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OPINION: SOME BIG HOLES IN TRUMP'S WALL

A new agreement between Mexico and Canada seriously undermines the rationale for a border wall.

By Stuart Anderson
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New players often play chess poorly because they make aggressive moves without anticipating how their opponents will react. They capture a pawn—only to lose a queen. This dynamic isn't very different from Donald Trump's proposal to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border: The policy doesn't consider how people will respond.

A wall across the southern border, as Mr. Trump has proposed, would cost billions of dollars and take years to complete. Yet no matter what material is used, or who pays for it, the wall would never be impenetrable. Migrants will always find ways to enter the U.S. illegally.

Consider Canada's decision to grant visa-free travel to Mexicans. Beginning Dec. 1, virtually any citizen of Mexico can buy a plane ticket, fill out a form online and arrive in Canada. "The Government of Canada has made it a top priority to re-establish and strengthen our relationship with one of our most important partners, Mexico," explained a June statement from the office of Canada's prime minister.

What would this mean in practice? Even if a wall is built, Mexicans could travel to Canada without a visa and, if they desire, try to illegally enter the U.S. through its porous northern border. It's as if Mr. Trump built a 30-foot wall across his front lawn – but his neighbors let people come through the backyard.

Would President Trump respond by vowing to build a wall across the 4,000-mile-long U.S.-Canada border? Would he make Canada pay for it?

A wall would also have no practical impact on Central Americans seeking asylum in the U.S. Such migrants make up as much as half of the current illegal-immigration flow, according to the U.S. Border Patrol. Anwen Hughes, deputy legal director of Human Rights First, verified in an interview that anyone can walk up to a lawful port of entry and request asylum or at least present enough information to be screened for a credible fear of persecution.

Immigration courts already face a backlog of more than 500,000 cases, according to the Justice Department. These could take years to process, making it difficult to deport even those denied asylum.

There is a much more effective way than the charade of a wall to reduce illegal entry into the U.S. The best approach is allowing more people to work legally by improving existing immigration categories for temporary work visas and establishing new ones for lower-skilled jobs.

In 1954, U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service Commissioner Joseph Swing liberalized the use of the Bracero program for Mexican agricultural workers. As the

admission of legal Mexican workers rose, illegal entry plummeted. From 1953-59, illegal entry, as measured by apprehensions at the border, fell by 95%, according to the U.S. Border Patrol.

Efforts to increase enforcement won't have much effect until we establish new ways to work in the U.S. Mr. Trump shouldn't try to build a wall around common sense.

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