

# Intelligence MEMOS



From: Parisa Mahboubi  
To: Concerned Canadians  
Date: July 24, 2018  
Re: CANADA CAN BENEFIT ECONOMICALLY FROM THE ASYLUM SEEKER SURGE

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The number of asylum seekers crossing into Canada has increased since 2016 due to changes in US immigration policy. While the [majority](#) do not appear to meet the requirements for admission, Canada can still benefit from eligible claimants by implementing effective settlement policies.

Since last July, about 27,000 asylum seekers entered Canada between the ports of entry, almost all through Quebec (95 percent), according to [Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada statistics](#). The influx has imposed challenges for Ottawa and the provinces of [Quebec](#) and [Ontario](#), who share responsibilities for settling these refugee claimants.

Only [eligible asylum claimants](#) in need of protection can stay while waiting for the determination of their claim. Although these people and their family members can obtain work permits after completing a medical examination, they are seen as a burden rather than an opportunity.

But they are just part of Canada's annual intake. This year, the [projected total](#) of incoming immigrants is 310,000, of whom about 14 percent would be refugees (9 percent) and protected persons (5 percent) while more than 57 percent are economic-class migrants.

Under the immigration point system the economic class is favoured, because of higher education and skills and perform relatively better than other immigrants in the labour market upon their arrival. In contrast, refugees and asylum-seekers have historically experienced, on average, the lowest outcomes in terms of [earnings and employment](#), excluding privately sponsored refugees. This is because they face greater barriers to labour market integration, and the need for language and workplace skills. In particular, my [C.D. Howe Institute study](#) shows they have lowest literacy skills, which can be improved by language training programs.

However, Canada's support for refugee seekers can be more than just a humanitarian stand. It can lead to an economic benefit to host provinces.

How?

According to Statistics Canada, job vacancies (unadjusted for seasonality) increased by 19.3 percent from the first quarter of 2017 to more than 462,000 in the first quarter of 2018. More than 39 percent of job vacancies were from Ontario, followed by Quebec and British Columbia with 20 percent. Remarkably, a sizable share of these available jobs did not require previous work experience or a minimum education level.

Canada experienced its lowest unemployment rate since October 2007 in the first quarter of this year, at 5.8 percent. Low unemployment has made it harder for employers to fill jobs. Higher job vacancies in jobs without requirements for higher education highlight the need for more labour rather than higher skills.

Undoubtedly, many will need help, especially around language training and with navigating job ads.

But immigration settlement programs can facilitate labour market entry for refugee claimants. This is not of course to substitute for a rigorous evaluation of refugees' claims and ensuring the integrity of Canada's borders. But Canada can also seek economic opportunities from the influx.

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