

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

## CANADA SAYS IT'S NO SAFE HAVEN FOR IMMIGRANTS LOSING U.S. PROTECTION

*Facing unprecedented influx, officials warn Haitians and others that a trip north could end in deportation*

By Sara Schaefer Muñoz in Toronto and Alicia A. Caldwell in Los Angeles  
September 27, 2017

Canada has an urgent message for immigrants in the U.S. fearing deportation: Don't count on us for refuge.

Earlier this month in Los Angeles, a top lawmaker with Canada's governing party met with members of the local Hispanic immigrant community to stress that people who fear losing their protected status in the U.S. shouldn't expect automatic reception in Canada – and could be deported to their country of origin if they make the trip north.

"It's really important before making any decisions that they understand [Canadian] laws," Pablo Rodriguez, a Liberal member of parliament from Quebec, told the group.

That message marks a shift for Canada, which has **emphasized its friendliness toward immigrants** as the Trump administration has moved to tighten U.S. borders. When the U.S. launched its ban on travelers from some Muslim-majority countries in January, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau posted a message on his **Twitter** account: "To those fleeing persecution, terror & war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith. Diversity is our strength."

Since mid-July, however, Canada has faced **an unprecedented influx** from the U.S. of some 7,000 asylum seekers, in large part Haitians who feared deportation once their U.S. temporary protection expires. Many of them were among the estimated 58,000 in the U.S. under a humanitarian program that allowed them to stay as the Caribbean island rebuilt after a devastating earthquake in 2010. The Trump administration has **signaled it won't renew** the protections once a six-month extension runs out in January.

Now Ottawa is rushing to clarify its own rules: namely, that those who arrive in Canada can be deported back to their country of origin, not just returned to the U.S. Furthermore, if they have been denied asylum in the U.S., they are unlikely to receive it in Canada.

"We remain unwavering in our commitment to offer protection for those determined to flee war, persecution or terror," Ahmed Hussen, Canada's Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, said in an interview earlier this month. "But there is a lot of false information in those communities. Not having or losing status in the U.S. is not grounds for an asylum claim."

Because of a treaty between Canada and the U.S., asylum seekers need to make their claims in whichever country they arrive first. There is an exception if they enter Canada illegally, which is why thousands made their way over back roads and through wooded areas along the New York-Quebec border in the summer. Canadian officials had to convert

Montreal's stadium to a shelter to handle the influx, which put immigration and police resources under stress and set off clashes between pro and anti-immigration demonstrators.

To discourage such crossings, especially as the Trump administration now aims to **end the so-called Dreamers program** that shields undocumented immigrants who entered the U.S. as children from deportation, Canadian officials are reaching out in the U.S. They are also posting messages on Canadian immigration websites, such as, "Claiming Asylum: No Automatic Stay in Canada."

They say myths about Canada have cropped up in some U.S. foreign-language media or over social-media applications like WhatsApp, triggering surges at the border.

"There is no pass for those who cross irregularly," Emmanuel Dubourg, a Haitian-Canadian member of parliament, emphasized during visits last month to Miami's Haitian community.

Mr. Trudeau was asked at a recent press conference if his January tweet had been too welcoming. "We welcome refugees in this country, but there is process to determine whether someone is a refugee," he said, adding that those fleeing to Canada face rigorous screening.

Among Haitians' refugee-protection claims finalized in the first six months of this year, about half were accepted, according to Canadian immigration statistics. Of 10,330 refugee claims completed from all countries in that period, 65 percent were accepted.

The White House plans to **reduce the maximum number of refugee admissions** for the coming fiscal year to 45,000, the lowest cap in decades, according to people familiar with the discussions. A decision is expected later this week. Canadian officials declined to comment.

For Canada, the U.S. has always served as a buffer against the northward flow of migrants. But now it is unexpectedly facing significant illegal immigration along many parts of its 4,000-mile southern border with the U.S., though far less than the U.S. experiences along its Mexican border. The outreach efforts of Canadian officials mirror those the U.S. government has undertaken in Central America in recent years, where officials have warned families there is no free pass into the U.S.

In Los Angeles earlier this month, community leaders listening to Mr. Rodriguez told him it could be hard to dissuade worried Central Americans in the U.S. from trying their luck in Canada. Many in those communities have been protected not only under the Dreamers program but through temporary status granted after Hurricane Mitch plowed through Central America in 1999 and deadly earthquakes hit El Salvador in 2001.

Protected status for citizens of Central American countries, covering more than 250,000 people, are also set to expire next year.

Salvador Sanabria, executive director of Salvadoran advocacy group: El Rescate, advised the Canadian officials to step up their campaign to clarify the country's stance, "given the fact that you might be facing a potential humanitarian crisis at your border."