents

○ Age of dependents from under 22 to under 19
Precarious status
Recent Changes in Refugee and Immigration Policy

Migrant workers

Temporary Foreign Workers vs Permanent Residents
2009-2013

- Foreign Workers
- Permanent residents
Migrant workers’ rights

Vulnerable to exploitation and abuse due to:
- lack of permanent status
- employer-specific work permits
- isolation
- lack of access to information on rights
- lack of monitoring
- no settlement services
Recent Changes in Refugee and Immigration Policy

Trafficked persons

New barriers to protection through a Temporary Resident Permit

- Refugee claimants (one year ban)
- Designated Foreign Nationals (five year ban)
Recent Changes in Refugee and Immigration Policy

Conditional Permanent Residence

- Regulatory change Oct 2012
- Sponsored spouses/partners, together for less than 2 years (no children)
- PR conditional for 2 years
- Exception for abuse or neglect
Recently Changes in Refugee and Immigration Policy

Cessation and loss of Permanent Residence

Since 2012, permanent residents who came as refugees lose their permanent residence if they are found to no longer need protection.
Recent Changes in Refugee and Immigration Policy

Barriers to citizenship

Citizenship applications

Prepared by Canadian Council for Refugees from CIC data
Recent Changes in Refugee and Immigration Policy

Barriers to citizenship

- Slow processing – 24 months
- Residence Questionnaire
- New requirement – provide proof of competence in English/French
- Increased fees – February 2014
Recent Changes in Refugee and Immigration Policy

Amendments to Citizenship Act

- Approved June 2014
- Most provisions not yet in force
- Citizenship “harder to get, easier to lose”
Restrictions for refugees
Recent Changes in Refugee and Immigration Policy

Refugee Health Care

Refugee Health Care: Impacts of recent cuts

Restrictions for refugees
Recent Changes in Refugee and Immigration Policy

Interim Federal Health Program

- Cuts effective June 30, 2012
- Affect resettled refugees, refugee claimants and others
- Federal Court: cuts “cruel and unusual treatment” (July 2014)
Recent Changes in Refugee and Immigration Policy

Refugee claim system

Warning – EXTREME COMPLEXITY!
Recent Changes in Refugee and Immigration Policy

Changes to claims - Key features

- Very short timelines
- Differential treatment
- Refugee appeal but bars on recourse
Recent Changes in Refugee and Immigration Policy

Drop in numbers of claims

Claims referred, 1989-2013

Restrictions for refugees
Refugee resettlement

The highs and lows of refugee resettlement to Canada

1979-2013

- Gov't ass. Refugees
- Priv. Spons. Refugees

Restrictions for refugees
Recent Changes in Refugee and Immigration Policy

Changes in resettlement

- Increased restrictions for private sponsors (but increased expectations)
- Ministerial priorities
- Focus on limited number of refugee populations
- Little response to Syrian crisis
Focus on fraud, criminality
Recent Changes in Refugee and Immigration Policy

Permanent residence and criminality

- Faster Removal of Foreign Criminals (C-43) June 2013
- No right of appeal – 6 month sentence (previously 2 years)
Recent Changes in Refugee and Immigration Policy

Divisive rhetoric

Common themes:

- Fraud
- Criminality
- Queue-jumping
- Pitting Canadians against refugees
Recent Changes in Refugee and Immigration Policy
Recent Changes in Refugee and Immigration Policy

For more information:

ccrweb.ca