



September 30, 2008

RE: Questionnaire

Attached please find the response of Canada's New Democrats to your 2008 Election questionnaire. It is the policy of our party to respond on behalf of all New Democrat candidates.

To find out more, we encourage you to consult: www.ndp.ca

Thank you for your interest in the views of Canada's New Democrats on the critical issues facing Canadians.

We appreciate your efforts to help voters make an informed decision on voting day.

Sincerely,

Jack Layton
Leader of Canada's New Democrats

New Democrat Response to Canadian Council for Refugees Questionnaire

QUESTION #1 – SUPPORT FOR LEGISLATION TO PROTECT TRAFFICKED PERSONS

This election, Jack Layton and his team of New Democrats have a plan for an improved immigration system—to ensure fairness, boost Canada's productivity, and ease family reunification. Our immigration system must also recognize domestic violence and abuse, and its particular effects on women in that system.

The New Democrat plan to promote women's equality globally includes working in collaboration with NGOs, victim services agencies, law enforcement and the international community to prevent trafficking, protect those who have been victims, and enforce laws against trafficking.

New Democrats realize the scope of the problem - an estimated 2.5 million people a year are victims of human trafficking and the vast majority are women and children. It is estimated that 92% of human trafficking is for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Temporary foreign workers and Live-in Caregivers are often among the most exploited workers in Canada. Changes are necessary to these programs that recognize both the importance of the work and ensure the rights of the workers and employment standards including wages, benefits and safety.

In the last parliament, Canada's New Democrats led the way by leading the campaign to end punishing processing fees imposed on refugees and on immigrant women and children escaping domestic violence, and by opposing legislation extending the use of "security certificates" to detain immigrants without charge.

QUESTION #2 – SUPPORT FOR AN INCREASE IN REFUGEES IN CANADA

Canada's New Democrats believe that new Canadians have always made our country stronger, and healthy immigration levels are more important than ever—to help build thriving communities and a 21st-century workforce to compete with the world's best.

New Democrats are very concerned about the poor performance of Canada's current refugee claim and settlement process, largely established by the Liberals and continued by the Conservatives. It is unacceptable that many refugees are escaping dangerous and difficult situations, only to have their application sit piled high at the IRB, virtually neglected, and their life put on indefinite hold.

BC MP and New Democrat Citizenship and Immigration Critic Bill Siksay has been very outspoken about this and we are pressuring the government to clean up its performance in dealing with refugees, during the claims process and beyond.

Our team will continue to pressure this government to treat refugees with the respect and dignity they deserve and show what makes Canada a beacon in a world of much poverty and conflict.

Through the refugee class of immigration, Jack Layton and his team of New Democrats will create a more compassionate Canada by offering new hope to people fleeing persecution, violence and repression.

QUESTION #3 – SUPPORT FOR THE ELIMINATION OF BURDEN OF TRANSPORTATION LOANS FOR REFUGEES

Canada's New Democrats share the concern that successful entrants to Canada face significant hardship once they do arrive, including poverty rates three times the national

average. In parliament, we have led the campaign to end punishing processing fees imposed on refugees and on immigrant women and children escaping domestic violence.

New Democrats will eliminate landing fees for new immigrants, as well as processing fees for refugees and people fleeing torture or domestic violence.

QUESTION #4 – SUPPORT FOR THE PRIORITIZATION OF FAMILY REUNIFICATION

New Democrats believe that family reunification is crucial to immigrants, and must remain a central feature of Canada's immigration policy. Backlogs in processing sponsorships that would allow family members to be reunited in Canada must be reduced. The definition of family in the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* must be expanded to better recognize key family relationships.

In the last parliament, Jack Layton and the New Democrats tabled legislation to speed up family reunification by permitting any citizen or landed immigrant to sponsor for immigration one family member from outside the "family" classification.

To improve family reunification moving forward, a New Democrat government will significantly increase resources and support for immigration processes to reduce the huge and unacceptable backlogs that currently exist in processing applications, work to meet Canada's target of annual immigration (1 percent of population), and establish firm targets for on-time completion of family class and spousal sponsorships.

We will also stop the decline in family reunification, and maximize the economic and social advantages of family stability, and implement the New Democrats' *Once in a Lifetime* bill to expedite sponsorship of one family member as a new Canadian.

QUESTION #5 – SUPPORT FOR THE REFUGEE APPEAL DIVISION (RAD)

Canada's New Democrats believe that the Refugee Appeal Division (RAD) is necessary to ensure justice and fairness in our refugee determination system.

In the last parliament, our team worked to ensure fact-based appeals for refugee claimants by demanding the launch of the RAD, which Parliament mandated in law in 2002 and has been ignored by every government since. We believe the RAD should be launched without further delay.

New Democrats have also been working to protect the rights of refugees and immigrants by pressuring the government to reform the visa program for fairness and efficiency—so visitors are not arbitrarily turned away overseas and families have proper visitation rights – and by opposing legislation extending the use of “security certificates” to detain immigrants without charge.

Moving forward, a New Democrat government will immediately implement the provision in the *Immigration Act* for a refugee appeal division to help facilitate a fair refugee hearing and determination process, and ensure that all vacancies on the Immigration and Refugee Board are filled in a fair and transparent manner.

To establish fairness in the immigration system and a more compassionate Canada, Jack Layton and the New Democrats will develop credible, accountable procedures and appeal processes for potential visitors to Canada for important family events such as weddings, births and illness, and for the unification of married couples.

In addition, we will properly regulate immigration consultants to stop abuse of immigrants and potential immigrants, crack down on unscrupulous and illegal activities, eliminate discrimination against people with disabilities in admission processes, and allow people without status who are living in Canada the opportunity to apply for legal status.

QUESTION #6 – SUPPORT FOR PERMANENT PROGRAMS AND PROTECTION OF TEMPORARY WORKERS

With 900,000 hopeful immigrants stuck on waiting lists, Stephen Harper's "solution" to backlogs is to give his cabinet arbitrary powers to screen people out. Instead of supporting family reunification and welcoming economic-class immigrants to match Canada's long-term needs, Harper wants to prioritize short-term requests from big-business friends.

Temporary foreign workers and Live-in Caregivers are often among the most exploited workers in Canada. Changes are necessary to these programs that recognize both the importance of the work and ensure the rights of the workers and employment standards including wages, benefits and safety.

Jack Layton and the New Democrats will continue to ensure that all new Canadians have access to the 'core' immigration system, rather than expand the Liberal-Conservative temporary "guest worker" and "live-in caregiver" programs. These programs deny basic employee rights, do not allow application for immigration, and result in longer delays in the entire system.

QUESTION # 7 – SUPPORT FOR COMPLAINTS MECHANISM FOR THE CANADA BORDER SERVICES AGENCY (CBSA)

We have learned from the Auditor General that the Canadian Border Services Agency decision-making process is arbitrary and poorly monitored, it's ineffective and its treatment of those in detention is inadequate.

Canada's New Democrats believe that the Canadian Border Services should ensure that their resources are spent on stopping criminals and not delaying or harassing the law-abiding residents.