

# Immigration Policies of the Three Main Federal Parties

By R. Reis Pagtakhan

Canada's immigration policy is one of the most talked-about public policy issues. As a result, the Filipino Journal, on our readers' behalf, sent simultaneous e-mails to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the federal Official Opposition critic for Immigration, and the federal Liberal Party critic for Immigration on January 30, 2014 inviting the political parties to respond to the following 4 questions:

1. Canada's immigration system has undergone changes in the last few years. What do you think about these changes?  
2. The Provincial Nominee Program has brought in number of immigrants on an annual basis. How many Provincial Nominee certificates should the province should be issued on an annual basis?

3. While provinces have autonomy with their Provincial Nominee Programs, the final decision is made by the Canadian government. To what extent should national policies play a role in provincial nominee selection, and what should those national policies be?

4. Increasing immigration to Canada will result in more individuals in the work force. How do you see the relationship between immigration policy and ensuring that there are enough jobs for Canadians?

## The Filipino Journal's "Ground Rules"

In order to be fair, we set "ground rules" that we communicated to all of the political parties. These "ground rules" were as follows:

1. All of the political parties had until the end of the day on February 14, 2014 to provide their responses.

2. We told the political parties that we would not share their responses with the other political parties in advance of publication so as not to give one party an advantage over the other.

3. No political parties were allowed to change their answers after February 14, 2014.

4. The total word count of their answers (not including our questions) was capped at 800 words as calculated by Microsoft Word. Any words beyond 800 would simply be cut off by us. The Filipino Journal would not otherwise edit the responses.

The Filipino Journal decided that the fairest way to publish these responses would be to start the largest party in Parliament, followed by the Official Opposition, and then by the Liberal Party. All of the political parties were told of this.

Only two parties responded to our questions – the Conservative Party and the NDP. No response was received from the Liberal Party. The following are the responses.

## The Conservative Party's Response

By The Hon. Chris Alexander, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada

*Canada's immigration system has undergone changes in the last few years. What do you think about these changes?*

Our Conservative government is focused on building a stronger country, which includes creating jobs, economic growth and long-term prosperity. Certainly, immigration plays a key role in Canada's long-term prosperity and the Government of Canada is planning to welcome – for the eighth consecutive year – between 240,000 to 265,000 new permanent residents in 2014. This is the highest sustained level of immigration in Canadian history, and it supports our economic immigration objectives,

family reunification goals and humanitarian obligations.

Our government is building a fast, flexible, and fair economic immigration system whose primary focus is on meeting Canada's labour market needs. Canada's future economic growth will require a steady stream of new immigrants to meet labour market demands.

Our government is developing a still-to-be-named Expression of Interest (EIO) immigration system model for Canada, which is critical to a new, transformed immigration system. Such a system would be labour market driven; it would be able to identify people who have the skills and experience required to meet Canada's economic needs, and bring them here in months, not years. We will launch this new system in January 2015.

*The Provincial Nominee Program has brought in number of immigrants on an annual basis. How many Provincial Nominee certificates should the province should be issued on an annual basis?*

The Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) is an important part of our Conservative government's efforts to align our immigration system with labour market needs. Through the program, participating provinces and territories play a role in selecting their own immigrants. They can nominate workers who meet their specific economic and labour market needs. The PNP helps to strengthen local economies by allowing provinces and territories to nominate qualified individuals to meet their unique labour market needs and promote business development.

Our government plans to welcome between 44,500 and 47,000 permanent residents under the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) in 2014. This represents the highest-ever levels for this program, a nod to its success in attracting newcomers who contribute more fully and can provide for their families more quickly.

The PNP is Canada's second-largest economic immigration program after the Federal Skilled Workers Program, and has helped to spread the benefits of immigration across the country. The program has grown exponentially, from around 1,250 landed immigrants in 2000 to almost 41,000 people in 2012, including principal applicants, spouses and dependants.

We need to carefully balance needs in all immigration categories and across the country. The number of PNP admissions reflects how many nominations are issued by provinces and territories, and must be balanced in the context of our overall levels plan.

*While provinces have autonomy with their Provincial Nominee Programs, the final decision is made by the Canadian government. To what extent should national policies play a role in provincial nominee selection, and what should those national policies be?*

Immigration is a federal responsibility, and again, the government needs to balance needs in all immigration streams and across the country. The number of Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) admissions reflects how many nominations are issued by provinces and territories, and must be balanced in the context of the overall levels plan.

The PNP is an economic program and we want to work with provinces and territories to ensure that it focuses solely on supporting economic growth, not duplicating non-economic federal immigration programs, such as family sponsorship. As we increasingly focus immigration on addressing our future economic needs, the extent to which provinces and territories maximize their existing allocations and ensure that their programs focus solely on supporting economic growth will inform future growth in the PNP.

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## The NDP's Response

By Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe, M.P., Official Opposition Critic for Citizenship and Immigration

One of the largest changes we have seen in Canada's immigration system under the Conservatives is in family reunification. For the past two years, the Conservatives put a moratorium on parent and grandparent sponsorship applications. This meant that no Canadian family could apply to have their parents or grandparents, who took care of them and raised them when they were young, be reunited with them in Canada.

We also saw the Conservatives put in place a dramatic increase in the minimum amount of money families need to have in order to apply. This, added to wait times that are as long as 8.5 years in some cases once families finally apply, means that family reunification is an increasingly inaccessible dream for many Canadians.

For 2014, the government announced that they will reopen parent and grandparent sponsorship applications, but it will be restricted to just 5,000 applications. These 5,000 spots were filled in less than 35 days,

meaning that thousands of Canadians wanting to reunite with their parents or grandparents will now need to wait until 2015 before they can even start the long and arduous process.

New Democrats understand the importance of family and being with your loved ones. That's why, under the leadership of Tom Mulcair, we have been fighting to make family reunification a central priority in Canada's immigration system. We will continue to hold Stephen Harper's feet to the fire and will make sure more families can reunite here in Canada.

Immigrants also play a very important role in Canada's economy and contribute a tremendous amount to society. The Provincial Nominee Program allows provincial governments to work with employers and recommend candidates based on job opportunities. The province of Manitoba is a good example of the successes of this program. The Provincial Nominee Program in Manitoba benefits both the immigrants and businesses. A key reason why the program is successful there is because of the strong resettlement programs

that allow immigrants to fully use their skills and integrate into our society.

Immigration is crucial in helping grow our economy and country. Under the Conservatives, we have seen record deficits and high youth unemployment. We have also seen life getting more and more expensive for the average hard-working Canadian. Whether it is regulating the out-of-control remittance fees or stopping gas price gouging, you can count on New Democrats to make life more affordable for you and your family."

## Sa Madaling Salita

by aL.fie vera mella  
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## Puwede Ka Bang Tumulong sa Iyong Kapwa kahit Wala Kang Pera?

### (On the Meaning of Philanthropy)

Ang akala ng maraming tao e sa pamamagitan lang ng pag-aambag ng pera sila maaaring makatulong sa kanilang kapwa.

Money is not the only thing that people could use to contribute to the welfare of others. Of course, money is useful especially to the poor. However, many people are able to help their fellow humans in other equally important ways; for instance, services or skills rendered for free or through words of wisdom or sharing of information that they couldn't easily get from ordinary sources.

For example, there are many physicians and nurses who—apart from working for the money at their workplaces—still volunteer during their free time to work for free in certain poor areas. Many of them join medical missions,

and they even shoulder their own travel-and-accommodation expenses.

Many musicians I know perform for free during fundraising events to serve as entertainment for guests, waiving their talent fee to cut down the production cost of the event. There are artists who contribute

original songs for free for cause-oriented compilation albums.

Many writers contribute articles to newspapers without getting paid just to be able to share their words of wisdom and ideas to people who love reading newspapers.

Philanthropy, in its basic sense, is "love for humanity" and the expression of caring, concern, nourishing, enhancing, and improving the quality of life—whether physically or mentally.

Therefore, anyone can be a philanthropist. If you have extra money to donate, then why not? But if all you could contribute are your skills, talents, knowledge, time, and other services, then it is still valid...so long as one of the primary reasons for doing this is the sincere concern for the quality of life of others.

According to Wikipedia, "Philanthropy etymologically means 'love of humanity' in the sense of caring, nourishing,

developing and enhancing 'what it is to be human' on both the benefactors' (by identifying and exercising their values in giving and volunteering) and beneficiaries' (by benefiting) parts."

### Sa Madaling Salita

Malaki pa rin ang maaari mong maitulong sa iyong kapwa kahit wala kang ekstrang pera;

basta ba meron kang sariling kaalaman, talento, panahon, o anumang serbisyong kaya mong iambag o ibahagi nang bukal sa iyong kalooban.

### Or, in Simple Words

Even without extra money to spare, anyone can still help others by sharing their knowledge, skills, talents, time, or services for free.



Above: MGEU members gather at a special conference devoted to women's issues.

Left: Les Crisostomo says MGEU membership was key to many of the benefits he now enjoys in retirement.

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